The Formation *of* Christian Europe

The Carolingians, Baptism, &
the Imperium Christianum

Owen M. Phelan

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For Lauren,
you make me happy every day.

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Feast of St. Agatha, 2014

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Introduction

Around the turn of the ninth century, political and religious reformers worked to establish an *imperium christianum*—a Christian empire—a society whose most basic organizing principle was the *sacramentum* of baptism. This study explores why they did this, how they did it, and with what consequences. Toward the end of the eighth century Charlemagne's court attracted intellectuals interested in a reform for Frankish Europe. As a *sacramentum*, baptism was an especially useful tool for Carolingian thinkers pursuing reform: not only could reformers draw on baptism's substantial tradition filled with legal, moral, social, political, and theological ideas, but also its nearly universal familiarity to all Christians rendered it a useful starting point for conversations about beliefs and behaviors.[1] The *sacramentum* of baptism was not merely an abstract concept; it was a widely practiced ritual of initiation and inclusion affirming each individual's place in a community. Thus, baptism offered a medium for the communication and popularization of beliefs, ideas, and goals. The ritual provided a framework for the formation of people throughout the expanding Frankish world. It supplied a medium through which people could understand, internalize, and propagate a vision of how sacramental principles theologically, politically, culturally, and socially supported an *imperium christianum*. The Carolingian Renewal of the late eighth and ninth centuries set in place basic assumptions about Christianity decisive for medieval Europe. The vigorous activities of Carolingian leaders bequeathed to medieval Europeans the vision of an *imperium christianum* and embedded in cultural and intellectual life a number of conventions for organizing their lives and their world. The title, *The Formation of Christian Europe*, reflects the complicated and overlapping processes involved.

Four complementary frames contextualize this study. First, I situate my work in the context of the history of early medieval Europe, particularly the

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[1] The literature on baptism in the first several hundred years of the Christian era is vast. A good starting point is Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

Carolingian Renewal.[2] In my view, the Carolingian Renewal consists in Frankish leaders, ecclesiastical and secular, forging consensus on a common vision of an integrated society—the *imperium christianum*—and then attempting to cultivate intellectual, social, political, and legal tools for implementing their vision.[3] This study recenters understanding of a key development in the course of Western Civilization, the Carolingian *imperium christianum*, around the ordering concept of the *sacramentum* of baptism. For the Carolingians, the *imperium christianum*, or Christendom, was the society of the baptized. The theological concepts and religious metaphors derived from baptism underlie the political and social ideas common to a variety of early medieval texts including law codes, theological treatises, land charters, ethical instructions, liturgical commentaries, chronicles, and other narrative sources. Disparate political, theological, and cultural projects of the Carolingian Renewal were coordinated by this theological discourse common to a wide array of sources produced in diverse centers over more than a century.

Second, I position my work in the history of baptism. Baptism in the early Middle Ages has been approached from a number of complementary angles. Peter Cramer has surveyed the theology of baptism from late antiquity to the central Middle Ages with particular attention to the evolution of its governing concepts.[4] A number of authors have studied the liturgy of baptism across the

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[2] An inspiration to me and to numerous others interested in the idea of reform is the magisterial work of Gerhard B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959); idem, "Gregory the Great and Gregory VII: A Comparison of their Concepts of Renewal" *Viator* 4 (1982) pp. 1–17; idem, "Die mittelalterliche Reform-Idee und ihr Verhältnis zur Idee der Renaissance" *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 60 (1952) pp. 31–59.

[3] See the classic study Walter Ullmann, *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969). I am indebted to some of his interpretive instincts even as I am aware of the important and substantial subsequent work, e.g. Rosamond McKitterick, "The Carolingian Renaissance of Culture and Learning" *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Storey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) pp. 151–66; Johannes Fried, "Karl der Große, die Artes liberales und die karolingische Renaissance," *Karl der Grosse und sein Nachwirken: 1200 Jahre Kultur und Wissenschaft in Europa, I: Wissen und Weltbild*, ed. Paul Leo Butzer, Max Kerner, and Walter Oberschelp (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997) pp. 25–43; John Contreni, "The Carolingian Renaissance: Education and Literary Culture" *New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. II*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 709–57; Giles Brown, "Introduction: The Carolingian Renaissance" *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995) pp. 1–51; John Contreni, "The Carolingian Renaissance," *Renaissances before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Warren Treadgold (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984) pp. 59–74; Janet Nelson, "On the Limits of the Carolingian Renaissance" *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977) pp. 51–69; G.W. Trompf, "The Concept of the Carolingian Renaissance" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34 (1973) pp. 3–26.

[4] Peter Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages, c.200–c.1150* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

early Middle Ages.[5] Others have examined the social and political implications of baptism for the early medieval world, particularly godparenthood and spiritual kinship.[6] An exploration of the different contexts within which Carolingian thinkers considered and applied baptism deepens our understanding of the coordinating significance of the *sacramentum*. Tracking the connections between the social, liturgical, theological, and political contexts of baptism and following the infrastructure supporting the administration of baptism allows us to assess the depth and breadth of its implications for interpreting the Carolingian Renewal and of medieval society more generally.

Third, I locate my work in the study of rituals in history. The work (and scholarly engagement) of Phillip Buc and Geoffrey Koziol suggests ways in which to understand the importance of baptism as a ritual to Carolingian culture.[7] The meaning of words, even about rituals, should be analyzed separately from the meanings of actions. Rituals' meanings are not fixed and their effects and consequences are not under anyone's full control. Thinking about ritual as an explanatory analytical category tends to reductionism. It is important to probe why actors engaged in rituals. Evidence for early medieval rituals is nearly exclusively textual. Thus almost all evidence is already an interpretation. Baptism is a particularly rich ritual to analyze because of the wide range of interpretations that survive from the early medieval period, the ubiquity of the ritual, and the ritual's central role in early medieval interpretations of other rituals. Discussions of the *sacramentum* of baptism survive in a variety of genres from saints' *vitae*, liturgical *ordines*, letters, theological treatises, annals, capitularies, and liturgical commentaries. Furthermore, sources describe how various Carolingian agents wanted baptism to be interpreted,

[5] Brian D. Spinks, *Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Glenn C.J. Byer, *Charlemagne and Baptism: A Study of Responses to the Circular Letter of 811/812* (Lanham, MD: International Scholars Pub., 1999); Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999); J.D.C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West: A Study in the Disintegration of the Primitive Rite of Initiation* (London: S.P.C.K., 1965).

[6] Bernhard Jussen, *Spiritual Kinship as Social Practice: Godparenthood and Adoption in the Early Middle Ages* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2000); Joseph H. Lynch, *Christianizing Kinship: Ritual Sponsorship in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); idem, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Arnold Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe: Kaiser, Könige und Päpste als geistliche Patrone in der abendländischen Missionsgeschichte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984).

[7] Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); see especially chapter nine "How Does Ritual Mean?" On their conflict see Geoffrey Koziol, "Review Article: The Dangers of Polemic: Is Ritual Still an Interesting Topic of Historical Study?" *Early Medieval Europe* 11:4 (2002) pp. 367–88 and the rejoinder, Phillipe Buc, "The Monster and the Critics: A Ritual Reply" *Early Medieval Europe* 15:4 (2007) pp. 441–52. Also insightful is the contribution to the debate in Christina Pössel, "The Magic of Early Medieval Ritual" *Early Medieval Europe* 17:2 (2009) pp. 111–25.

how they understood it had been interpreted in the past, and how they intended to influence others to interpret the *sacramentum*. Not only did early medieval authors show their awareness that baptism's meaning was neither obvious nor fixed, they offered robust discussion of how and why they interpreted it as they did.

Fourth, because I examine a phenomenon that bridges ritual and its explanations, my work addresses language. The intelligibility of words and concepts to groups and the ability of one to explain and convince another about the importance of key concepts is essential to my case for organization in the Carolingian Renewal. I am indebted to careful scholarship on a number of fronts having to do with language. The importance of literacy in Frankish Europe is well studied, especially at the instigation of Rosamond McKitterick, who has probed the technical as well as the more literary or ideological efforts of Carolingian authors.[8] Vivian Law has written lucidly about early medieval interest in and approaches to language.[9] Still others have cultivated appreciation for how literacy enabled people to establish "textual communities" through oral, written, and ritual communications.[10] The language and vocabulary of the *sacramentum* of baptism received particular scrutiny in the early Middle Ages. Consensus coalesced around its key features and ideas and allowed for meaningful discussions of larger religious and cultural phenomena related to the *sacramentum*.

Chapter One explores *sacramentum* as an ordering concept for Latin authors from Antiquity to the early Middle Ages. Ultimately, Carolingian thinkers, aware of both secular and religious contexts, used the word to describe the establishment of relationships that were at once legally binding and theologically meaningful. The chapter begins with a selective survey of the legal and

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[8] On the former see *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For the latter consult Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: Formation of the European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); idem, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); idem, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[9] Vivian Law, *Grammar and Grammarians in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Longman, 1997); idem, *The Insular Latin Grammarians* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1982). See also the essays in *History of Linguistic Thought in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Vivien Law (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1993).

[10] Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). While Stock focuses on the eleventh and twelfth centuries, he does selectively reach back into the early Middle Ages to help set the stage for his discussion. Importantly, he treats discussion of the eucharist at the monastery of Corbie and focuses on the coordinating importance of *sacramentum*. See Stock, *Implications*, pp. 252–72. On the relationship between language and communication with special attention to early medieval contributions is Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: "Grammatica" and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), see especially pp. 272–404.

political uses of *sacramentum* in classical Roman authors. It continues with pagan and Christian authors in Late Antiquity, who drew on the earlier Roman definitions as they confronted contemporary intellectual challenges and expanded the range of concepts ordered by the word. Then it maps how Carolingian authors took advantage of overlapping senses of the word *sacramentum* to interpret legal and theological commitments. Finally, the chapter examines how early medieval approaches to baptism reflect and underscore the utility of *sacramentum* for organizing political, theological, and cultural agendas. Intellectuals reflecting on baptism as a *sacramentum* offered a technical vocabulary which became paradigmatic for scholars while at the same time becoming familiar to broader audiences through catechetical teachings. Viewing baptism as a *sacramentum* offered Carolingian leaders an intellectual rationale for the project of the Carolingian Renewal and, bridging the realm of theology and the realm of law, suggested a way to build their *imperium christianum*.

Chapter Two establishes how baptism helped Carolingian leaders order their approaches to public life. *Sacramenta*, especially baptism, helped leaders think in ways ideologically consistent, publicly available, and socially useful. Through the letters concerning the Adoptionist Controversy taken up at the Council of Frankfurt, leaders from Gaul, Spain, and Italy presented their understandings of the rationale and scope of religious authority in Europe. The arguments in the letters written at Charlemagne's court contrasted sharply with those in the letters from the other powers of Christian Europe, such as the Spanish bishops or the pope. Charlemagne's supporters viewed the king as the head of a polity defined by the *sacramentum* of baptism. Consequently, he enjoyed jurisdiction over all who fell under the pledge, or oath, of baptism. Beginning with the *Admonitio generalis* (789), which set the agenda for the Carolingian Renewal, capitularies and canonical decrees issued under the Carolingians consistently foregrounded baptism. Carolingian thinkers viewed the *sacramentum* of baptism as a religious, cultural, and political bedrock for Christendom, the society of the Carolingian Renewal. Non-baptized people too were expected to participate in and respect a society governed by *sacramenta*. Controversies concerning the position of the Jews in Carolingian Europe throw into sharp relief the importance of *sacramenta* to the Carolingians as well as the limits of the *imperium christianum*.

Chapter Three traces baptism's hold on Carolingian ideas of people and society—theologically, socially, politically, and culturally. It focuses on the example of Alcuin of York, an advisor to Charlemagne and a chief architect of the Carolingian Renewal, who worked to implement a sacramental society through baptism. In his theological writings, Alcuin maintained that *sacramenta* established one's relationship with God and with others. He ardently believed in the necessity of baptismal instruction to make clear to new Christians that sacramental relationships existed and had concrete implications. Through his grappling with missionary challenges in Saxony and Bavaria, Alcuin refined his

approach to baptism. He then disseminated his ideas on Christian formation through his extensive network of personal contacts in positions of influence across the Carolingian world.

Chapter Four tracks the depth and endurance of Carolingian consensus. Carolingian leaders around and after Alcuin assumed that baptism was central to the Carolingian Renewal and insisted on this view in a variety of ways. Through the first decades of the ninth century, ecclesiastical leaders and Emperor Charlemagne himself manifested clear concern for Christian formation across Europe and, in particular, for the administration of the *sacramentum* of baptism. The chapter turns on a consideration of a circular letter released by Charlemagne in 811/812. The letter asked each metropolitan bishop to canvass his archdiocese, ascertain how his suffragans conducted baptismal formation, and report their findings back to the court. Responses from across the empire testify to the success of the letter, both in eliciting replies from archbishops and in encouraging archbishops to conduct surveys of their dioceses. Redactions of the circular letter and its replies appear in ninth-century manuscripts from across Europe, testifying to broad discussion and vigorous interest in implementation.

Chapter Five assesses the internalization of sacramental thinking conveyed by baptism throughout the *imperium christianum* of the ninth century. Two representative lay instruction manuals, by Jonas of Orléans and Dhuoda of Septimania, advised important aristocrats on how to achieve success in life—both here and hereafter. Both manuals differ from earlier Carolingian offerings because they were explicit about the mechanisms by which Carolingians ought to learn. Both singled out baptism as the foundation for Carolingian life, describing the role of the godparent as educator. They also developed ideas of penance and confirmation, rites whose theology they derived from baptism, as tools for the continued formation of the Carolingian laity. Evidence surviving from other lay aristocrats complements Jonas and Dhuoda by employing similar sacramental analysis of contemporary crises. Nithard, a noble in Charles the Bald's retinue, depended upon the *sacramentum* of baptism when analyzing the political, social, and theological dimensions of the moral decrepitude of Louis the Pious' sons. Rudimentary Latin prayerbooks, homilies, and—more significantly— vernacular texts confirm wide participation in a sacramentally grounded society of the kind laid out by Jonas and Dhuoda and scrutinized by Nithard. By the mid-ninth century leaders of the Carolingian Renewal had ceased to argue for and come to assume that the *sacramentum* of baptism was the foundation for their Christian society.

The conclusion summarizes my arguments and evidence and makes the following two points. First, concrete Carolingian political aspirations for an *imperium christianum* fizzled out. By the end of the ninth century, the Carolingian World was permanently fractured and its early guiding principles a bitter memory. Second, political frustrations conceal the deeper achievement of the

Carolingian Renewal. The ironic and satirical laments about Carolingian decline that appear at the end of the ninth century turn on the hold that the *sacramentum* of baptism had on the thought and practice of medieval Europeans. An indelible mark was left on the medieval world. People had come to think of European society as a community of the baptized. This basic Carolingian assumption formed the foundation of medieval European life.

1

Sacramentum: An Ordering Concept from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages

> But the holy man (Martin) chose to serve the heavenly God rather than to fight under an earthly emperor; he who was specially chosen to carry the flag of the holy cross in the western parts of the world, and who exchanged the *sacramenta* of the military for evangelical edicts: not to contend with secular arms for the Roman Empire, but to enlarge the Christian empire (*imperium christianum*) with particular teachings; and not to throw wild peoples under the hard yoke of the Romans, but to put the light yoke of Christ on the necks of many nations.[1]

So wrote Alcuin of York (d. 804) at the pivotal moment of decision in his version of the *Life of St. Martin of Tours*. In this dense quotation, an influential author crystalized several key elements of the Carolingian Renewal in a famous historical and religious figure: the centrality of *sacramentum*, a vision of an *imperium christianum*, and the importance of proper Christian formation, especially in the context of the *sacramentum* of baptism.

Alcuin was born in the mid-eighth century and educated at the celebrated cathedral school of York, where he subsequently became master.[2] After meeting Charlemagne on a journey to Rome, he was lured to the Carolingian court, where he taught, wrote, and advised the king. Alcuin became an influential voice at court, working on a Carolingian vision of reform in such fundamental

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[1] Alcuin of York, *Vita Martini* 2, PL 101.0659. "*Sed vir sanctus magis elegit Deo coelesti servire, quam sub imperatore militare terreno; qui specialiter electus est, ut vexillum sanctae crucis occiduas orbis portaret in partes, et militiae sacramenta evangelicis mutaret edictis: non pro regno armis saecularibus certare Romano, sed specialibus doctrinis Christianum dilatare imperium; nec dura Romanorum lege populos subjicere feroces, sed leve Christi jugum plurimarum collo injicere gentium.*"

[2] On the life, work, and legacy of Alcuin see the magisterial Donald A. Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). See also the earlier biographies of Eleanor Shippley Duckett, *Alcuin: Friend of Charlemagne, His World and His Work* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951) and C.J.B. Gaskoin, *Alcuin: His Life and His Work* (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1904).

statements such as the *Admonitio generalis* and *De litteris colendis*.[3] Charlemagne gave him numerous gifts during his time at court. In 796, Alcuin semi-retired to one of these offerings, the famous monastery of St. Martin at Tours, where he continued to have a hand in Frankish politics and ecclesiastical life, especially through his correspondence with luminaries across the Carolingian world.

Bishop Martin of Tours (336–97) founded a monastery in Tours after his episcopal election in 371. He became one of the most popular saints in Gaul, which cemented the prestige of his foundation. He was a Roman soldier who left the army to take up a simple Christian life and eventually was elevated to the episcopacy. The most well-known story about St. Martin concerns his cloak. One very cold day, Martin met a shivering and half-naked beggar at the gates of the city of Amiens. Moved with compassion, he divided his coat into two parts and gave one to the poor man, who then revealed himself to be Christ. The part Martin kept for himself became a famous relic preserved in the oratory of the Frankish kings. The earliest hagiographical account of St. Martin was written by Sulpicius Severus (d. *c.*420), who met Martin in 393 or 394 and wrote the work in 396, shortly before Martin's death.[4] Martin's cult grew, perhaps unevenly, to become a significant presence across the Frankish world.[5] Periodically, new *vitae* reinterpreted and celebrated the saint for new audiences, such as a version by the poet Venantius Fortunatus in the late sixth century.[6]

Alcuin presented Martin's story anew to Frankish Christians at the end of the eighth century, just as Charlemagne was establishing Frankish control across most of Europe. Alcuin's personal prestige combined with his subject's wide celebrity made the writing of this *vita* a compelling opportunity for the new abbot to spell out his vision of reform. His specific rendition of Martin's conversion foregrounded essential concepts guiding the Carolingian Renewal, most especially the importance of *sacramentum*. While previous *vitae* of Martin

[3] For Alcuin's influence on programmatic Carolingian reform documents see Bullough, *Alcuin*, pp. 379–86. On the *Admonitio generalis* specifically see *Die Admonitio generalis Karls des Grossen*, eds. Hubert Mordek, Klaus Zechiel-Eckes, and Michael Glatthaar (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2012) pp. 47–63 and, earlier, Friedrich-Carl Scheibe, "Alcuin und die Admonitio generalis" *Deutsches Archiv* 14 (1958) pp. 221–29. For the *Epistola de litteris colendis* see the comments and new edition in T. Martin, "Bemerkungen zur 'Epistola de litteris colendis'" *Archiv für Diplomatik* 31 (1985) pp. 227–72.

[4] For Sulpicius Severus' work see Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. and trans. Jacques Fontaine, 3 vols., SC 133–5 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967–69).

[5] Alan Scott McKinley, "The First Two Centuries of Saint Martin of Tours" *Early Medieval Europe* 14 (2006) pp. 173–200; Sharon Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[6] Venantius Fortunatus, *Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. Solange Quesnel (Paris: Les Belle lettres, 1996). On the work's distinctiveness see Michael Roberts "The Last Epic of Antiquity: Generic Continuity and Innovation in *Vita Sancti Martini* of Venantius Fortunatus" *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 131 (2001) pp. 257–85.

contained gripping accounts of Martin's conversion to Christianity, and each reported basically the same facts, the accounts of neither Sulpicius Severus nor Fortunatus included the details supplied by Alcuin. First, Alcuin juxtaposed contexts within which the *sacramentum* was operative, contrasting the Roman centurion's military oath with a Christian's baptismal commitment. He pointed to an underlying continuity in Carolingian understanding of the word *sacramentum*, capitalizing on both classical legal and early Christian theological usage. The comparison was not new with Alcuin, but was used in an original way to describe the nature of Martin's conversion. Even as the move differentiated contexts, it tied together the theological and political dimensions of Alcuin's work on reform. Ultimately, even as Alcuin distinguished Martin's allegiance to the Christian community against his allegiance to a Roman military community, he posited a deeper continuity in the coordinating significance of a *sacramentum* for framing an individual's life and for establishing the unity of a community. As s*acramentum* organized religious, social, and political relationships for Martin, so would it for Carolingian thinkers like Alcuin.

The selection of *sacramentum* was not *ex nihilo*. The scope of the word's impact on the Carolingian imagination becomes visible through a survey of the word's history and semantic range. Examples available to Carolingian intellectuals from ancient Roman and early Christian usage provided the vocabulary and concepts that could be reimagined and freshly applied as conceptual glue for the society of the Carolingian Renewal. Through Late Antiquity and into the early Middle Ages the word appeared in many different contexts. Most basically, *sacramentum* symbolized the intimate bonds which established a group of people as a community. Carolingians have long been recognized as voracious consumers and transmitters of texts. They collected, read, absorbed, and transmitted most of the texts presently surviving from the classical and patristic eras.[7] As a result of both inherited tradition and careful study, the term *sacramentum* came to provide a supple category which Carolingian authors exploited as they explored the implications of their ambitious program of cultural renewal. While Carolingians recognized myriad *sacramenta*, they described one as especially significant, the *sacramentum* of baptism, which they understood as primary in two important ways. First, this *sacramentum* was the entry point into religion, into society, and into politics. Second, it was

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[7] Rosamond McKitterick, "The Carolingian Renaissance of Culture and Learning" *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) pp. 151–66. On the court libraries of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, as well as manuscripts more generally and classical texts more specifically see the essays in Bernhard Bischoff, *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, trans. and ed. Michael Gorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). A comprehensive review of Charlemagne's library, emphasizing Carolingian interest in patristic texts over classical works, is provided by Donald A. Bullough, "Charlemagne's Court Library Revisited" *Early Medieval Europe* 12 (2003) pp. 339–63.

the fundamental paradigm for understanding other and subsequent *sacramenta* which organized Carolingian life. An understanding of the ways in which Carolingian thinkers understood baptism to work as a *sacramentum* illumines the peculiarities—and the ingenuity—of Carolingian thought, which established the intellectual foundation for Christendom and paved the way for social and political renewal. An overview of the traditions inherited by Carolingian intellectuals will throw into sharp relief what knowledge they had and how they turned it to their own purposes.

1.1. *SACRAMENTUM* IN ROMAN ANTIQUITY

In antiquity, the word *sacramentum* first appeared in a legal context, though it would be widely used to interpret relationships in many contexts, including social and religious. The earliest evidence defined it as an oath sworn by both parties to a civil suit in support of their claims.[8] The word also indicated the sum of money staked by the parties to back their claims, thus joining them together in a legal process. In either case, a *sacramentum* bound two parties together, albeit on opposite sides, in a public legal procedure. It is in this legal context that the oldest surviving definition appears in Varro (116–27 BC), *On the Latin Language*.[9] The *Institutes of Gaius*, compiled in the second century AD, witnesses to the endurance of this use, when it described the five forms of Roman statute process, the first of which was the *sacramentum*.[10] The *Institutes* explained how it was the default legal mechanism when the law did not explicitly prescribe another process. In a *sacramentum*, two parties involved in a dispute put up a sum of money as a stake. Then the local authority decided the case and the losing party paid the stake as a penalty.[11] Descriptions in other sources attest to this procedure and suggest that it was not uncommon. In *On*

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[8] The Roman legal use of the word *sacramentum* is widely acknowledged. Daniel G. Van Slyke, "*Sacramentum* in Ancient Non-Christian Authors" *Antiphon 9.2* (2005) pp. 167–206, 182–9. Alan Watson, *Rome of the XII Tables: Persons and Property* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) pp. 125–33. H.F. Jolowicz and Barry Nicholas, *Historical Introduction to the Study of Roman Law*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) pp. 180–7. For another discussion of the use of the term *sacramentum* in Antiquity, see Dimitri Michaélidès, *Sacramentum chez Tertullien* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1970) pp. 23–36.

[9] Varro, *De lingua Latina* 5.180, eds. G. Goetz and F. Schoell (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1910), pp. 54–5. "[*si is*] *ea pecunia quae in iudicium venit in litibus, sacramentum a sacro; qui[s] petebat et qui infitiabatur, de aliis rebus uterque quingenos aeris ad pontem deponebant, de aliis rebus item certo alio legitimo numero assum; qui iudicio vicerat, suum sacramentum e sacro auferebat, victi ad aerarium redibat.*"

[10] Gaius, *Institutiones* 4.12, eds. E. Seckel and B. Kübler (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1969) p. 195. "*Lege autem agebatur modis quinque: sacramento, per iudicis postulationem, per condictionem, per manus iniectionem, per pignoris capionem.*"

[11] Gaius, *Institutiones* 4.13–16, pp. 195–9.

the Commonwealth, Cicero (106–43 BC) described its use in Rome when "some fifty-four years after the establishment of the republic, the consuls Sp. Tarpeius and A. Aternius carried in the centuriate assembly a law concerning penalties and the *sacramentum*."[12]

The vast majority of references to *sacramentum* in Latin literature, although not the earliest, appear in a military context, specifically the oath of allegiance that bound soldiers together under their leader and established a military community.[13] From the last century BC through the first centuries AD, numerous writers including Julius Caesar (d. 44 BC), Livy (d. AD 17), Tacitus (d. AD 117), and Suetonius (d. AD 122), all used the term in this fashion. While each author emphasized the *sacramentum*'s concrete legal implications, each also indicated that the bonds established held for many a deeply personal significance.[14] In Book One of *The Histories*, Tacitus provided an account of a military mutiny against the new emperor Galba in January AD 69. Galba's violent seizure of rule following Nero's death inaugurated an infamous power struggle remembered as the Year of the Four Emperors.[15] Tacitus reported that uncertainty over Galba's legitimacy and his intentions led the legions in Lower Germany to swear the *sacramentum* only hesitatingly.[16] Under the empire legions would typically swear the *sacramentum* in the name of the emperor.[17] In stark contrast, Tacitus mentioned that some legions, who wished to be seen as loyal to Rome even as they contested Galba, took the *sacramentum* using an archaic moniker, swearing allegiance to the government of the Roman Republic. "And lest they be seen to set aside respect for the empire, they now invoked in the *sacramentum* the obsolete names of the Senate and of the People of Rome."[18] This protest *sacramentum* helpfully highlights the importance of the oath both in its personal nature as understood by the soldiers, they wanted to swear to something in which they believed, and its communal significance, they felt the need to swear the widely known oath. Later in the same work, Tacitus placed the *sacramentum* at the center of an episode of tension between German and Roman soldiers serving the Roman army. Mucianus, a leading Roman statesman and general

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[12] Cicero, *De Republica* 2.60, ed. K. Ziegler (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1929), p. 74. "*Gratamque etiam illam legem quarto circiter et quinquagesimo anno post primos consules de multa et sacramento Sp. Tarpeius et A. Aternius consules comitiis centuriatis tulerunt.*"

[13] Van Slyke, "Sacramentum," p. 167. J.B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army 31BC–AD235* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) pp. 19–32. J. Vendrand-Voyer, "Origines et développment du 'droit militaire' romain" *Labeo* 3 (1982) pp. 259–77.

[14] Van Slyke, "Sacramentum," pp. 168–82.

[15] Gwyn Morgan, *69 A.D. The Year of Four Emperors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Kenneth Wellesley, *The Year of the Four Emperors*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[16] Tacitus, *Historiae* 1.55, ed. C. Heraeus (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1877), p. 85. "*Inferioris tamen Germaniae legiones sollemni kalendarum Ianuariarum sacramento pro Galba adactae multa cunctatione.*"

[17] Van Slyke, "Sacramentum," p. 175.

[18] Tacitus, *Historiae* 1.55, p. 86. "*Ac ne reverentiam imperii exuere viderentur, senatus populique Romani obliterata iam nomina sacramento advocabant.*"

swept up in the tumultuous Year of the Four Emperors, assembled all the Ger-
man soldiers into a single corps. Fearing that they were being sorted out for
treachery, perhaps even a massacre, the Germans began to panic. Mucianus
soothed their nerves with reference to the soldiers' common *sacramentum*,
stressing the inviolability of the community bound by the military oath. The
soldiers "implored first Mucianus, then the absent emperor, lastly heaven and
the gods, until Mucianus advanced against their false fear calling them all 'sol-
diers of the same *sacramentum*, of the same emperor.'"[19] That the *sacramentum*
bound soldiers to a particular leader by name here stressed its deeply personal
aspect. Any transfer of allegiance was a dangerous and destabilizing proposi-
tion with the potential to undermine the morale of the unit and threaten the
stability of the state. *Sacramentum* served Tacitus as a crucial ordering concept
for soldiers and leaders during periods of strife, especially civil wars, under-
scoring personal convictions and identifying the boundaries of communities,
in this case, the Roman army.

By analogy to the military oath, Roman authors used *sacramentum* to organ-
ize ideas about convictions and communities in more general contexts. Some
Roman writers understood the *sacramentum* to hold a typological or symbolic
meaning, expanding its usefulness beyond legal and military contexts and into
social and religious realms.[20] Petronius (d. AD 66), Quintilian (AD 35–95), and
Apuleius (d. *c.*AD 180) all used the word *sacramentum* in this more ambiguous,
perhaps vulgar, way. Petronius' *Satyricon*, the earliest surviving work of Latin
prose fiction, now exists only as a series of lengthy fragments which preserve the
escapades of a former gladiator, his boyfriend, and two others, an itinerant
teacher and a poet-conman.[21] The surviving sections describe the group's
encounters with colorful figures along their journey and detail the erotic rivalry
of Encolpius, the former gladiator, with the other travelling companions as they
jockeyed for the affection of Giton, the boyfriend. During one episode, when
Encolpius passed out drunk, Ascyltos, the itinerant teacher, bedded Giton. Upon
awaking, Encolpius flew into a rage and began to attack Ascyltos. Giton then
pleaded with the two men not to battle each other and offered his own life,
lamenting "I ought to die, I who destroyed the *sacramentum* of friendship."[22] The

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[19] Tacitus, *Historiae* 4.46, p. 146. "*Modo Mucianum modo absentem principem, postremo cae-
lum ac deos obtestari, donec Mucianus cunctos eiusdem sacramenti, eiusdem imperatoris milites
appellans falso timori obviam iret.*"

[20] Van Slyke, "Sacramentum," pp. 189–97. Geoffrey MacCormack, "Formalism, Symbolism
and Magic in Early Roman Law" *Revue d'histoire du droit* 37 (1969) pp. 439–68. See also H. von
Petrikovits, "Sacramentum" *Rome and Her Northern Provinces,* ed. B. Hartley and J. Wacher
(Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1983) pp. 179–201.

[21] Petronius, *Satyrica*, eds. and trans. R. Bracht Brantham and Daniel Kinney (Berkeley: Uni-
versity of California Press, 1996) ix–xxx; P.G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel: The Satyricon of Petronius
and the Metamorphoses of Apuleius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) pp. 67–140;
J.P. Sullivan, *The Satyricon of Petronius. A Literary Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968).

[22] Petronius, *Satyricon* 80, ed. K. Mueller (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1995), pp. 78–9. "*Ego mori
debeo, qui amicitiae sacramentum delevi.*"

dramatic force of the statement depended on a deep analogy to the military oath. The personal nature of sexual encounter and high stakes of perceived betrayal echo defining features of the military *sacramentum*. The use of such an important term accentuated the intimacy of the relationships damaged by Giton's infidelity. Such treachery demanded the strictest punishment.

Perhaps the most important witness to *sacramentum* as it was used in Late Antiquity and available to early Christian authors is Apuleius. Writing about a century after Petronius, Apuleius' corpus displays *sacramentum* organizing ideas across both literary and philosophical genres popular at the time. Apuleius' work emerged from the same North African context of paradigm-setting early Christian authors such as Tertullian and his work was well known to and engaged by later influential Christian writers like Augustine.[23] The *Metamorphoses*, or the *Golden Ass*, is the only Latin novel to survive complete from Antiquity.[24] Part bawdy entertainment, part fable, the story follows the adventures of Lucius, a virile young Roman aristocrat with an insatiable interest in things magical. Lucius' pursuit of the supernatural led him unintentionally to be transformed into a donkey. As a beast of burden, he lived and served among the slaves and destitute freemen working for a wealthy Roman family. In Book Three, Apuleius testified to a common use of *sacramentum* playing on the idea of the military oath, similar to Giton's plea in the *Satyricon*. After being impressed by a shape-shifting magician named Pamphile, Lucius rubbed a magic ointment over his body intending to become a bird. Much to his dismay he was transformed into an ass. After it was explained to him that the process could not be reversed until morning, he was led to the stable and quartered next to his own horse and another ass. The frustrated Lucius ruefully remarked "I also thought, if there is any silent or natural *sacramentum* in mute animals, that my horse would offer me lodging and hospitality out of a certain knowledge and compassion."[25] The *sacramentum*, for Apuleius, was a bond of community out of which ought to spring social obligations. The irony of the situation highlighted that a community based on a *sacramentum* had a deeply personal or intimate character, here signalled by Lucius' disappointment that his own horse would not receive him.

Apuleius also bears witness to the endurance of legal *sacramenta* in Late Antiquity and their importance in ordering communities. Early in Book Three

[23] See the brief survey in Carl C. Schlam, "Apuleius in the Middle Ages" *The Classics in the Middle Ages*, eds. Aldo S. Bernardo and Saul Levin (Binghamton, New York: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1990) pp. 363–9. See also James Gollnick, *The Religious Dreamworld of Apuleius' Metamorphoses: Recovering a Forgotten Hermeneutic* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999) p. 23; Jack Tatum, *Apuleius and the Golden Ass* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979) pp. 99, 112, 142–5; Walsh, *The Roman Novel*, pp. 185–89, 229; John Ferguson, "Apuleius" *Greece & Rome* 8:1 (1961) pp. 61–74.

[24] P.G. Walsh, *Apuleius: The Golden Ass* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). Walsh, *The Roman Novel*, pp. 141–223.

[25] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 3.26, ed. R. Helm (Stutgart: B.G. Teubner, 1968), p. 71. "*Atque ego rebar, si quod inesset mutis animalibus tacitum ac naturale sacramentum, agnitione ac miseratione quadam inductum equum illum meum hospitium ac loca lautia mihi praebiturum.*"

of the *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius used *sacramentum* in the context of a legal action.[26] At the very end of Book Two, Lucius in drunken confusion slew what he believed to be three bandits attempting to break into a home. Book Three then began with Lucius being rousted from his bed and arrested by city officials for murdering three citizens of Hypata. An elderly prosecutor explained the case to an assembly, noting "but by the providence of the gods, which permits nothing unpunished to criminals, before that one (Lucius) could slip away on his secret journey, I stood ready early in the morning to lead him to the most heavy *sacramentum* of your judgment."[27] Apuleius set the legal action in the context of a public assembly. The idea behind the author's legal conceit was the action of a unified community against an outsider. The prosecutor addressed the assembly as "most august citizens" and encouraged them to "resolutely deliver a sentence against this foreign man in this crime which you would punish severely in your fellow citizen."[28] Apuleius' use of *sacramentum* ratcheted up the dramatic stakes through its emphasis on the integrity of the community.

The earliest extant application of the word to the vibrant and evolving religious scene of Late Antiquity also appeared in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. In Book Eleven, Lucius, still an ass, exhausted and depressed by his many unsuccessful attempts to restore his human form, began to pray for a solution and received a vision. In a dream, the goddess Isis appeared to him and revealed that he would be restored to a human body and live a life of service to her. Lucius immediately joined her cult and was restored to human form. Following Lucius' restoration, a priest of Isis recounted Lucius' trials, extoled Isis' power, and invited Lucius to commit himself to the cult.

> Yet, that you may be the safer and the surer, enroll your name in this army of holiness, to which you were but a short time past pledged by *sacramentum*. Dedicate yourself to the service of true religion, and voluntarily bend your neck to the yoke of this service. For when you have begun to serve the goddess, you will feel the full fruitfulness of your liberty.[29]

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[26] That this legal context is more general than technical is discussed by Rudolf Theodore van der Paardt, *L. Apuleius Madaurensis. The Metamorphoses: A Commentary on Book III with Text and Introduction* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1971) p. 45.

[27] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 3.3, p. 54. "*Sed providentia deum, quae nihil impunitum nocentibus permittit, priusquam iste clandestinis itineribus elaberetur, mane praestolatus ad gravissimum iudicii vestri sacramentum eum curavi perducere.*"

[28] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 3.3, p. 54. "*Quirites sanctissimi . . . constanter itaque in hominem alienum ferte sententias de eo crimine, quod etiam in vestrum civem severiter vindicaretis.*"

[29] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.15, pp. 277–78. "*Quo tamen tutior sis atque munitior, da nomen sanctae huic militiae, cuius non olim sacramento etiam rogabaris, teque iam nunc obsequio religionis nostrae dedica et ministerii iugum subi voluntarium. Nam cum coeperis deae servire, tunc magis senties fructum tuae libertatis.*" Mohrmann points out the significance of this text in her article, Christine Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens texts chrétiens" *Harvard Theological Review* 47:3 (1954) p. 146. See also Van Slyke, "Sacramentum," p. 200. Michaélidès, *Sacramentum chez Tertullien*, p. 27.

Apuleius used *sacramentum* to mean a kind of sacred oath offered in something of a liturgical context by an initiate into a religious cult. He organized his understanding of a religious community by analogy to the military *sacramentum*. It provided entrance into a community defined by religious adherence. Further, he implied that the commitment and discipline required by this religious cult could most clearly be understood in terms similar to those demanded by the Roman army.

Apuleius also witnessed to the penetration of *sacramentum* into philosophical discussions. In his treatise *On the God of Socrates* he considered four topics: the distinction between gods and men, the nature of gods, the specific gods of Socrates, and an exhortation to follow Socrates' moral example. In the final section, Apuleius raised the importance of living well. He argued that shame was not related to economic success. There was no shame in being a poor painter or poor pipe-player; rather, shame was to be found in not living well. He concluded with an appeal to the reader for a deep and sincere commitment to philosophy, lamenting how the reader must often see people who give too little consideration to the most important things in life and simultaneously lavish attention on the inconsequential. He wrote "so daily you examine their debts: you find much poured out in wasteful fashion and nothing on themselves—I say—on the cultivation of their god, which cultivation is nothing other than the *sacramentum* of philosophy."[30] Here the word was used in the sense of a deliberate and deeply personal commitment to a way of life. This use again depended on an analogy to the military oath. But rather than accenting the legal obligations of the military *sacramentum*, it capitalized on the intimacy and fidelity associated with the word. Into the second century, the word *sacramentum* was an important organizing concept. It accommodated technical uses in legal and military contexts, but also included more "vulgar" uses that explored personal commitment and the identification of communities, sometimes religious. Early Christian authors quickly seized on this idea and capitalized on its religious overtones.

1.2. *SACRAMENTUM* IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Early Latin Christian writers adopted the term *sacramentum* as an organizing concept, adapted it and expanded its range of uses. As chronological and

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[30]   Apuleius, *De deo socratis* 170, ed. C. Moreschini (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1968), p. 35. "*Igitur cotidiana eorum aera dispungas: invenias in rationibus multa prodige profusa et in semet nihil, in sui dico daemonis cultum, qui cultus non aliud quam philosophiae sacramentum est*." This use of *sacramentum* was not unique to Apuleius. Other Roman authors from the early centuries attested to this religious or sacred idea of the sacrament. For example, also in the second century, Sextus Festus Pompeius explained "By sacrament is said what is done in the making sacred of an oath." Sextus Pompeius Festus, *De verborum significatione quae supersunt cum pauli epitome*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1913) pp. 466–67. "*sacramento dicitur quod iuris iurandi sacratione interposita actum est . . . sacramenum dicitur, quod iurisiurandi sacratione interposita geritur*."

textual intermediaries between classical authors and the Carolingians, these early Christian writers drew on late classical understandings of the word to develop theories of sacred oaths and Christian liturgical celebrations such as baptism and the eucharist. Studies of the language of the earliest North African writers, especially Tertullian (d. *c.*225), Cyprian (d. 258), and Optatus of Milevis (d. *c.*387), reveal a continuing evolution of the word in light of an antique inheritance.[31] In his treatise *Against Marcion*, Tertullian used *sacramentum* to describe oaths, rites, and mysteries. In each case the oath, the rite, or the mystery explained a Christian's relationship to God or to his fellow believers. When commenting on the superscription to 1 Corinthians, Tertullian contrasted this Christian salutation with Jewish salutations. "Now, when he (Paul) announces these blessings as 'from God the Father and the Lord Jesus,' he uses titles that are common to both, and which also correspond to the *sacramentum* of our faith; and I do not think it is possible to discover what is declared to be God the Father and the Lord Jesus, except by the attributes more suited to them severally."[32] Tertullian argued that Jewish greetings

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[31] Scholarly discussion of early Christian treatments of *sacramentum* across the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries broke into two distinct concerns. First, many scholars went through great lengths to plot the boundaries between Christian and pagan religion, with the *sacramentum* serving as either a bridge or a boundary. Second, other scholars explored the relationship of Christians to the military, where *sacramentum* became the principle category for discussion.

With respect to the first division and for a wide overview of the early Christian use of the word *sacramentum* see, J. De Ghellinck, É. De Backer, J. Poukens, and G. LeBacqz, *Pour l'histoire du mot "sacramentum." I. Les anténicéens* (Louvain: Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense, 1924); A.D. Nock, "Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments" *Mnemosyne 4:5* (1952) pp. 177–213, reprinted in Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. Zeph Stewart, Volume 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972) pp. 791–820. Examples of specific studies with the same concerns include C.J. Becker, *The Doctrine of Saint Cyprian on the Sacraments* (Würzburg: Universitäts-Druckerei, 1924). Optatus is treated in L. Malunowiczóna, "Signification du mot sacramentum chez saint Optat de Milève" *Roczniki Teologicyno-Kanoniczne* 19:4 (1972) pp. 163–71. Especially important is the long study of Tertullian's terminology in Dimitri Michaélidès, *Sacramentum chez Tertullien*. Michaélidès insistence on consistent precision in the use of the word precluded acknowledgment of nuance in Tertullian's use of *sacramentum* or change in the meaning and semantic rance of the word over time, a position which drew sharp criticism. See the summary of the debate in Robert D. Sider, "Approaches to Tertullian: A Study of Recent Scholarship" *Second Century* 2 (1982) pp. 228–60. For an extremely spartan overview from early Christianity to the modern era see, Bruce Harbert "Sacramental Language" *New Blackfriars* 77 (1996) pp. 40–52.

With respect to the second division see Hanns Christof Brennecke, "'An fidelis ad militiam converti posit [Tertullian, *De idolatria* 19,1]?' Frühchristliches Bekenntnis und Militärdienst im Widerspruch?" *Die Weltlichkeit des Glaubens in der Alten Kirche: Festschrift für Ulrich Wickert zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Dietmar Wyrwa (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977) pp. 45–100; Adolf Harnack, Militia Christi: *The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries*, trans. David McInnes Gracie (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981); John Helgeland, "Christians and the Roman Army from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine" *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romischen Welt* 23:1 (1979) pp. 725–834.

[32] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, 5.5.2 CCSL 1 ed. A Kroymann (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954) pp. 675–76. "*Haec cum a deo patre nostro et domino Iesu adnuntians communibus nominibus utatur, competentibus nostro quoque sacramento, non puto dispici posse, quis deus pater et dominus Iesus praedicetur nisi ex accidentibus, cui magis competant.*" Of course, Tertullian's text of Paul is a *Vetus Latina* edition.

focused on a wish for physical health, while Christian ones, following Paul, grounded their good wishes in God. To this end, the *sacramentum* was the touchstone of the Christian community, an oath of allegiance or a vow to God, which both established the community and organized its view of the world. In the same work, Tertullian offered the earliest characterization of the rites of baptism and the eucharist as *sacramenta*.[33] Amid vigorous polemic against Marcion's negative attitude to divorce which pitted Jesus' teaching against Moses', Tertullian explained how the two positions were consonant in permitting divorce under specific circumstances. He asked trenchantly "if, however, you deny that divorce is in any way permitted by Christ, how is it that you on your side destroy marriage, not uniting man and woman, nor admitting to the *sacramentum* of baptism and of the eucharist those who have been united in marriage anywhere else, unless they should agree together to repudiate the fruit of their marriage, and so against the fruit of marriage, so also against the very Creator Himself?"[34] He presented participation in baptism and the eucharist as central activities of a Christian community. Those who were frozen out of these rites were placed outside of the community. Throughout his writings Tertullian explicitly deployed *sacramentum* to distinguish his community against those from whom he drew the term. In a passage directed against the cult of Mithras from *The Prescription against Heretics*, Tertullian argued that there existed no fundamental difference between idolatry and heresy. In both ancient institutions sacred texts were twisted by diabolic malice. He inveighed against the devil "who copies aspects of the divine *sacramenta* in the mysteries of idols."[35] Against Roman military service, Tertullian turned to the idea of the *sacramentum* in his *On Idolatry*. He stressed diabolic distortion in his depiction of a Christian serving in the army. "The divine *sacramentum* and the human do not come together, the sign of Christ and the sign of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness, one soul cannot be bound to two, to God and to Caesar."[36] Tertullian originated this contrast later used by Alcuin for Martin of Tours. For Tertullian, baptism and the eucharist were *sacramenta* because they were at a most fundamental level

[33] The ambiguity of Pliny's use of the word *sacramentum* in his letter to Trajan concerning Christians is discussed in A.D. Nock, "The Christian Sacramentum in Pliny and a Pagan Counterpart" *The Classical Review* 38:3/4 (1924) pp. 58–9.

[34] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, 4.34.5, p. 636. "*Aut si omnino[non] negas permitti diuortium a Christo, quomodo tu nuptias dirimis, nec coniungens marem et feminam nec alibi coniunctos ad sacramentum baptismatis et eucharistiae admittens, nisi inter se conjuraverint aduersus fructum nuptiarum, ut adversus ipsum creatorem?*"

[35] Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 40.2 CCSL 1 ed. R.F. Refoulé (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954) p. 220. "*qui ipsas quoque res sacramentorum diuinorum idolorum mysteriis aemulatur.*" This passage is cited in Mohrmann "Sacramentum," p. 144, and discussed by Michaélidès, *Sacramentum chez Tertullien*, pp. 235–41.

[36] Tertullian, *De idololatria* 19.2, CCSL 2, eds. A. Reofferscheid and G. Wissowa (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954), p. 1120. This passage, typical of Tertullian's approach, is discussed in Harnack, *Militia Christi*, pp. 54–5 and 76–7. Brennecke, "'An fidelis ad militiam," pp. 45–100.

pacts made with God, signs of the total allegiance to God which ordered the Christian community.[37]

Tertullian also witnessed an important Latin Christian development in the use of *sacramentum*. He consistently used the word to render the Greek word *mysterion* into Latin. This convention in translations of Paul was present from the earliest Latin biblical translations as seen in Tertullian, Cyprian, and others.[38] The decision was a conscious and consistent one. When commenting on Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Tertullian wrote

> now, to what good will most suitably belong all those things which relate to 'that good pleasure, which God has displayed in the *sacramentum* of His will, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might recapitulate' (if I may so say, according to the exact meaning of the Greek word) 'all things in Christ, which are in heaven and which are on earth (Eph. 1:9-10),' that is to return to the beginning or to gather up from the beginning; unless all things of his are from the beginning, and the beginning itself, by whom are time and the fulfillment of time and the dispensation of fulfillment, according to which all things up to the very first are gathered up in Christ?[39]

Most likely, Latin writers mechanically translated the Greek *mysterion* into Latin.[40] The custom was certainly not an innovation of Tertullian, but probably grew out of the everyday Latin usage common to his Christian community, which saw a double nuance, both sacral and legal, in the word *sacramentum*.

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[37] Arnold Ehrhardt, "Christian Baptism and Roman Law" *Festschrift Guido Kisch*, ed. Karl S. Bader (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1955) pp. 147–66. John Crehan, *Early Christian Baptism and the Creed: A Study in Ante-Nicene Theology* (London: Burns, Oates, and Weshbourne, 1950) pp. 96–110.

[38] The majority of surviving *Vetus Latina* texts routinely use *sacramentum* to render the Greek *mysterion*. However, the *Vetus Latina* tradition in Italy was less consistent in using *sacramentum* to render *mysterion*. For the Ephesians passage cited by Tertullian see *Vetus Latina. 24/1 Epistola ad Ephesios*, ed. Hermann Josef Frede (Freiburg: Herder, 1962) p. 20. For a brief discussion of this tradition in biblical interpretation see *Vetus Latina* 24/1, 33–5. The most important witness to the Italian tradition is Ambrose of Milan (*c.*340–97), who was not hesitant to employ the terms *mysterium* and *sacramentum* interchangeably. Nowhere was this clearer than in the recensions of his addresses to neophytes given during Easter week. The addresses were first gathered in a type of stenographic record of his preaching and copied under the title *On the Sacraments*. Later, these addresses were revisited by Ambrose, polished, reworked in a more literary manner, and published with the title *Concerning Mysteries*. For a full and recent discussion of this relationship see Craig Alan Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002) pp. 20–9. For a slightly earlier treatment, see the introduction in *Ambrose de Milan: Des Sacrements; Des Mystères; Explication du Symbole*, ed. Berhard Botte, SC 25 (Paris: Èditions du Cerf, 1980). On Ambrose's approach to sacraments more generally see Joseph Huhn, *Die Bedeutung des Wortes Sacramentum bei dem Kirchenvater Ambrosius* (Fulda: Druck und Verlag der fuldaer Actiendruckerei, 1928).

[39] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, 5.17.1, pp. 712–13. "*Cui ergo competet secundum boni existimationem, quam proposuerit in sacramento uoluntatis suae, in dispensationem adimpletionis temporum—ut ita dixerim, sicut uerbum illud in Graeco sonat—recapitulare—id est ad initium redigere uel ab initio recensere—omnia in Christum, quae in caelis et quae in terris, nisi cuius erunt omnia ab initio, etiam ipsum initium, a quo et tempora et temporum adimple<tio et adimple>tionis dispensatio, ob quam omnia ad initium recensentur in Christo?*"

[40] Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens texts chrétiens," p. 148.

Christine Mohrmann has attempted to solve this equation of Greek *mysterion* with Latin *sacramentum* by suggesting that Christians did not wish to use words already strongly associated with pagan cults, the way *mysteria* was associated with certain pagan cultic practices.[41] While certainly very compelling, this explanation does not rule out other possible reasons for choosing the word *sacramentum*. For example, in the passage above, the use of *sacramentum* presented a gathering up in Christ as a culmination or a fulfillment. Thus it underscored the relationship established between God and his creation. Because *sacramentum* conveyed a sense of allegiance and community, as seen in Tacitus and Apuleius, it provided a more fitting translation of *mysterion* than other common Latin alternatives such as *mysterium* or *arcanum*.

  Augustine of Hippo's (354–430) decisive voice anchored use of the word *sacramentum* among subsequent Christian authors as a tool for organizing ideas of allegiance and community. On a practical level, *sacramenta* came to define communities for Christians in Augustine's North Africa. *Sacramenta*, whether civil or ecclesiastical, were necessary for establishing trust, ensuring justice, and preserving society. Augustine's own episcopal career coincided with a slow accommodation of Christian theology and practice to the social reality of oath-swearing in the late Roman World.[42] For Augustine the term *sacramentum* applied to words, actions, events, and even institutions that established communities on the basis of trust and fidelity. Its formal, binding, and liturgical character in North African social and political life connected in Augustine's mind with ecclesiastical practice. On a theoretical level, a *sacramentum* was essentially a sign, something visible and external, which identified an invisible, inner, or spiritual reality.[43] In numerous places, Augustine described specifically

[41] Christine Mohrmann, "Sacramentum dans les plus anciens texts chrétiens" pp. 141–52, esp. 143–4. This was first suggested in a 1951 lecture given at l'Institut de linguistique de l`Université de Paris, printed as "Christine Mohrmann, L'Étude de la latinité chrétienne: état de le question, methods, resultants" *Latin vulgaire, Latin des chrétiens, Latin médiéval* (1955) pp. 17–35, esp. 31. Mohrmann disagreed with the ideas of the German Benedictine liturgist Odo Casel, who argued that it is precisely because *sacramentum* took on the meaning of *mysterium* that it was adopted by early Christian authors. Odo Casel, "Neue Zeugnisse Für das Kultmysterium" *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 13 (1933) pp. 99–171; idem, "Mysteriengegenwart" *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 8 (1928) pp. 145–224; idem, "Das Mysteriengedächtnis der Messliturgie im Lichte der Tradition" *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 6 (1926) pp. 113–204.

[42] Kevin Uhalde, *Expectations of Justice in the Age of Augustine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) pp. 77–104. On the broader paradigms through which Augustine analyzed the interaction of the religious and the secular see Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) along with his reconsiderations in Robert A. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

[43] *Augustine through the Ages*: *An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999) p. 742. B. Studer, "'Sacramentum et exemplum' chez Saint Augustine" *Studia Patristica* 16 (1985) pp. 570–88. André Mandouze, "A propos de 'Sacramentum' chez S. Augustine polyvalence lexicologique et foisonnement théologique" *Mélanges offerts à Mademoiselle Christine Mohrmann* (Anvers: Spectrum Editeurs, 1963) pp. 222–32. C. Couturier, "'Sacramentum' et 'mysterium' dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin" *Études Augustiniennes* (1953) pp. 161–274.

Christian liturgical practices, especially baptism, with *sacramentum*. In *On Christian Doctrine* when considering liberation from enslavement to the letter, Augustine analyzed the importance of religious rites. After a treatment of Hebrew worship, he described the significance of the *sacramenta* of baptism and the eucharist. The *sacramentum* was a sign which signified the community to which Christians belonged. On the one hand, it was a rite that bound together a community defined by spiritual freedom and faithfulness to traditions passed on from Jesus through the Apostles. On the other hand, it was the symbol by which people recognized the reality of that community.

> But the Lord himself and apostolic discipline handed down a few signs instead of many and these most easy to perform and most majestic to understand and most virtuous to observe, as is the *sacramentum* of baptism and the celebration of the Lord's body and blood. When anyone receives these, having been given instruction the people know to what they are referred, so that they venerate things not in carnal servitude, but rather in spiritual freedom.[44]

Sacramentum also organized teachings on scripture and on liturgy in Augustine's widely read discourses on the Psalms. In his explanation of Psalm 73, Augustine evaluated the relationship of the old covenant to the new. He here used *sacramentum* to characterize the discontinuity between the exterior signs of the old and new covenants, even as an interior continuity remained. "If we separate the two testaments, the old and the new, the *sacramenta* are not the same, neither are the promises, yet the majority of the commandments are the same."[45] Augustine's equally popular sermons also took advantage of the word. The North African bishop provided a frank explanation of the *sacramentum* of the eucharist in sermon 272. He elucidated how the term pointed to a double significance of the eucharist confected in a liturgical rite through which visible bread and wine become the Lord's Body and Blood. Again, an accent was placed on the community which possessed the *sacramenta*. The sermon was directed toward his Christian community and explained what characterized the group as Christian. "Brethren, these things are called *sacramenta* because in them one thing is seen and another is understood. What is seen has corporeal form. What

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[44] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 3.9.13, CCSL 32, ed. J. Martin (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962) p. 86. "*sed quaedam pauca pro multis eademque factu facillima et intellectu augustissima et observatione castissima ipse dominus et apostolica tradidit disciplina, sicuti est baptismi sacramentum et celebratio corporis et sanguinis domini. Quae unusquisque cum percepit, quo referantur imbutus agnoscit, ut ea non carnali seruitute, sed spiritali potius libertate ueneretur.*"

[45] Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. 73.2, CCSL 39, eds. D. Eligius Dekkers and J. Fraipont (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956) p. 1005. "*Si enim discernimus duo Testamenta, Vetus et Nouum, non sunt eadem sacramenta, nec eadem promissa; eadem tamen pleraque praecepta.*" Augustine's use of the word *sacramentum* is sketched out in greater detail in C. Couturier, "*Sacramentum*" pp. 161–274. See also the explanatory footnotes in Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 73–98 3/8*, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2002) p. 15.

is understood has spiritual fruit."[46] Augustine's fascination with semiotics directed him to distinguish between the visible exterior and the invisible interior and to plumb their relationship.

Sacramentum helped the bishop of Hippo analyze many of the theological controversies in which he was embroiled. His detailed considerations of the rites of baptism and of the eucharist strongly influenced subsequent Christian thinkers. Around the year 400, Augustine offered sustained attention to the use and meaning of the *sacramentum* of baptism in treatises *On Baptism* and *Against Faustus the Manichee*, composed against the Donatists and the Manicheans respectively. In these works he developed technical explanations of *sacramenta* as liturgical rites. He frequently drew on inherited definitions of the word as he ruminated on its significance to the Christian religion. Christian liturgical celebrations were a particular and special type of *sacramentum*, signs that ordered individuals' allegiance and drew them together into a community in a very fundamental way. Baptism, in particular, helped Augustine draw lines around the edges of the Christian community. In *On Baptism* he argued for a distinction between validity and fruitfulness with regard to a *sacramentum*'s effect on individual Christians. He began with an analysis of how the schism between Donatist and Catholic Christians in North Africa affected both those who were baptized and those who did the baptizing. He concluded that ordained priests could lose holiness or even good standing in the church without their priestly character being lost. He wrote "just as the baptized person, if he withdraws from the unity [of the Church], does not lose the *sacramentum* of baptism, so also he who is ordained, if he departs from the unity (of the Church), does not lose the *sacramentum* of conferring baptism."[47] In this context, a *sacramentum* was a sign which marked individuals as part of a community from which one could not ever completely be removed and enabled one to perform valid activities specific to the community.

Still, Augustine's writings were not perfectly consistent and they did not develop in a straight line. For example, Augustine sometimes used *sacramentum* and *mysterium* as synonyms. In a passage from the *Tractates on John*, he employed both words in exclamations of insight into the deity. In an explication of Jesus' washing the feet of the disciples (Jn 13:6–10), Augustine cited a passage from the Song of Songs (5:2–3), which described foot washing. In order to signal that an Old Testament passage was an appropriate lens through which to interpret the episode in John, Augustine exclaimed, "O Wonderful

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[46] Augustine, *Sermones* 272, PL 38.1247. "*Ista, fratres, ideo dicuntur Sacramenta, quia in eis aliud videtur, aliud intelligitur. Quod videtur, speciem habet corporalem, quod intelligitur, fructum habet spiritualem.*"

[47] Augustine, *De baptismo libri septem*, 1.2 CSEL 51, ed. M. Petschenig (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1908) p. 146. "*Sicut autem baptizatus, si ab unitate recesserit, sacramentum baptismi non amittit, sic etiam ordinatus, si ab unitate recesserit, sacramentum dandi baptismi non amittit.*"