

Saint Louis IX and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III

THOMAS RENNA

Saginaw Valley State University (Emeritus)

ABSTRACT

Throughout the Middle Ages the French and the Germans have vied with each other in their attempts to integrate the figure of Charlemagne into their perceptions of national identity. Both legacies envisioned Charles the Great as a prototypical Christian ruler, crusader, pilgrim, and promoter of the arts of civilization. But for the French, as exemplified by St. Louis IX (1226–70), Charlemagne remained primarily a role model for their monarchs, including the Valois, and a hero of the chansons de geste. For the Germans, as personified by the Habsburg emperor Frederick III (1440–93), Charlemagne embodied the Roman Empire and the German nation. He was a saint with historical roots going back to the Trojans. Far more than the French, the late medieval Germans emphasized the imperial traditions as they were represented in the memory of Karl der Grosse.

“Your holiness is sovereign in Rome, but I am Emperor of Rome.”

—to Pope Pius VII, 13 Feb 1806

“I am Charlemagne, the Sword of the Church, and their Emperor [the people of Rome][.]”

—to Cardinal Fesch, 18 Feb 1806¹

Exactly two years earlier in 1804 Napoleon announced that he was Emperor of the French. Throughout that summer the *Moniteur* ran articles which compared Napoleon to Charlemagne as the restorer of the glory of France, the arts of civilization, and the equality of all people.² At once the Emperor had combined the French and German understandings of the memory of Charlemagne. He produced an amalgam of the French, German, and Roman traditions.

How in fact did the French and the Germans incorporate Charlemagne into their national

identities during the Later Middle Ages? How did these two traditions differ? *It is argued here that Charlemagne was for the French monarchy primarily a role model for their kings. But for the Germans Charlemagne was used to integrate the nation, the Roman Empire, and the core of the Holy Roman Empire, Germany.*

Charlemagne is unique in the history of Western political thought because of his sizable presence in the national narratives of both France and Germany during the late medieval era. In each instance this son of Pippin was absorbed into their mutual search for a national identity. The first question concerns the nationality of Charles himself. Many of the Carolingian-based *chansons de geste* naturally portray him as “French,” on the assumption that French and Frankish are synonymous.³ If we assume that the Germans were also Franks, we can accept Charles as French of some kind, even if his first language was probably German. As the Capetians sought to clarify their distinct qualities as the descendants of the (West) Franks, they generally preferred to think of Charlemagne as an ethnic Frank.⁴ That he was an ancestor of the Capetians was a given, even if this assumption required some adjustment of the chronicles.⁵ The early rivalry between the Robertians and the Carolingians was not permitted to interfere with the Carolingian ancestry of the Capetians. Thirteenth-century chroniclers, however, were more interested in the bloodline of the Capetian family than in the “nationality” of the son of Pippin.⁶

The French Tradition

With regard to France, why did Charlemagne become tied to Saint Louis IX (1226–70) more than any other French monarch in the Middle Ages? This connection was likely inevitable, since the idealization of King Louis would naturally be juxtaposed to the most eulogized of all previous rulers after Constantine. Prior to Louis IX the myth of Charlemagne had long been identified with:

- 1) A lost golden age, which might someday return, or at least provide a standard for future leaders. The various biographies of Charlemagne, chronicles, and Frankish annals kept alive this memory of this blissful era of peace and plenty.⁷
- 2) This paradise of yore was also a time of the *Franks*, a folk who were endowed with every virtue.
- 3) There were many vernacular accounts of Charlemagne’s adventures, such as the *Descriptio qualiter*,⁸ the Oxford *chanson de geste*, the Charroux *Privilegium*, *Vita Karoli Magni*,⁹ Pseudo-Turpin,¹⁰ and numerous tales of the king’s adventures in Spain and southern

France, not to mention the Holy Land. The memory of Charlemagne in thirteenth-century France was inescapable. In addition to this vast body of tales about the “French” emperor there were the persistent echoes of the Last Emperor, who will lay down his weapons on Mount Moriah prior to the End-Time. While these esoteric prophecies were more prevalent in Germany, they also circulated in France.¹¹ Although the association of Louis IX with this collection of source material about the wanderings of Charlemagne was not strong, it can be assumed that Louis’s contemporaries made these connections, especially with Charlemagne’s pilgrimages to Jerusalem. In the legends Charles was the prototype crusader and pilgrim.

- 4) Thirteenth-century French chronicles expanded the links between the Capetian ancestry and its “founder” Charlemagne.¹² For the French polemicists who advanced the eminence of Saint-Denis, the royal abbey became a sort of alter-Aachen.¹³ An elaborate series of techniques was devised to cement the bond with the Carolingians and Saint-Denis, with its royal necropolis and mystique of monarchy. It took some chutzpah to make the patron (St. Denis was the patron saint of the realm, while St. Genevieve was the patron of Paris) of the kingdom, Charlemagne, into the protector of the Capetian dynasty. Fanciful genealogies were devised to merge the Capetian line with that of the Carolingians. The ancient Trojans were counted among the Capetian ancestors.¹⁴
- 5) A peculiarity of Capetian myth-making was the absorption of the venerable symbols of the kingdom of the West Franks into the royal heritage. The images of the *fleur-de-lys* and the oriflamme were integrated with the symbols of the Capetian dynasty.¹⁵ Yet, despite the parallels between Louis IX and Charlemagne, the adoption of “Carolingian” symbols of authority was sparse, as the Capetians tried to define their own identity and unique mission in history. Many of Louis’s seals portray him more like Roman Caesars or Staufan emperors (with suggestions of the Carolingian/Ottonian Christ-in-Majesty motif) than the Carolingian types.¹⁶ The use of the traditional title of *rex Francorum* could be ambiguous enough to suggest an imperial self-perception, given that the restriction of the royal title to the “West” Franks had been abandoned centuries earlier. Louis did on occasion adopt the more “nationalistic” *rex Francie*,¹⁷ a residue of the former duchy of *Francia*, and now extended to the entire kingdom of the Franks. The use of *Francia* implies a much smaller version of the original empire under Charlemagne. In the vast literature written during and shortly after the reign of Saint Louis, the direct identification with Charlemagne is not

pronounced.¹⁸ The partisans of Louis show little interest in Charlemagne the saint or in his imperial ambitions. They sometimes portray the French King as the defender of the pope against bad emperors, such as Frederick II.¹⁹ The king might be emperor in his own realm, but the French sources prefer to render *imperator* in the classical sense of “authority” rather than in the sense of territorial dominion. The French, to be sure, often portray Charlemagne as a saint, imbued with virtue, zeal for the faith, and devoted to sacred relics.²⁰ But, although the French had little trouble with the manner of Charlemagne’s canonization (he was declared a saint by an antipope in 1165),²¹ they generally depict Charles’s virtues as secular, a mighty warrior who fights for God and church.²² Louis, as the second Charlemagne, is hardly noticeable in the hagiographical and canonization sources. There was no attempt to make Charlemagne a prototype for the election of the king or the royal succession. There was no “election” in 1226; Philip III succeeded his father Louis by hereditary right in 1270, not by election. There was no French equivalent of the German custom of the seven electors who chose the king of the Romans, afterwards duly crowned at Aachen.²³ Few if any thought of the Twelve Peers of France of the *chansons de geste* as anything but a charming fiction.²⁴ If there were models for Louis’s behavior, according to the hagiographical sources, it would be Solomon, David,²⁵ or Josiah.²⁶

What, then, are the Carolingian virtues which accrue to the Capetian *rex*? They can be reduced to three: dispenser of justice, giver of the law (or, more accurately, affirming existing custom, although in practice this could have the effect of making law), and crusading. In the hagiographical sources for Louis, Charlemagne appears more as the prototype sovereign than as the archetypical Christian king. For the Christian virtues as such, the French authors refer more often to Holy Scripture, saints’ lives, Church Fathers, and more recent Christian authors, such as Bernard of Clairvaux.²⁷ This reticence to associate Charlemagne too closely with the Capetian saint can be seen in the canonization literature and propaganda which emanated from the court of his grandson, Philip IV the Fair.²⁸ One way to partially bypass Charlemagne as a dynastic ancestor would be to return to King Clovis as the founder of the royal line, as the Valois monarchs would often do. Since the Valois had to distinguish themselves from their Capetian predecessors, they often juxtaposed “saint” Clovis to Louis IX as a founder of the French monarchy. Clovis too was made a prototype Christian and ideal ruler. Charles VII even elevated himself to a second Clovis.²⁹ But while the literary references to Charlemagne continued to proliferate in France during 1300–1500, the impact on political thought was minimal. One would have to wait for the French kings Charles V,³⁰ Charles VIII,³¹ Francis I,³² Henry IV,³³ and Louis XIV³⁴ for more explicit attempts to elicit

Charlemagne as an ancestor or dynastic founder. In 1475 Louis XI declared January 28 the feast of Saint Charlemagne, who possessed great virtue and performed saintly deeds. From that day until 1790 when the Revolution abolished it, the Parlement of Paris officially celebrated this feast, although in practice the cult of Saint Charlemagne always remained tepid in France.³⁵ In 1454 a painting of the Crucifixion which included the figures of Charlemagne and Saint Louis was placed in the Great Hall of the royal palace, meant to symbolize the triumph of divine justice. The French higher clergy never recognized the canonization of 1165.³⁶ Interestingly the University of Paris in 1478 requested the *translatio studii*—a contentious issue since the thirteenth century, when the French generally conceded the *translatio imperii* to the Germans in exchange for the transfer of learning to the more civilized French—to be taken from the University of Athens to Paris. Charlemagne in the view of the arts faculty of the University of Paris had translated learning from Rome to Paris. Charlemagne could never quite shake loose from the merry ole soul of the *chansons de geste*.

Charlemagne remained for the French mainly an exemplar for their kings, Capetian and beyond. And, even then, the great Frank was not always a paragon of virtue; he is sometimes portrayed in the *chansons* as erratic and tyrannical, capable of cruelty, as in the *chanson d'Aspremont*³⁷ and the *Huon de Bordeaux*.³⁸ Oddly some of these unflattering images of Charlemagne made their way into German translations in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.³⁹

Thus the association of Saint Louis with Charlemagne during the Capetians' reign was rather casual. There were attempts to claim Charlemagne as a blood ancestor or in some sense ethnic "French" or Frankish. Charlemagne was vaguely seen as a universal monarch and as a conqueror. Contemporary or near contemporary *vitae* portray Louis as the just ruler who maintained the peace, both within and outside the realm. During the period of the hearings of the canonization, 1277–97, the miracles testify to his manner of living. These texts focus on his ascetic behavior and humility. The king was zealous in defending the church and the faith; raised his children in the true religion; distributed alms; lived chastely; attended Mass and liturgical offices frequently; prayed privately; showed compassion to the needy; meted out justice; confessed often; legislated wisely; showed devotion to holy relics; washed the feet of the poor, and fed them at his table; built Sainte-Chapelle; hated oath-taking and blasphemy; wore a hair shirt and performed many bodily penances, including fasting. The canonization documents, divine offices in his name, sermons, *Lives*, and a multitude of anecdotes reveal a model Christian ruler and prototype lay Christian.⁴⁰ The oblique allusions to Charlemagne affirm these Christ-like qualities, with little hint of a "theory" of kingship or empire. There is barely a suggestion of ecclesiastical restraints, although Louis is zealous in protecting the church and its possessions.

Louis's publicists display little interest in importing a prominent imperial concept of the Staufen emperors, that of "honor." The idea of the *honor imperii* permeates the registers of Frederick I, Henry VI, and Frederick II.⁴¹ Some of the canonization texts refer to this notion of honor but they decline to pursue the possibilities of imperial reach for the French king.⁴² Jacob of Lausanne contrasts the honor of the king's earthly rule as a mirror of the honor of his "rule" in the kingdom of heaven. Louis in effect governs as Christ the king on earth, referring to Solomon as his model. This idea of honor, made almost in passing, stands in contrast to the German emphasis on the emperor, who acted as a stand-in for his ancestor Charlemagne, as the embodiment of the *honor imperii* in the aristocratic courts of the Staufen emperors, in particular Frederick Barbarossa.

For the next two centuries after Louis IX his literary image in France was based primarily on the canonization documents, particularly those of Geoffrey of Beaulieu, William of Nangis, William of Chartres, and Yves of Saint Denis, as well as the liturgical tradition.⁴³ Perhaps the royal court during the Hundred Years War did not find the pious Louis an adequate model for the Valois monarchs in wartime. The immensely popular *chansons de geste* which included Charlemagne seemed difficult to integrate into the legacy of the cultic Louis. Besides, Charlemagne was too closely identified with notions of empire and universalism, which seemed extraneous during the country's struggle for survival against the English nemesis. Not coincidentally the memory of Charlemagne began to receive more attention during the times of recovery and expansion of Louis XI, Charles VIII, and Francis I. (Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, saw in Charlemagne, Clovis, and the Trojans the origins of his Order of the Golden Fleece.⁴⁴) Try as they might to transpose Charlemagne into a prototype French *rex*, the emperor was, in the end, just that, an emperor. One might say that for the French the name of the great Charlemagne was tied (prior to the sixteenth century) to the idea of a *national* king. While for the other descendants, the Germans across the Rhine, Charlemagne remained wedded to the notion of a universal *imperator*. Charlemagne was for the Capetians less an emperor than a "king of France."⁴⁵ It might be added parenthetically that well into the fifteenth century (and beyond) the French and the Germans continued to quarrel about the nationality of Charlemagne.

THE GERMAN TRADITION

The German tradition of Charlemagne after 1300 is in some ways similar to the French. In the literature of the Holy Roman Empire [HRE] Karl der Grosse was often portrayed as a national (ethnically German, as imprecise as this designation can be, as well as a speaker of "German," however one describes the language in the Rhineland c. 800); as a model ruler (typified by his

enforcement of good laws and the rendering of sound justice); as “holy” in the sense that he was canonized a saint, anointed by a leading prelate, and practiced Christian virtue; as the protagonist in numerous *chansons de geste*; as in some sense “Roman” since he utilizes Roman law and compares himself to some Roman emperors of old. But these similarities are superficial. The Charlemagne of the French *chansons* was substantially different from the German *imperator* as a latter-day Karl. The point of divergence is that Charlemagne is above all an *emperor* in German political thought. The German emperors during 1300–1500, it is argued here, integrated Charlemagne into their theories of the HRE in ways the polemical writers considered specifically German. The culmination of this synthesis of Charlemagne and German traditions occurred during the reign of Emperor Frederick III (1440–93), after which time the universalist component of the HRE became more prominent.

The received tradition of the process of the incorporation of Charlemagne into German imperial thought in the fifteenth century centers on the Germanization of Charles after the Great Schism. The classic expression of the heritage appears in the works of Robert Folz,⁴⁶ whose interpretations continue to be cited almost without qualification. But the term “Germanization” is vague. It claims too much and too little. Too much, because many German sources in the early Habsburg era do not insist on Charlemagne being an ethnic German, and often give Otto I the Great the honor of being the first truly German emperor. Too little, because there were other elements in the notion of the HRE which gave the *imperium* its unique cast, in particular, the way in which the emperor was elected.

In hindsight it was perhaps inevitable that Germany became the place of extensive writing on political ideas during the later Middle Ages. The amount of tracts on basic political concepts—which might be called the origin of Western “political science”—during 1250–1500, and especially 1300–1360, is large, in contrast to the sparse quantity of political literature in France at the same time. The reason for this big bang of words is not hard to identify:

- 1) There were ambiguities in all three attributes of the HRE and how they related to each other. There was little agreement on even the name of the HRE!⁴⁷ It was called simply the Empire or the Kingdom, or even the HRE of the German nation.
- 2) The constant interaction with the papacy, not to mention the endless discussion about the details of the papal coronation and its implications.
- 3) The relationship between *Germania*⁴⁸ (loosely defined as most of the empire, excluding Burgundy, Austria, and some eastern principalities) and Italy.

- 4) The powers and electoral function of the prince-electors.
- 5) The relationship between the Electors and the other Estates of the empire.
- 6) The Translation of Empire.
- 7) The relationships with France and the Byzantine Empire, always sources of tension.
- 8) The odd amalgam of hereditary and/or elective succession.

Not only were the boundaries of the empire in flux, but so was the connection between the ruler's ancestral lands and the other parts of the *imperium*. After 1300 imperialists relied more on history (mainly by means of chronicles) than on canon law, Roman law, scripture and scriptural exegesis, Church Fathers, theological tracts, and homilies to make their case for the emperor. Hence the almost inevitable high status attributed to the prototype Charlemagne, who was ready-made for any proposal in favor of augmenting imperial *potestas*. Indeed it could be argued that the figure of Charlemagne was the pivot around which late medieval German imperial-papal thought revolved. Our concern here is with the narrow issue of the place of Charlemagne in the attempts to give a "German" stamp to the HRE during the fifteenth century.

Any assessment of the role of Charlemagne in fifteenth-century German political thought must begin with the nature of the sources that the imperialist authors utilize. Writers in the previous century seem to assume that historical *fontes* have legal force, almost like English common law. To bypass the papalist appeals to church councils, canon law, scripture, exegesis, and theology, imperialist polemicists during 1330–60 looked to chronicles—local as well as "world"⁴⁹—to demonstrate how Charlemagne's actions were relevant at the time they were writing. Lupold of Bebenburg constructed a grand theory of imperial power to counter both the Electors and the popes. Of course historical texts, like any texts, could be interpreted in different ways; Lupold's creative reading of the Carolingian chronicles was typical of his time.⁵⁰ Lupold might have been surprised to know that his own writing would be used extensively in the next century as a "historical" source!⁵¹ He was a moderate imperialist who resisted the extreme claims of the Electors—that they were solely responsible for the choice of emperor and his constitutional powers—and the papalists, who insisted that only the papal unction and coronation (and papal approbation) conferred on the emperor-elect his power and even his right to exercise this power. Lupold's approach was to virtually identify the realm of "Germany" with the Reich,⁵² as if the HRE were a normal state just like, say, the *regnum* of France. He cut the Gordian knot of how to reconcile king and emperor by making Charlemagne the originator of *both*. Lupold's controlling

idea is that Charlemagne possessed full imperial authority—in Burgundy and Italy as well as Germany—before he was crowned *imperator* by Pope Leo III in Rome in 800.⁵³ *Germania* was the core (to use the modern parlance of empire-speak) of the HRE, with the “additions” of Burgundy and *Italia*.⁵⁴ (This is an effective approach for polemical purposes, for it permits Lupold to “save” Otto I as the one who “recovered” Burgundy and Italy for the empire as it was during the mythic time of Karl der Grosse; Otto thus keeps his venerable role as the first truly “German” emperor.) Thus Germany was a *bona fide* principality in its own right. But the pope’s coronation is necessary because a) by this act the empire is transferred from the Greeks to the Franks⁵⁵ (who are “German,” but the full translation to the *Germani* would have to wait until Otto I), and b) the *title* of emperor (later, emperor of the Romans) was now bestowed on the *rex Romanorum* (a later usage). Lupold would have Charlemagne the beneficiary (and his descendants) of hereditary succession,⁵⁶ although the function of election would later be assimilated with dynastic right; some combination of hereditary and election was necessary to account for both procedures following the Ottonians.

By the time of Frederick III this notion of full imperial power by virtue of the selection of the German princes at Frankfurt was a given, which effectively precluded the necessity of a papal crowning. Fifteenth-century writers often cited Lupold as a definitive source. Another oft-cited chronicle was that of Sigebert, a monk of Gembloux (1030–1112), whose world history had several continuations by several authors. Perhaps reflecting opinions in his native Brabant, Sigebert vigorously opposed the intervention of Pope Gregory VII, and in response upheld imperial authority. His chronicle was highly regarded in the German late Middle Ages. He places Charlemagne at a turning point in world history, when the empire passed to the Franks, inaugurating a new era of justice and Christian piety. Charles possessed the full imperial *potestas* even before the pope crowned him emperor in 800. With his Carolingian successors, Charles began a new mission for the German *Volk*, which was continued successfully by the Ottonians and the Salians. (The Capetians of course assigned this ongoing imperial mission to their own line of kings.) When the pope anointed Charlemagne, the line of succession began;⁵⁷ when he crowned him, the latter was already *imperator*.⁵⁸ Charlemagne was made emperor by acclamation;⁵⁹ the pope’s coronation simply confirmed Charlemagne’s imperial status when he gave him the title of Caesar and Augustus.⁶⁰ The imperial title of Frederick III, it might be noted, was associated with that of Karolus Magnus.⁶¹

To minimize the constitutional effect of the coronation of 800, the *translatio imperii* was sometimes described as a series of stages. The *Flores Temporum* (1300)⁶² would have a succession of three popes, as would Martin of Troppau.⁶³ Another common approach was to deny any transfer

of empire, attributing the empire of Charlemagne or Otto I as either a direct descendant of ancient Rome or as an empire acquired by just war. Nicholas of Cusa is typical in denying the *translatio*—and indeed denying the authenticity of the Donation of Constantine—to Charlemagne from the Greeks by means of the pontiff. Cusa simply sidesteps the question of transfer by assigning Charlemagne’s temporal power to wars of conquest; after all, the classical *imperator* means “one who rules.” The Romans transferred their power to the emperor but retained their superiority over him; they later made Otto I emperor.⁶⁴

One of the most widely cited authorities in the German later Middle Ages was Godfrey of Viterbo, who wrote extensively at the time of Frederick Barbarossa. Godfrey uses a variety of sources—sometimes fictional—to link the German emperor with Charlemagne and his predecessors, the Roman *imperatores*.⁶⁵ The implication is that Barbarossa possessed complete imperial power prior to the papal coronation. The peculiar belief that the concept of the right of the German princes (eventually fixed at seven Electors, later expanded by the Habsburgs) was a gift of Pope Gregory V was cited by Godfrey of Viterbo, who conveyed it to later centuries.⁶⁶ Imperialists in the fifteenth century did not conceive of this papal grant as a threat to imperial authority. They viewed it as simply the papal confirmation of a pre-existing right (a right which preceded the events of Christmas 800). The important chronicle of Johann (Jacob) of Königshafen (1336–1420)⁶⁷ translated the power of the emperor to Charlemagne, who communicated it to his imperial successors.⁶⁸ There were many other chronicles and vernacular works during 1100–1300 which glorify Karl der Grosse and his connections with the HRE.⁶⁹

A typical chronicler is Heinrich of Herford, who makes Charlemagne the first emperor of the Germans, who bestowed many privileges on his “homeland” and Aachen.⁷⁰ The poet Lohengrin carries on this tradition as the cause of the *translatio imperii* to the Germans.⁷¹ The influence of these earlier chronicles on the fifteenth century can be seen in the famous Nuremburg Chronicle (1493), which illustrates how deeply the Carolingian heritage had penetrated early Habsburg historical writing.⁷² The author, Hartmann Schedel, has Otto I complete the transfer of the empire, begun by Charlemagne (German by birth), to the Germans.⁷³ Charlemagne’s latest successor, Frederick III today, continues to rule the “Germans.” When Frederick III was crowned at Milan and Rome, he brought with him from Nuremburg some of Charlemagne’s possessions: podium, sword, scepter, orb, crown. Later, Maximilian I too was crowned with the diadem of Charlemagne, as designated by the Golden Bull.⁷⁴ Schedel is careful to specify the rank and order of the princes, who are supposed to rule the empire in harmony with the emperor.

Many of these tracts were well known at imperial courts at the time of Sigismund and Frederick III. It goes without saying that many of these pre–1300 works make Charlemagne a German or

Franco-German.⁷⁵ The implication is that Charlemagne translated the empire to the Germans, and that he did so by virtue of his nationality/ethnicity as a German, although the validity of the latter is left ambiguous. The seemingly esoteric issue of ethnicity—the standard evidence given is that he was born in Ingelheim—was not academic, since some German authors felt compelled to counter the claims of Saint Denis, the “French” Charlemagne of the *chansons de geste*, and the Carolingian ancestry advanced by the partisans of Louis IX. It must be emphasized that the fifteenth-century contentious question of Charlemagne’s Germanness had a firm basis in well-known writings, considered authoritative, such as those of Alexander of Roes, Vincent of Beauvais, Sigebert, Martin of Troppau, Godfrey of Viterbo, and Lupold of Bebenburg.

After 1400 the need to integrate the historical Charlemagne intensified because of new challenges to the integrity of the HRE: the emperor’s relationship to the general council, particularly Basel; the internal threat of dissents such as the Hussites in Bohemia; the external danger posed by the Ottoman Turks in the East; the growing demands of the Electors and Estates; the rising power of Austria in the HRE—and the uncertain status of Hungary—and its relation to *Germania*; the justification for the emperor to be the arbiter between pope and council(s). Understandably the imperialist writers sought to strengthen the imperial authority in the HRE. Given the penchant for historical argument at the time, the blessing of Charlemagne would be supportive. The trick was to make Charles a German without magnifying the powers of the princes, who seemed to quarrel endlessly. The resolution lay in making the election of the emperor a specifically “German” ritual, without however diluting his *auctoritas* vis-à-vis the Electors or the Estates or the supreme priest in Rome. The defenders of Frederick III obtained help from an unexpected source: the humanists, given their fascination with geographical places in the classical *quellen*.

A common solution to the problem of what constituted the *quidditas* of the HRE was to designate the German Electors as the defining characteristic of this unique empire.⁷⁶ The authors strive mightily to make this special group the source of imperial power, and the centerpiece of executive, legislative, and judicial authority without sacrificing the emperor’s rights. In the chronicle of Hermann Korner (1365–1438) Charlemagne is a Germanic Frank who transferred the empire to the Franks.⁷⁷ The empire passed to the Germans under Henry I, but Otto I was the first German-speaking emperor, with the same imperial *potestas* as Charlemagne.⁷⁸ Not all the chronicles make Leo III the instrument of the translation of empire to Charlemagne. Some assign this role to Stephen.⁷⁹ It must be noted that the function of Otto I is not diminished by these allusions in the chronicles to Charlemagne as the means of the transfer of imperial power from the Greeks to the Franks or Germans. There was a veritable cult of Otto I in the fifteenth century as

the prototype of the German emperor, who was often seen as the restorer of the Carolingian empire.⁸⁰

One of the literary masterpieces of this genre of attempting to define the HRE in its relation to the Electors is the treatise (1460) of Peter of Andlau (1420–80), which might be compared to the *De iuribus* of Lupold of Bebenburg for its scope and originality. A professor of the two laws at Basel, Peter tried to make the positions of the emperor and the Electors relevant to the era following the Council of Basel; to rally support for a crusade to recover Constantinople; to call for reform of the German church, a major theme in the HRE after 1440; to prod Frederick III, the Electors and the princes, and the new pope, Pius II, to cooperate for the common good. He gives considerable attention to Charlemagne's part in translating the empire from the Greeks to the Germans, while defending the church and the faith.⁸¹ Following a commonly held belief, Charles is portrayed as the patrician who translated the empire to the Germans.⁸² King Charles became emperor in Rome in 800; he established a wide-ranging government of princes and scribes in Germany and Italy.⁸³ He rules the "kingdom of Germany" with his princes.⁸⁴ Peter rejects the suggestion that Pope Leo transferred the empire to the Germans. Charlemagne, who was born at Ingelheim, was after all a German,⁸⁵ who ruled over many other regions which had been parts of the Roman empire. Citing Godfrey of Viterbo, Peter notes that Karl had a Roman mother and a German father.⁸⁶ That the Germans were destined to rule the empire was prophesied by Saint Peter. The exceptional virtues of the German people can be traced to their ancestors, which included the Trojans, who even gave them their language.⁸⁷ The high virtues of the Romans and the Trojans were passed on, by way of Charlemagne's *translatio imperii*, to Frederick Barbarossa and Otto I, to German counts and barons—and to the Habsburgs of today!⁸⁸ Special status in imperial administration goes to the princes of the Palatine, Brunswick, Lotharingia, and Swabia, and the various dignitaries, both ecclesiastical and secular, under them. Thus Charlemagne's translation effectively combines a moral component—the right to rule—and a legal one (the right to elect and to govern for the public welfare). The great Karl stamps the HRE with an indelible mark.

But while the HRE may be a *regnum* like any other kingdom in some sense (as had argued Lupold), it is unique because of the institution of the seven Electors. In a clever *tour de force* Peter minimizes Pope Gregory V's "gift" of this electoral procedure by inserting it in a process which started with Charlemagne himself.⁸⁹ For the institution was simply one part of the gradual translation of the empire to the Germans. Initially there were four elector-princes, which were among other princes, including marquis, counts, barons, and cities. Later Charles IV confirmed this tradition of election in his Golden Bull.⁹⁰ The empire is holy because emperors and princes together swear to defend the church and the faith. Charlemagne was of course not elected emperor

by the Germans, whether Electors or otherwise. (Historians still debate the meaning of “German” in the eighth century.) But when Karl transferred the empire to the Germans he in effect transmitted the right to elect along with it. With his imperial title he united the Germans and the Romans, thereby making possible the later title *imperator Romanorum*.⁹¹ Thus the practice of choosing the *rex Romanorum* at Frankfurt was not an invention of Otto I or Otto III, but part of the historical process in which the empire was given to the Germans. Gregory V’s grant was in fact a mere recognition that the Germans already possessed this right to elect (and then the anointment and crowning at Aachen) their king, a king who thereby held full imperial power. And the seven Electors are not only electors, but representatives of all German princes. The establishment of the Electors is peculiarly German, and cannot be used to select a non-German.⁹²

For Peter, the two coronations in Milan and Rome following the events at Frankfurt and Aachen⁹³ confirm the power bestowed on the emperor by the German princes. On the delicate question of whether the Electors vote as individuals or as a corporate group (*collegio*),⁹⁴ Peter opts for the latter, which he sees as somehow participating in imperial administration. (He probably would have had second thoughts about this suggestion when he passed away in 1480, after which time the Electors posed a greater threat to Frederick’s authority. After 1500 Maximilian I would learn to tame the electoral college.) The intensity of the discussion about the identity and purpose of the Electors and the *Reichstag* is indicated by the literature and artistic depictions after 1450. The intensity of the discussion about the identity and the function of the Electors is evidenced by the literature⁹⁵ and artistic depictions⁹⁶ after 1450.

Thus Charlemagne was the major historical figure who was responsible for translating the HRE to the Germans, and indirectly giving them their uniquely German institutions of election and coronation (at Aachen). For Peter of Andlau, Karl der Grosse was the prototype ruler with a strong centralized authority, while permitting maximum participation of the princes in administering the empire, reforming the church, upholding the Catholic religion, arbitrating disputes within the HRE, and, by implication, organizing a crusade against the infidel. What is important for our purposes here, the German writers often use Charlemagne to connect the HRE to the traditions of the Electors; to translate the empire to the Germans; to shore up central power; to expand territorial boundaries (by diplomacy and marriage in addition to armed force); and to confer privileges on Aachen. Typical is Dietrich of Niem (1340–1418), who, like Lupold, refers to the emperor as “*imperator vel rex Romanorum*.”⁹⁷ The Germans were born warriors who equaled the Romans. It is fitting that the nobles—including the Electors—carry on the Roman and Carolingian traditions to the Germans, who would emulate Charlemagne the German, who was born at Ingelheim.⁹⁸ He anticipated the transferal of the empire to the Saxons under the Ottonians. Charles’s privileges to

Aachen gave a special status to the Saxons in the kingdom of Alemania.⁹⁹ God instituted the principle of princely election of the emperor for the good of the church and the Christian people.¹⁰⁰

Like many writers in the fifteenth century, Peter of Andlau and Dietrich emphasized the need for cooperation between emperor and pope, the general council having declined as an authority. A widespread tendency of the time was to model empire and church on each other, as largely separate administrations of spirituals and temporals. Neoplatonic paradigms could be used to construct arguments in favor of bolstering the central authority of the emperor in the face of challenges from the princes, Hussites, Turks, Hungarians, the principalities in the eastern and western sides of the empire, and the rivalries in Italy. (Not even the Austrians were immune from rebellion, as Frederick III was to discover early in his reign.) Supporters of imperial *auctoritas* sometimes allude to the memory of Charlemagne.

An instance of this memory is the tract (1430s) on imperial and papal power by Antonio Roselli (1380–1466), who attributes the *translatio imperii* to the Germans as an act of Charlemagne.¹⁰¹ Yet this action is closely tied to the papal coronation in 800. Some years later (1500), Jacobus of Middleburg cannot seem to decide between Charlemagne and Otto I as the translator of empire to the Germans.¹⁰² This willingness to acknowledge the validity of both claims was in fact common in fifteenth-century writings. Although Charlemagne was accepted as German, the empire was generally portrayed as being somehow more fully removed to the Germans by the elected Otto I. Thus the elected Frederick III is a true emperor of the “Germans,” a grouping which often seems to suggest all residents of the HRE outside Italy. (Even Frederick III called himself “German.”) There are many other writers in the Quattrocento which make Charlemagne or Otto I or both the efficient cause of the transfer of the *imperium* to the *Theutonici*. There were different opinions about the nationality of Charles and his providential function, and about the significance of his conquests, elections, and coronations. But there could be no doubt as to his decisive historical role in making the *translatio imperii* possible.

There were of course many ways to associate Charlemagne with imperial authority in *Germania*. If one preferred to emphasize the continuity of the Roman Empire, the place of the supreme pontiff could be excluded in this transfer. For those who sought to minimize the church’s involvement in the possession of temporals, it would be more effective rhetorically to have Karl acquire Germany by other means. Nicholas of Cusa insists that Charles in his position as *patrician* acquired the territories of the empire outside his ancestral lands, an idea widespread in the early fifteenth century.¹⁰³ Thus the emperor bestowed temporals on the papacy and not the other way around. Charlemagne received these lands not from the pontiff, but from rightful conquest. As patrician, he was the “father of the pope in temporal matters.”¹⁰⁴ Nicholas portrays the imperial

Electors not as representatives of the German but of the Roman people, who in effect elect the emperor. This notion of the superiority of consent in both church and state is fundamental to Cusa's vision of parallel hierarchies of the temporal and spiritual authorities. Cusa's Charlemagne provides historical precedent for mediating differences between Basel and Rome, and for strengthening imperial government as it strives for church reform, the ecclesiastical union with Constantinople, the mediation of disputes in Europe, and the expulsion of the Turks.

For the humanists at the time of Frederick III the memory of Karl der Grosse as the *rex teutonicorum* Germany was an *idée fixe*.¹⁰⁵ In an unusual composite work which combines a eulogy (with reservations) to Frederick III with a history of Austria, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini makes Charlemagne as king of the Germans the holder of complete imperial authority.¹⁰⁶ Aeneas's discussion of the coronation of Frederick III in 1452—preceded by his crowning as King of the Germans in Aachen and the iron crown of the Lombards in Milan—has sometimes been interpreted as a mockery of the event, which supposedly the humanist presents as an empty ceremony.¹⁰⁷ In point of fact Aeneas describes the papal coronation as the classic “German” event: the crowning of the king at Aachen (as ruler of the *regnum Alemaniae*) transmitted to the full *de iure* imperial power.¹⁰⁸ When the pope anointed and crowned him as *imperator Romanorum* he in effect acknowledged or confirmed the power which the king of the Romans had received since the time of Charlemagne.¹⁰⁹ This perspective becomes clearer when placed in the context of Aeneas's previous treatment of Frederick Barbarossa,¹¹⁰ which seems *prima facie* to be an odd place to begin the history of “Austria.” Modern historians seem to have missed the significance of this apparently casual account of Barbarossa—no Austrian, he—as background to Frederick III; the connection between Fredericks I and III is easily overlooked, given the conventional nature (most of this section is copied from other sources, such as Otto of Freising and John of Viktring) of this part. This complex character of Aeneas's *History*¹¹¹ notwithstanding, Aeneas clearly attempts to associate Frederick III with his prototypes: Frederick I and Charlemagne.

In his treatise on the Roman empire—*On the Origin and Authority of the Roman Empire* (1446)—Aeneas follows a common humanist line by having Charlemagne as “patrician” come to the aid of a beleaguered Rome.¹¹² When the grateful pope crowned him Augustus, the “Roman Empire was translated to the Germans. Passed through various hands, finally, it passed to you, divine Caesar Frederick [III], by legitimate election,”¹¹³ thus conferring supreme power in temporal affairs. The pope did not bestow this power; he merely affirmed the *potestas* Charlemagne already possessed by virtue of being patrician and his just wars. Charlemagne, a “German by birth,”¹¹⁴ is thus the successor of the Roman emperor with full power to maintain peace, arbitrate disputes, establish laws, and administer justice. Aeneas's ideal emperor is the

universal Roman emperor who rules the fourth of Daniel's kingdoms;¹¹⁵ he has no need to consult the German Electors or anybody else.

Aeneas's idealized latter-day Roman empire did not fare well against the quarreling Electors and Estates after 1470. The situation with the Hungarians and the Ottomans worsened as Frederick attempted to establish a balance with the princes. Moving around his capitals of Vienna, Linz, and Graz, he tried to counter the Reichstag of the Estates with the demands of the Electors. The numerous visual portrayals¹¹⁶ of these constitutional arrangements testify to these efforts to establish order, a prerequisite for collecting taxes and raising armies. Charlemagne's uncertain role in these discussions can be seen in the fascination with ancient descriptions of geography, such as Tacitus's *Germania*,¹¹⁷ and the move to Germanize the primitive folklore tradition of Charlemagne as a "wild man."¹¹⁸

It is understandable that writers would romanticize and idealize the great Karl during the difficult reign of Frederick III. Even living and recent emperors were depicted as Charlemagne, often with allusions to the principalities within the empire. While Albrecht Dürer's pictures of Sigismund and Frederick III are justly famous, there were others.

Did Frederick himself attempt to identify with his renowned predecessor? As the sources make clear, he frequently wore the figurative cloak of Charlemagne. He often stopped at Aachen¹¹⁹ and made it a point to extend its privileges and connections to the holy site, including the Marienschrein and its relics.¹²⁰ There are references to Charlemagne in Frederick's registers, beginning early in his reign. When at Frankfurt in June 1442 he refers to the crown of Karl.¹²¹ In his dealings with his rival Louis XI, he summons Charlemagne, a not-so-subtle allusion to Carolingian claims to Burgundy.¹²² Frederick was fond of referring to the Golden Bull as a way of establishing his legitimacy and asserting his preference for dealing with the seven Electors rather than with the larger political bodies such as the Reichstag.¹²³ On the whole, the references are not especially many, given that imperial decrees are brief and specific.¹²⁴ Yet the fact that these references often appear in places where they seem extraneous indicates that the Emperor and his staff determined that they should be there.

What, then, are we to make of the German fondness for the legacy of Charlemagne throughout the fifteenth century? Perhaps there is significance in the very diversity of the responses to the iconic "German" in the varied types of sources. It was as if Karl were summoned to resolve the many ambiguities in the nature and purpose of the HRE. He was called upon to give credence to the three components of this unwieldy political entity: Holy, Roman, Empire. Yet he had to be German and connected somehow to the land area called *Germania*, a word difficult to define at any time in the later Middle Ages. (Modern writers continue to debate its meaning.) But *mutatis*

mutandis the memory of the great Charles had to be integrated into the method by which his successor emperors acquired their powers, in particular the institution of the election of the German *rex* or King of the Romans. The papal coronation of course could not be omitted as a part of the myth of Charlemagne, but it had to be reduced in constitutional significance; it did not confer imperial powers on the emperor-elect. With the growing power of the state in the West following the Hundred Years War, the spirit of Charlemagne would remain, whatever the French might think, on the east bank of the Rhine. Paradoxically Charlemagne could not be *too* German, lest he relinquish his claims to Burgundy, lands to the east, and above all Italy. He must be “imperial” and trans-German, not to mention his authority, at least *de iure*, over the church. Saint Charles had to be at once a defender of the faith and the church, especially the Roman Church, and the supreme head of the church temporals, at least *casualiter*. And for Frederick III, Charlemagne had to be associated with the Habsburgs and their Austrian ancestral territories. Somehow he was obliged to be *both* king and emperor. Unlike France, the ambiguities in the constitutional formation of the HRE virtually ensured much speculation about political ideas. By default, Charlemagne was the only candidate who could be simultaneously a German, a king, and a Roman emperor. No one else in the past, including the prototype Otto I the Great, could make such claims. Charlemagne was the divinely-appointed ruler who indirectly created the imperial system of the Ottonian emperors.

CONCLUSION

And herein lies the historical significance of the role of Charlemagne in the French and German traditions. In Valois France the contingencies caused by the war with England and Burgundy disposed the French to search for role models, who were both military and sacred. There was less need for imperial archetypes, except for the traditional—since the early thirteenth century—emperor in his own realm. Charles the Great was the prototype king, crusader, and pious Christian. He embodied the “French” nation first, the would-be empire second. Charlemagne the hero of the *chanson de geste* survived as the archetypical king of the French.

By contrast, the Germans had a more formidable task: conjure up a model who was simultaneously king and emperor. At the heart of the HRE was a tragic flaw: the undefined, or rather ever-changing, nature of *rex* and *imperator*. In the fourteenth century many imperialist authors realized that the universal emperor must be in the first instance a *bona fide* monarch, similar to a Valois one. Hence the Germans looked to the legendary Karl der Grosse to embody the two aspects, and demonstrate how this union could be effected nowadays, at the time of Frederick III. The imperialist writers who sought to strengthen both the universalist and

particularist sides of the HRE after 1330 were not dabblers in abstract political theory, but practical individuals who wanted immediate remedies to the empire's problems at the time. Thus the different national traditions—particularly the French and the German—were conditioned by the political exigencies of the day. The college textbook cliché that would have Charlemagne the first Holy Roman Emperor may be questionable historically, but the German penchant to idealize him was just that: the originator of the uniquely German phenomenon in central Europe. Late medieval political theorists endeavored to make this literary heritage into workable visions of action. It is fitting that Frederick III's most distinguished protagonist, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, should bear the same name as the founder of ancient Rome. The future pope (Pius II) made Charlemagne the second Aeneas, who integrated the Romans (and the Trojans) with the Germans, and the papal coronations of 800 and 962. Medieval political thought about popes and emperors began with Karl der Grosse. Charlemagne was the first post-Roman emperor of the West; Napoleon was the last.

Endnotes

1. See Masson 1908, 63–89, 126–34.
2. See Morrissey 2003, chapter 7, 250–65; Rowell 2012, 1, 27–31, 59.
3. See Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont 2009, 80–126.
4. See Latowsky 2013, 215–37; Gabriele 2011, 22–33.
5. See Latowsky 2013, 220–36; Van de Kieft 1958; Spiegel 1978.
6. See Stuckey 2006, 164–76 (mostly Philip Augustus and Louis VIII); Spiegel 1971; Brown 1990; Jones 2007, 62–82.
7. See Latowsky 2013, 16; Gabriele 2011, chapter 1.
8. A product of the royal abbey of Saint-Denis or perhaps the court of Philip I, the *Descriptio* (1050) is an excellent example of how Charlemagne's legendary ventures to the East were adapted to Capetian needs. Although the *Descriptio* is a composite of various stories, the relevance here is how the parts were adjusted to the link with Saint-Denis; there is no attempt to make the French king into an "emperor." See Rauschen 1890 (*Descriptio*).

9. Although the *Vita Karoli Magni* (1170–80) was probably compiled in the chancery of Frederick Barbarossa, it was widely used in France. Virtually all of the influential *Descriptio* (1080) is reproduced in the *Vita*. What is pertinent here are the extensive descriptions of Charlemagne (and Constantine) and his journeys to Jerusalem and Constantinople. Thus there were plenty of imperial themes in the legends of Charlemagne which were available to the panegyric writers at the court of Louis IX. See Rauschen 1890, 1–93; Latowsky 2013, 69–91, 189–99; Folz 1950, 214–22; Stuckey 2008.
10. Again, the legends of Charlemagne in the Pseudo-Turpin—which were widely diffused in France, Flanders, and Germany—were virtually ignored by the promoters of the cult of Saint Louis. The Flemish and German courts exploited these legends for their imperial themes. See Folz 1950, 215–25, 223–25, 281–82; Latowsky 2013, 212–13, 238, 247–49; Spiegel 1995. I use the Old French Translation of Walpole 1976 and the edition of Wulff 1879–81. Many of these Old French editions are available by print books on demand from Google Books and elsewhere.
11. While the prophecies of the Last World Emperor were in the courts of the Staufens emperors, the French—except obliquely for Louis VII—showed little interest in them. See Latowsky 2013, 110–26, 141–59; Gabriele 2011, 115–28; Verhelst 1973.
12. See Spiegel 1971, 43–69; Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont 2009, 153–55; Favier 1999, chapter 23, 651–59 (Charlemagne), 659–71 (Capetian ancestry); Folz 1964, 246–53 (Charlemagne and Capetians).
13. See Beaune 1991, chapter 1, 20–69; Jones 2007, 164–69; Hallam 1980, 135, 176–79, 261; Folz 1950, 179–81; Waldman 1990, 191–97; Latowsky 2013, 221–25.
14. The ties with the Trojans continued into the later dynasties of the Valois and the Bourbons. Across the Rhine the Germans did much the same, as can be seen in the multi-faceted genealogies compiled by Godfrey of Viterbo for his patron, Frederick Barbarossa. See Huppert 1965; Potter 1995, 19–29; Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont 2009, 150–53; for the period after Saint Louis, see Beaune 1991, 228–44; Tanner 1993, 97 (Charlemagne as the new Aeneas).
15. For the legacy after Louis see Contamine 1975, 179–244; on the *fleur-de-lys* see Beaune 1991, *chapter 7* (oriflamme on 53–55); Prinnet 1911; Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont

2009, 158–61; Gaposchkin 2008, 233–36.

16. Saint Louis's seals (often larger in size than his predecessor kings') typically present him in the style of Christ-in-Majesty, a characterization passed on by the Carolingians and Ottonians. Louis wears a toga-like garment with a *fleur-de-lys* in both hands, one at the top of a scepter. The inscription reads "*Francorum rex Ludovicus Dei gracia [gratia]*" (*Louis king of the Franks by the grace of God*). But this semi-imperial (and Roman) motif finds little place in contemporary French sources. It should be noted that there are no representations on the seals of divinity or any ecclesiastical intermediary. See Moffit 2007, chapter 16. It is possible that these Ottonian themes were introduced by French iconographers (cf. Sainte-Foi of Conques). Louis's seals may have been influenced by courtiers who wanted to counter the imperial pretensions of Frederick II Hohenstaufen. There is a stained glass window in Saint Louis Cathedral in New Orleans which portrays Louis surrounded by Freemasons, with the Seal of Solomon. The king holds the plans of Sainte-Chapelle by the master mason Pierre de Montereau. Ironically the Masonic Solomon would have fit well with a contemporary image of Louis, given his fondness for the historical Solomon, although the association with the anti-Catholic and cult-bound Freemasons would have been less well received!
17. The new kingdom of "France" (*Francia*) appears even in liturgical texts, as well as coins. See Gaposchkin 2009, 58; note references to David and Solomon. See also Gaposchkin 2008, 25n33: *Ludovicus, Francie rex illustrissimus*. On Louis's *gros tournois* he is simply *rex*. Philip III and Philip IV are also called kings of *Francia*. The commonplace adage, since the time of Innocent III, "the king is emperor in his own realm," can be transposed into the narrower "France": see Jones 2003. Edward III and the subsequent English kings during the Hundred Years War called themselves kings of England and France. After Clovis, "*Francia*" was simply one of several kingdoms which were parceled out among his sons. In time, the term was applied to the region around Paris. Saint Louis in effect applied this mini-regional name to the entire kingdom of the Franks. The point is that Louis showed scant interest in the "imperial" side of his ancestor Charlemagne. The modern Île-de-France is approximately the same geographical area as medieval *Francia*. Parisians today usually call it the "Paris region." Interestingly, modern Italians refer to France as *Francia*.
18. See Beaune 1991, chapter 3; Morrissey 2003, chapter 2; Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont

2009, 164–81; Gaposchkin 2008, chapters 2–4. Charlemagne is virtually absent in the canonization texts. See Gaposchkin 2012, 106–58, especially the *Beatus Ludovicus* (written shortly after 1277). Also see Gaposchkin and Field 2014. Understandably Boniface VIII in his bull *Gloria Laus* (1297) emphasizes Louis’s defense of the faith and the church; Gaposchkin and Field 2014, 40–1, 55–7, 160–72; Gaposchkin 2003. The *Life* of William of Saint-Pathus remains basic to the canonization collections; de Saint-Pathus 1899. I omit Joinville in my considerations since his *Life* of Louis was largely unknown for centuries. Even in Primat’s *Grandes Chroniques*, the Capetian relationship to the Carolingian imperial legacy remained ambiguous. See Jones 2007, 146–64. Understandably, the heritage of Saint Louis remained strong for the Capetians. During the Valois era before Charles VIII, the figure of Louis in the development of a national consciousness was not paramount. So too the memory of Charlemagne in this evolution was never emphasized. See Monfrin 1964–65.

19. See Jones 2007, 62–102.
20. See Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont 2009, 29–58.
21. See Folz 1950, Book 3, chapter 3, 203–25; Folz 1967; Folz 1971.
22. See Gaposchkin 2008, 185–88; Le Goff 1996, 527–28.
23. Actually there was not a consistent procedure of selecting German emperors in the Middle Ages. Emperors would attempt to establish dynasties, and on occasion succeeded for a time. All aspects on the nature of the election and what it signified were sharply debated from the time of Otto I the Great to Frederick III. For his election in 936 Otto is said to have succeeded by hereditary right from his father Henry I, assigning a role of approval to the designated electors (eventually fixed at seven, and later expanded by the Habsburgs). See Widukind of Corvey 1965, 2.3: 25, lines 6–9. Many imperialists insisted that the king of the Romans possessed full imperial powers even before the pope crowned him emperor of the Romans in Rome. The king was crowned no less than three times (Aachen, establishing the link to Charlemagne; Milan or Pavia as king of Italy; Rome as the emperor of the Romans). Unlike France, the German rulers sometimes changed their ancestral power base. After the passing of the Staufen in 1254, Saint Louis’s supporters sometimes cooperated with the popes—who were determined to reduce the German presence in Italy—in influencing the election and even promoting a Capetian challenger

to the imperial title. Louis's claim to "imperial" *potestas* did not derive from the Holy Roman Emperor but from Capetian tradition.

24. See the many collections of these stories, such as Church 1902; Bulfinch 1863.
25. See Gaposchkin 2008, 17, 122–23, 130–32, 232, 236; Gaposchkin 2012, 248–99; Le Goff 1996, 304–12, 458, 478, 525–26, 563, 576.
26. Louis was compared to Josiah in addition to Solomon and David; Le Goff 1996, 257–58, 309–14, 371–72, 374, 576, 690–91; Gaposchkin and Field 2014, 69–73, 126–27, 131–32; Gaposchkin 2008, 111–12, 130. The promoters of Louis's canonization would not have known it—since this is a trend in modern biblical exegesis only since the 1940s—but the historical books of the Hebrew Bible portray Josiah as a second David. It might be added that when a *pope* compares a contemporary king to David or Solomon, the inference is the opposite: that the secular ruler is subservient to the supreme pontiff. Cf. Wood 2003, 160–67.
27. See the sources Gaposchkin cites in her editions and studies of the canonization texts in Gaposchkin 2008; Gaposchkin and Field 2014; and Gaposchkin 2012. See also Folz 1971.
28. See Brown 1980; Brown 1984; Brown 1990. Also Gaposchkin 2002; Jones 2007, 169–78; Hallam 1982; Hallam 1980, 308–13.
29. See Beaune 1991, 77–89, 79 (Charles VII) and Beaune 1977. Also Krynen 1981, 228–41.
30. See Morrissey 2003, 96–7, 139; Beaune 1991, 64–7, 112, 116; Gaborit-Chopin 1977. But Charles V was careful to distance himself from the legacy of Louis IX, who was remembered as the champion of tax relief, except for the nobility. Charles wanted to raise taxes, not lower them! See Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont 2009, 173–81.
31. See Morrissey 2003, 102–08; Gaposchkin 2008, 239; Potter 1995, 33. French kings in the fifteenth century could always conjure up the name of Charlemagne to legitimize military action, including crusades against the Turks. See Gilli 1997, 10, 15–6, 107–11, 119–44, 178–79 (Philolphe and Saint Louis).
32. See Morrissey 2003, 108–10; Gaposchkin 2008, 242n12; Tesseyre 1980; Auzas 1976.
33. Henry IV traced his lineage to Saint Louis; Gaposchkin 2008, 241; Morrissey 2003, 138–

42. He preferred Hercules to Charlemagne as his model. The Bourbon former Huguenot could not appear overly Catholic at first.
34. See Knobler 1996; Neveu 1988; Gaposchkin 2008, 241; Tietz 1983; Morrissey 2003, 156–57, 167–71, 211.
35. See Morrissey 2003, 97; de Mandrot 1894–96, 1: 323. Morrissey in chapter 3 argues convincingly that the French during the reigns of Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Francis I gradually adapted the myth of Charlemagne to visions of a new French empire and a national identity. Morrissey is certainly correct in seeing this process from 1300 to 1600 as slow and uncertain.
36. But allusions to Saint Charlemagne can be found in the fifteenth century. See, e. g., Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires*, 1: 145.
37. See Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont 2009, 132–35.
38. Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont 2009, 136–40.
39. See Folz 1950, 467–74.
40. For the continuity of the ideas of French kingship used by Primat and William of Nangis, see Lamarrigue 1999; Krynen 1993, 385–86 (emphasizes how French kings tried to make their kingdom independent of the HRE); Chazan 1999.
41. The bibliography is immense. See especially Görich 2001 and 2011. Also see Renna 2014.
42. See Gaposchkin and Field 2014, 37, 112, 132; Gaposchkin 2012, 253, 255. Jacob of Lausanne seems unaware of the implications of his use of honor as lordship and as a mirror image of the heavenly kingship as a model for the earthly.
43. See Gaposchkin 2008, chapter 8.
44. See Tanner 1993, 6–7, 57–8, 98, 100, 146–53, 210–12.
45. See Jones 2007, 146–59.
46. In particular Folz 1950, especially Book 5, chapters 1–4, 423–561,
47. See Scales 2012, chapters 3, 4; and Scales 2010; Nonn 1982; Schubert 1979.

48. See Thomas 2000; Müller 1925. The title HRE was first used in 1254. After 1300 “of the German Nation” was occasionally added, and officially adopted in 1452, 1486, and 1509/12, but even then often not employed by the Habsburgs.
49. See Krüger 1976; Grundmann 1969; Johanek 1988; *Flores temporum* 1879, 232, 242–46.
50. Lupold cites a variety of chronicles, such of Godfrey of Viterbo, *Annalista Saxo*, *Historia Francorum*, Frutolf of Michelsberg, Martin of Troppau (Opava), Vincent of Beauvais. In terms of the influence of the Carolingian tradition, his *De iuribus regni et imperii* (1340–41) is the most important. Critical edition in Lupold of Bebenburg 2004. For convenience I cite from Lupold of Bebenburg 2005, with facing German.
51. Lupold’s views on the empire were well known in the fifteenth century, even among humanists. His tract probably influenced Nicholas of Cusa’s *Concordance*. While the influence of the notion of the German king crowned at Aachen as having full imperial powers is the most obvious carry-over to Cusa, there is no modern study, as far as I know, which explores his views on Charlemagne, election, and *Germania*. I intend to pursue this topic in a future study. See Klippel 1954.
52. See Lupold of Bebenburg 2005, chapter 1: 28; 1: 30, 32, 38; 2: 40, 42, 44; 3: 50, 52, 54, 56, 62, 64, 68; 4: 72; 5: 86, 88, 92, 96, 98, 100; 7: 108, 118, 120, 122; 8: 130; 9: 140. For *Germania* in the *De Zelo*, see Lupold of Bebenburg 2004, 414–16, 423, 430–33, 446, 453, 457, 462–63, 467–69, 475, 481, 489, 498, 501–05.
53. Lupold of Bebenburg 2005, especially the Prologue, chapters 1–5, 7, 8, and letter to Archbishop Baldwin of Trier, 14–26.
54. Lupold of Bebenburg 2005, chapters 1, 2, 4, 5.
55. Actually Leo III, according to our author, did not transfer the empire to Charlemagne, for the king of the Franks already held full imperial powers by right of conquest. But now, after the papal coronation in St. Peter’s, he governs his emperor with the title of emperor. It is because of this quasi-compromise that many modern historians classify him among the “moderate” imperialists. As I will discuss below, the function of Charlemagne in the much-debated *translatio imperii* never reached a consensus among imperialists in the late German Middle Ages. Some historians have paid attention to the political circumstances at the time Lupold wrote his tract (1340–41). See Miethke’s excellent introduction to the

MGH edition (Lupold of Bebenburg 2004, 1–148), and the Afterward to C. H. Beck edition (Lupold of Bebenburg 2005, 280–328). See also the classic study by Most 1941, 444–85; Wittneben 1997; Krüger 1971.

56. Lupold of Bebenburg 2005, chapters 3 (52–4), 5, 17 (266–68). Cf. *De Zelo* in Lupold of Bebenburg 2004, chapter 6. In his *Eight Questions on the Power of the Pope* William of Ockham sharply criticized Lupold’s preference for hereditary succession, as opposed to election by the princes, favored by the Englishman (who was at the time residing in or around Munich.) Actually Lupold is not consistent, for he wants it both ways: heredity to undercut the claims of the Declaration of Rhense and the pope, and election to preserve the German character of the empire.
57. See Sigebert de Gembloux 1844, 332–33.
58. Sigebert de Gembloux 1844, 337.
59. Sigebert de Gembloux 1844, 336. Excellent treatment of the evolution of Charlemagne’s role in German history and in Sigebert, Chazan 1991, 217–53, 471–83, 490–94, 505–39. See also Deploige 2014.
60. Sigebert de Gembloux 1844, 336, line 15: Leo crowned Charlemagne Caesar and Augustus; 336, lines 19–21: the Franks seized the crown when the imperial seat became vacant (by Irene). The assembly of Franks and Romans acclaimed Charles emperor; the pope merely affirmed its decision.
61. Sigebert de Gembloux 1844, 404, 411.
62. *Flores temporum* 1879, 236, 242–43.
63. Martin of Troppau (or of Opava, of Poland; d. 1278), *Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum* lists emperors and popes on facing pages, in the dialectical fashion of the day; for Charlemagne, see Martin of Troppau 1872, 427. The message is in the medium, for this juxtaposition of the two world “emperors” magnifies the place of Charlemagne in the continuity of Roman emperors. (This method of listing emperors is a way of implying that the current German emperors are in a line going back to the Roman emperors, as in the *Kaiserchronik*.) It also suggests that the harmony between the two is natural, desirable, and divinely ordained.

64. See Nicholas of Cusa 1996, Book 3, chapters 3, 4; Nicholas of Cusa 1959–68, 337–52. The notion of Translation of Empire was denied by many authors, such as William of Ockham.
65. See Godfrey of Viterbo 1872; *Speculum regnum*, 21: 35, 22: 5, 24: 27 (to show that Frederick I is in the lineage of Charlemagne); *Pantheon*, 107–307 at 124: 30, 125: 5, 139: 40, 145: 5, 150: 35, 197: 45, 200–09, 139: 40, 145: 5, 150: 35, 197: 45, 281: 15, 298–302; *Memoria seculorum* 99: 5, 102: 5, 104: 40, 106: 15; *Gesta* 307: 35–9 (Ytalie rex).
66. Possibly the famous name of our Godfrey got confused with the chronicle of Martin of Troppau, who also alludes to this tradition of Gregory V; Martin of Troppau 1872, 466, lines 15–25. See Godfrey of Viterbo 1872, 256, 287. See Weber 1994. The *Kaiserchronik*—well known in the fifteenth century—implies that Charlemagne’s “brother” Leo III merely confirmed his *de facto* power; Myers 2013, 322–33. See also von den Brincken 1988. It may not be coincidental that Martin’s chronicle was later included in the same MGH SS 22. Further, the link with Godfrey may be the result of his mention of the stall of St. Peter; *Pantheon*, Godfrey of Viterbo 1872, 156, which ended up in the hands of the very archbishops (Trier and Cologne) who would elect the king of the Romans. See Wilks 1965, 80–1; Latowsky 2013, 198–212. The attribution of Gregory V as the occasion of the handing over of the custom of the German Electors of the *Rex Romanorum* was a commonplace in the fifteenth century. See Dietrich von Nieheim 1956, 5.1, 18–19, where the transferal of *electio* is linked to Charlemagne’s *translatio imperii* to the Germans. A typical German response to the Gregory V legacy is that this pope merely gave his consent to an arrangement which was made by Henry II “by common agreement of all the Germans”; this arrangement was in any case the result of “natural and divine law” and not from positive law “nor from any man.” See Nicholas of Cusa 1996, Book 3, chapter 4, 230.
67. See Jacob of Könighafen or Twinger (Strassburg), in Hegel 1870, especially chapters 8, 9. Copies at University of Michigan (Film, List 17, no. 3 (8) and St. Louis University Vatican Film Library (BAV ST Ross. 548). Available online Wikisource. For Jacob, Charlemagne transferred the empire to the Germans, but it was the later Electors (at the time of Gregory V) who made the election “German”; Hegel 1870, 404.
68. See especially Twinger, Hegel 1870, *chapter* 8, 402–03, 422, 465; *chapter* 9, 621–24.

Also Hillenbrand 1982, 449–50, where Johann of Viktring (1275–1347) holds up Charlemagne as a model for Louis of Bavaria to pursue reconciliation with the princes and the church.

69. See Weiland 1877, vol. 5 (contains 5 chronicles) 125, line 5 [125: 5]; 143: 20; 147–52; 154: 10; 164: 5; 167; 180: 5; 188: 30; 189: 30; 201: 20; 202: 5; 205: 5; 227: 10; 229: 1; 270: 20; 274; 279: 5; 286: 5; 300: 35; 357; 398: 120; 420: 1495; 461–64; 472: 1065; 491: 2535; 521: 49851; 534: 6000; 540: 6535; 577–78; 582: 2; 591: 50; 605: 15. Many of these writings are adaptations of French *chansons* and Charlemagne’s wars. There is never a doubt that he was German. See Kienast 1975, 513–27; emphasizes the cross-borrowing and interaction between the French and German traditions of Charlemagne. For a summary of many of these German chronicles down to Maximilian I, see ed. Maschek 1936; Ratkowitsch 2004.
70. Potthast 1859, 45; also 40–45, 54, 77–8; numerous references to Charlemagne as German. Henry (1300–70) often cites Sigebert Gembloux and Godfrey of Viterbo among other historians.
71. See Thomas 1973, 169–72.
72. See the stunning new edition of Schedel 2010, based on the seven ages of the world. On Charlemagne, see 20, 35, 36, 44, 76, 79, 101, 138, 184 (Frederick I), and especially 487, 552.
73. See *Nuremburg Chronicle*, vol. 4, ccxlviiiir. Cf. Emperor Sigismund, 430–32.
74. *Nuremburg Chronicle*, 4: 552. Frederick I was equal to Charlemagne, but he persecuted the church; 184 (the implication is that Frederick III and Max I are greater than Barbarossa). The “sacred electors” share power with the *principes Alemmanie*; 532. Although during the papal coronation of 18 Mar 1452 Frederick, out of humility and respect for the vicar of Christ, agreed to allow him to act as the groom holding the horse’s bridle; 487. Note that Schedel stresses the “German” essence of the HRE, even though Frederick III and Max I are Austrians. Charlemagne is the conduit of the transfer of empire.
75. See Moeglin 2002.

76. The tradition of the origin of political power in the action of the Electors goes back at least to Frederick I. See Renna 2014. This idea was developed by Lupold and others in the fourteenth century, and underlies the Rhense Declaration of 1338 and the Golden Bull of 1356, and even Louis of Bavaria's modification in 1338. See Schubert 1977 and 1975; Becker 1973. The uniquely German nature of the election of the king of the Romans is axiomatic for Lupold, Peter of Andlau, Aeneas Sylvius, Nicholas of Cusa.
77. Schwalm 1895.
78. Folz uses the Leipzig 1723 edition. I cite from the Schwalm 1895 critical edition. I include both page and image numbers (from the online version) for references to Charlemagne and the Germans: 4, image 53 [4/53]; 21/70; 59/108; 137/186: *incipi insuper opus hoc a temporibus Julii (Caesaris), quae ipse primus Romanorum; 534/584 (translation to the Germans); 269/318; 578/627; 532/581 (election of Sigismund in 1435: principes electores sacri imperii seculares et ceteri principes Alemanne ac marchiones); 579/628; 587/636; 591/640.*
79. Such as Jean Hug, *Quadruvium ecclesiae* [compilation of imperial and canon laws], f. 29, 115–16; cited in Folz 1950, 548, 555. See also the later chronicle: Diemer 1909, 1: 58–61. Available online. Gerstenberg (1457–1522) makes Charlemagne a German of the German nation, although he concedes that the pope transferred the empire.
80. See Jank 1979.
81. Müller 1998, Part 1, chapter 13, 138 [I: 13, 138]. Facing Latin and German.
82. Müller 1998, I: 13, 136. See Nicholas of Cusa 1996, III: 3, §§313–33, 223–27.
83. Müller 1998, I: 13, 140–46, *passim*.
84. Müller 1998, I: 13, 144. See Miethke 2007; Hürbin 1897.
85. Müller 1998, I: 13, 144.
86. See Appendix to Müller 1998, I, 317–31.
87. Müller 1998, I: 14, 148–58.
88. Müller 1998, I: 16, 164–68. See Walther 1989. Habsburg polemicists in the fifteenth

century traced this lineage to the Trojans, as did the French and others. Genealogies were concocted to make Charlemagne the ancestor of the Habsburgs. See Hughes 2004; Mutschlechner 2011. See also Tanner 1993.

89. Müller 1998, I: 16, 164–82. Peter gives much attention to the Electors—as well as the other princes of the empire—who are associated with the German *natio*, the German Charlemagne, and the Translation of Empire of the HRE. They function as a sort of papal curia, even if they rarely come to court, or *a fortiori* like the Electors of the Golden Bull, if somewhat idealized. They administer the empire in harmony with their emperor, who can raise armies and collect taxes. Peter envisions the Electors as associates in Frederick III’s central government. Peter did not, of course, foresee that twenty years after he wrote his tract (1460) these very Electors would subvert the emperor’s drive to centralize power. Many at the time bemoaned Frederick’s political weakness. See Nicholas of Cusa 1996, III, chapters 25–39.
90. Müller 1998, I: 16, 168.
91. Müller 1998, II: 1, 170–74.
92. Müller 1998, II: 3, 182–86. Although Frederick III had a strong sense of being Austrian, the designation of being German could be quite elastic.
93. Müller 1998, II: 6, 194–96. On the triple crowning: II: 6, 196–98, 210–12. The fourth coronation (at Arles) was not usually performed, although Frederick would later recover Burgundy (by marriage).
94. Müller 1998, II: 3, 186–94. For historical context see Hoffmann 1982; Heckmann 2002; Schubert 1975.
95. See Wolf 1990; Becker 1973, chapters 1–3; Begert 2010, chapters 4–7; Schubert 1977, 285–338; Kaufmann 1975–76.
96. See Hoffmann 1982, chapters 2–4 (many examples); Ziehen 1962 (examples of *Quaternionen*); Schubert 1993, 50–63; Putzer 1996 and Putzer 1997, 62–72; Cohn 2006, 295–307.
97. See Dietrich von Nieheim 1956, 4, lines 13, 17; 5, lines 3, 19; 7, lines 17, 23.

98. Dietrich von Nieheim 1956, 1, line 13f. For Charlemagne in Dietrich see Heimpel 1932, 222–43, 258–71; influence on Charles IV, 164–69. Cf. *rex et imperator* in Müller 1998, 142. Dietrich’s praise of German military prowess was in fact common in fifteenth-century German imperialist writing. See Scales 2003, 47–52 (Charlemagne); Karl (along with Otto I and Barbarossa) was the imperial model of former military might.
99. See Heimpel 1932, 258–65.
100. See Dietrich von Nieheim 1956, 18, lines 11–17. Typical of German writers, Dietrich notes that Pope Gregory V’s grant of the institution of the seven electors was merely a passive acknowledgment of the divine will.
101. Perticone 1944, 33–4, 189.
102. See Leupen 1980, 235 (Otto I transferred the *imperium* to the Germans), 238 (Peter of Andlau), 239 (Charlemagne the German passed the empire to the Germans; Gregory V created the seven German Electors). Also Coing 1964, 190 (German use of Roman law).
103. See Nicholas of Cusa 1996, III, 3: 223–27; Cusa 1959–68, III, 3: 337–44. Cf. Müller 1998, 136–38. See Folz 1950, 553–54.
104. Cusa 1996, III, 3, 223; Cusa 1959–68, III, 3: 338: “pater papae in temporalibus fuit.”
105. See Borst 1967; Leupen 1980, 238–40; Leitch 2010; Mertens 1992, 34–7; Hirschi 2006; Nederman 1993; Scales 2012, chapter 7, 295–352.
106. *Aeneae Sylvii Piccolomini Historia*, in Pez 1723, 152–54; in many modern reprints on demand, this is the 1723 edition, 4: 3, 637–744, which runs about 222 pages in modern eds. Caution: many of these modern reproductions are of mixed print quality, and even omit pages; they generally lack introductions explaining the edition. The correct name of the work is the *History of Austria*, not *History of Frederick III* as many of these editions are titled. See now the excellent edition of Wagendorfer and Knödler 2009.
107. For the coronations at Aachen and Rome, see *Historia rerum Frederici III imperatoris* in Pez 1723, 153. Some modern authors portray Aeneas as bemused by the events of 1452. Even if he enjoyed the pageantry, he supposedly viewed them as an anachronistic gesture of no constitutional significance. See Toews 1968, 485–87, and Toews 1964, 82–4.

108. See Pez 1723, 152–54; Wagendorfer and Knödler 2009, 607–17; Sarnowsky 2005, 374–78. Aeneas’s *History of Austria* has long fascinated modern historians for its peculiar history of composition and textual transmission. See Montecalvo 2000, chapter 2; Kramer 1931.
109. Sarnowsky 2005, 374: At cum regnum Alamaniae ad imperium pleno iure pertineat, placuit in Aquisgrani. Charlemagne was a “German who had been born and raised in Germany.” His descendants reigned in both Gaul and Germany. “Under Charlemagne, this race [of Germans] earned title to the Roman Empire”; Piccolomini 2014, 185.
110. See Sarnowsky 2005, I, chapters 9–32, 50–136; Wagendorfer and Knödler 2009, 350–95. Aeneas’s insertion of the section on the Staufen, in which was supposed to be a work on the Austrian rebellion at the time of Frederick III, has been discussed by historians since 1872. Whatever Aeneas’s immediate purpose in adding this background—perhaps as a prod to Frederick III to follow his namesake’s example and launch a crusade against the Turks after quelling the rising in Austria—the relevance here is how he depicts Frederick I as an alter-Charlemagne who aggressively crushes dissent within his empire.
111. For the redactional development of the HA, see, in addition to Kramer 1931 and Montecalvo 2000 above, Ilgen 1889; Bayer 1872, 15–49. Aeneas took many of the sections on Barbarossa from Otto of Freising. See Schürmann 1986.
112. Piccolomini 2000, 101; Wolkan 1909, especially 40, 103–58; Kallen 1939.
113. Piccolomini 2000, 101.
114. Piccolomini 2000, 101.
115. Piccolomini 2000, 97–101.
116. In addition to n. 95 above, see Wolf 2005, pt. C, 283–534.
117. See Hirschi 2006.
118. See Leitch 2010.
119. There are by my count about one to five references to Aachen in each of the 29 volumes of the Registers: Koller and Heinig 1982. See Kraus 1993. Privileges to Aachen: vol. 13,

reg. 75 (1454), 66; vol. 15, reg. 155 (1464), 112; vol. 17, reg. 271 (1467), 168.

120. See, e. g., *Regesten Friedrichs III*, vol. 20, ed. Elfie-Marita Eibl (2004), reg. 69 (16 Feb 1453), 82–3 (references to Charlemagne and Golden Bull); at Wiener Neustadt he mentions privileges to Aachen: vol. 17, registers 75 (1454), 155 (1464), 271 (1467); vol. 20, reg. 8, 51–2.
121. Reg. 116, vol. 3, Koller and Heinig 1982, 112. Cf. Reg. 75, 66. Frederick in many of the registers alludes to the emperor Charles IV, who excelled all other emperors in exalting Charlemagne. See vol. 3, 13, 26, 50, 70, 74, 111, 113, 117, 119, 123.
122. See, e. g., *Registers*, vol. 4 (Heinig 1986), reg. 449 (Dec 1474), 240.
123. See, e. g., *Registers* 40, 41, vol. 4, 84–88; vol. 14, reg. 416 (1442); vol. 20, reg. 69, 82–3.
124. Other mentions of Charlemagne: vol. 7, reg. 12, 65, and 166, 539, 591, 679; vol. 4, 86; vol. 19, reg. 198, 110; vol. 20, reg. 8, 51–2; vol. 27, reg. 249, 181–82.

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