

EPISCOPACY AND APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION ACCORDING TO HINCMAR OF REIMS

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HINCMAR, A MONK from the Abbey of St. Denys on the outskirts of Paris, was elected archbishop of Reims in 845 by the bishops of the province meeting at Beauvais.¹ Since the conversion of Clovis (482–511), and more than ever since the Carolingians, with Pepin the Short (751–768) and Charlemagne (768–814), initiated their reforming policy, the Frankish bishops were, for all practical purposes, selected by the king. Hincmar had in fact been known at the court of Louis the Pious (d. 840) since 822, and he was to remain loyal to the cause of Charles the Bald (d. 877) in the King's conflicts with his half brothers. The son of Louis the Pious by a second marriage, Charles was made by his father King of the Western Franks despite the agreement of 817 on the division of the Empire: only the sons of the first queen were to inherit the crown. With the treaty of Strasbourg in 843, Charles's position became, like that of Louis the German (d. 876), King of the Eastern Franks, fairly secure. On the contrary, Lothair (d. 855), whose imperial ambitions had provoked the coalition of his younger brothers, Louis and Charles, found himself on the defensive. Pepin, King of Aquitaine until 833, had died in 838 and his kingdom, never officially recognized, had been given to Charles the Bald.

Beaten militarily at Fontenoy (841) and diplomatically by the Oath of Strasbourg (842), Lothair I was forced to sign the Treaty of Verdun (843), which made permanent the tripartite division of the Frankish Empire. When Lothair died in 855, his part was itself subdivided among his sons. Louis II (d. 875) obtained Italy; Charles, the youngest (d. 863), received Provence and Burgundy; the northern section of the kingdom passed to

¹There are few studies of Hincmar's life and doctrine: H. Schrörs, *Hincmar, Erzbischof von Reims: Sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Freiburg, 1884); J. Devisse, *Hincmar et la loi* (Dakar, 1962). The following books have good pages on Hincmar: Karl Morrison, *The Two Kingdoms: Ecclesiology in Carolingian Political Thought* (Princeton, 1964); *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton, 1969); Emile Amann, *L'Époque carolingienne* (Fliche et Martin, *Histoire de l'église* 6; Paris, 1947); Yves Congar, *L'Écclésiologie du haut moyen âge* (Paris, 1968). On the Trinitarian controversy, see Jean Jolivet, *Godescalc d'Orbais et la Trinité* (Paris, 1958); L. D. Davis, "Hincmar of Rheims as a Theologian of the Trinity," *Traditio* 27 (1971) 455–68. On the popes of the period: Horace Mann, *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages* 3 (2nd ed.; London, 1925). On the councils: Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles* 4 (Paris, 1911).

his second son, Lothair II (d. 869), whose name was to remain immortalized in the Lotharingia (Lorraine, Lothringen) of his successors.

The border between Western Frankland and Lotharingia cut through the Diocese of Reims. Hincmar, himself a subject of Charles the Bald, was therefore thrown by his functions into frequent dealings with the two Lothairs. He was thus forced to become a bishop-diplomat, which, one should recognize, he found congenial to his temper and concerns. With Charles his relations were usually good, even during his disagreement with the kings of Eastern Frankland found him prepared to assume a lationships with the Lothairs were cooler and became, on the occasion of Lothair II's divorce, definitely hostile. His occasional correspondence with the kings of Eastern Frankland found him prepared to assume a "European" role in defense of the Church and of the rights of Charles the Bald. Hincmar's diplomatic involvements induced him to reflect on authority in the *respublica*, as his advice to kings and sons of kings clearly shows.

Hincmar's election to the See of Reims had already earmarked him for special interest in the source, nature, and extent of episcopal authority; for it took place after an interregnum of eight years at Reims. His predecessor, Ebbo, had been deposed on March 4, 835. In 840 he had briefly and illegitimately reoccupied his see. Ejected again from Reims, he was finally "reduced to the lay state" by Pope Sergius II (844-47), and he died in March 851. No sooner had Hincmar been consecrated (May 3, 845) than the legality of his elevation was challenged by Ebbo. Upheld by a synod of Paris in 846, Hincmar received the pallium from Pope Leo IV (847), who thus confirmed the legitimacy of his election.

Yet Hincmar did not leave well enough alone. He proceeded to suspend *a divinis* nine clerics of his diocese whom Ebbo had ordained in 840. His ground for such an action was that Ebbo's occupancy of the see was, at that time, illegal. Although he gained the support of a synod of Soissons on April 22, 853, Hincmar was unable, ten years later, to stop one of these suspended priests, Wulfad, from becoming bishop of Bourges. Wulfad was Charles the Bald's nominee. Prudently, a synod of Soissons in August 866 abstained from judging the case. In 868 Pope Hadrian II adjudicated the matter in favor of Wulfad.

By some strange nemesis, Hincmar spent most of his archiepiscopal life in conflicts with various bishops. Not content with his difficulties with Ebbo, he soon initiated a sharp struggle against one of his own consecrators, Rothad of Soissons (832-69). As the Metropolitan for the Diocese of Soissons, Hincmar contested Rothad's right to suspend one of his priests without consulting the archbishop, and to call a synod in sup-

port of his action. Though the priest was accused of unchastity, a type of behavior which Hincmar was not inclined to condone, the Archbishop of Reims felt that the uncanonical actions of Rothad deserved condemnation. His zeal to intervene may also have been fanned by Rothad's kindness toward Ebbo, whom he had helped and sheltered in his tribulations. In 861 Hincmar deposed Rothad in the required canonical form at a synod held in the cloisters of St. Crispin in Soissons. Rothad, however, made the journey to Rome in 864, armed, it seems, with the recently forged *Collectio Isidori mercatoris*, where papal power was extolled, and which he introduced to Rome. In 865 Nicholas I restored him to his see. Although he had to bow to the inevitable, Hincmar states, in the *Annales Bertiniani*, that the Pope's decision was made *non regulariter, sed potentialiter*.² In other words, ecclesiastical power should not be confused, as it was in this instance by Pope Nicholas, with ecclesiastical law.

The worst fight that Hincmar engaged in was with his own nephew, Hincmar of Laon (bishop in 858, d. 882), whom he himself had educated and consecrated. The conflict was occasioned by Hincmar of Laon's refusal to accept any arbitration in a case brought against himself by some of his clergy, his bold defiance of Charles the Bald who had summoned him to court to explain his behavior, his denial of the Metropolitan's right to interfere, and the excommunication which he fulminated against all those who challenged his episcopal authority in this matter.³ This unfortunate episode ended tragically. The nephew was deposed in 871, in response to Hincmar's strenuous exertions. Although Pope Hadrian had asked for a synodal decision in this affair,⁴ he refused to ratify the deposition, on the ground that, since the Bishop of Laon appealed to Rome during the Synod of Douzy, to Rome the case had to go. He ordered that the Bishop of Laon and an *accusator idoneus* come to Rome for judgment, and he specified that no successor to Hincmar of Laon be elected until Rome closed the case.⁵ However, John VIII, on January 5, 876, ordered another election, without directly endorsing the previous deposition of the unfortunate bishop.⁶ Hincmar of Laon never traveled to Rome. After the death of Charles the Bald (877), however, he addressed a petition to John VIII, who was present at Troyes for the synod

² *Annales Bertiniani* (PL 125, 1222C).

³ The remaining writings of Hincmar of Laon are in PL 124, 979-1072. It is hard to believe all the accusations brought by Hincmar of Reims against his nephew in *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* (PL 126, 279-634).

⁴ See Hincmar, *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* (PL 126, 567-68), and Pope Hadrian's *Epistola 2* (PL 122, 70).

⁵ *Epistola 37* (PL 122, 1314-15). This letter is addressed collectively to the bishops of the Synod of Douzy.

⁶ *Epistola 17* (PL 126, 662).

of 878 and the coronation of Charles's son, Louis the Stammerer (d. 879). Hincmar of Laon was then introduced to the Pope by several bishops. As a result, John VIII rehabilitated him, allowing him to celebrate Mass pontifically and to receive some of the revenues of the See of Laon, already occupied by his successor.⁷

With the Popes—Leo IV (847–55), Benedict III (855–58), Nicholas I (858–67), Hadrian II (867–72), John VIII (872–82)—Hincmar's relations were generally fair. Yet he never himself visited the tombs of the apostles. And he could not obtain papal support each time he felt entitled to it. Nicholas frustrated him in the affair of Rothad, though he took his side against the nomination of Hilduin to the bishopric of Cambrai. Hadrian did not follow him in the matter of Wulfad of Bourges, and was reserved in that of Hincmar of Laon. In turn, Hadrian received from Charles the Bald, in 872, a rather insolent letter, ghostwritten by Hincmar.⁸ In January 876, John VIII aggravated Hincmar considerably by naming Angesis of Sens (871–883) his legate in Gaul and Germany.⁹

These historical details help to see the background and the political and ecclesiastical horizon of Hincmar's theology of the episcopate, which was strongly influenced by the circumstances of his work as archbishop. Intellectually, Hincmar was a canonist rather than a theologian.¹⁰ He never wanted to innovate and was satisfied that his understanding of his function had been sanctioned by the councils and doctors of the past. When the False Decretals appeared on the scene and were used against him by both Rothad and Hincmar of Laon, he was too good a historian of canon law to trust them; yet he was not averse, when they came in handy, to using some of them, in particular the decrees attributed to Anacletus. He never intended anything else than to remain faithful, in the matter of episcopacy as elsewhere, to what had been the constant tradition of the Church.

⁷ *Annales Bertiniani* (PL 125, 1289–91). The Bishop's petition is in PL 124, 1071–72. Hincmar of Laon states that he did not freely attend the Synod of Douzy, having been apprehended on the way and taken to Douzy as a prisoner, that furthermore Hincmar of Reims did not let him plead his case, and finally that, after the Synod, he was incarcerated and, two years later, blinded. To Hincmar of Reims's demand for submission to the sentence of the Synod of Douzy, Hincmar of Laon had retorted: "Qui jubet impossibile, ipse se facit contemptibilem" (PL 124, 1072A).

⁸ In Charles the Bald's correspondence, *Epistola 8* (PL 124, 881–96).

⁹ *Epistola 15* (PL 126, 660).

¹⁰ H. Netzer writes that Hincmar "is a historical theologian who argues only from the authority of the Fathers" (*DTC* 6, 2485). This is an exaggeration, as Hincmar interprets the Fathers' quotations according to his own conceptions. This is clear in his views of apostolic succession. Among other points, his theology of marriage would deserve a detailed examination.

SUCCESSION TO PETER

Hincmar's *Epistola 2*, a letter to Nicholas I, provides a good starting point for an investigation of his conception of episcopacy and apostolic succession. The letter is written chiefly to justify his position in the affair of Rothad of Soissons. It also treats some other questions: the "invasion" of the See of Cambrai by Hilduin; the question of the marriage between Baldwin, Count of Flanders, and Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, widow of Ethelwulf of England (d. 858), to which Charles will not consent.

Hincmar's tirade against Rothad gives him a good opportunity to state his belief in the primacy of the pope. The pope, who is "vicar of the apostles... and supreme pontiff of the catholic and apostolic Church,"¹¹ has pleaded for Baldwin and Judith *ad instar* Christ the Saviour. In another passage, which is less obviously flattering, Hincmar writes: "All of us, older and younger men, know that our churches are subject to the Roman Church, and that we, the bishops, are subject to the Roman pontiff in blessed Peter's primacy; and on account of this we must always obey your apostolic authority, the faith being safeguarded, which has always thrived, and, with God's co-operation, will always flourish in the Church."¹² The insert is, of course, significant: obedience to the primate must be given *salva fide*. But what does this imply? Would a lapse from faith on the part of the Roman pontiff—which is possible though, granted Christ's assistance, unlikely—absolve the bishops from obeying the pontiff? Hincmar's text alludes to, or quotes, Lk 2:51, Hb 12:17, Phil. 2:3, and 1 Cor 11:16 to justify obedience to the Roman pontiff.¹³ These passages do not refer to Peter's place among the apostles, but to obedience to parents and superiors and to peace and concord in the *ecclesia*. Hincmar then informs the Pope that his advice has been transmitted to the King with an explanation of the weight of this papal intercession: "For, as the earth is the Lord's, with its fullness and all who live on it, and His is the kingship, which He gives to whom He wants, likewise He founded His Church on the foundation of the apostolic rock, which both before His passion and after His resurrection He entrusted to Peter and, in him, to his vicars, with special care and by a singular privilege."¹⁴ Accordingly, the texts of Mt 10:40 and 1 K 2:30 apply to those who obey such a mandate of the Roman See and of its pontiff.

¹¹ *Epistola 2* (PL 126, 26C).

¹² *Ibid.* (33A).

¹³ *Ibid.* (33A-B).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* (33B).

One may wonder at the argumentation. Hincmar appeals to the Petrine texts while addressing the King, in order to incite him to agree to the Pope's request. Yet he justifies the bishops' submission to the Pope for the sake of good order and on the pattern of Jesus' obedience to His parents. Clearly, Hincmar is not without hesitancy on the point: he avoids a position that would leave him no way out of a conflict with a pope, should he be caught in one.

Hincmar's correspondence with Hadrian II mentions the Roman primacy. Hincmar is then concerned about Lothair II and his bishops, and already embroiled in the long polemic against his nephew. As Hincmar of Laon accused his uncle of unfaithfulness to the authority of the bishop of Rome, the Metropolitan felt the heat of his situation and put himself awkwardly on the defensive: "I humbly suggest that I have never deviated from the decision of the Apostolic See by reason of contempt (for it)."¹⁵ And again: "I do not separate myself from the solid rock of the unity of the catholic and apostolic Church."¹⁶ Answering his nephew's "calumnies" in the *Schedula* prepared in 870 for the Synod of Douzy,¹⁷ Hincmar piles up epithets which extol the See of Rome: not only is it *mater et magistra*, its pontiff is also "patriarch of patriarchs" and "primate of the primates of all the provinces."¹⁸ We are, Hincmar further says, "sons and disciples of the Apostolic See."¹⁹ Yet, *Epistola* 27 also hints at vague threats. Despite Lothair's open adultery, Hincmar pleads for leniency in Hadrian's dealings with him. For neither Lothair nor the bishops of his kingdom admit the indictment brought against the King. The bishops also invoke the necessity of keeping Lothair as king, for he alone is able to fight the Norman invaders. "And when," Hincmar complains, "we want to suggest to them that the power was given by Christ to St. Peter, the first of the apostles, and in him to his successors, and that the authority to bind and to loose was bestowed on the apostles and, in them, to the bishops, they reply: In that case, defend the kingdom yourselves just with your prayers against the Normans and

¹⁵ *Epistola* 27 (PL 126, 175A).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* (182D).

¹⁷ The Synod of Douzy (871), where Hincmar of Laon was deposed, took place at what is now Douzy-les-Prés (Ardennes). It must not be confused with the Synod which opened on October 22, 860, at a place sometimes called Toucy by the authors. This was a Lotharingian and West Frankish Synod, attended by Charles the Bald. It examined the marriage problems of Count Boso and his unfaithful wife, Ingeltrude. This Synod met at the hamlet of Tusey, near Vaucouleurs (Meuse).

¹⁸ *Schedula seu libellus expostulationis Hincmar adversus Hincmarum Laudunensem episcopum* (PL 126, 609A).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* (610B).

other invaders, and do not ask for our help."²⁰ The Lotharingian bishops are obviously not prepared to be pacifists. They also add a point which aims directly at Hadrian: "Tell the Apostolic Lord [this expression normally designates the pope]: Since the king cannot also be at the same time the bishop, and the pope's predecessors regulated the ecclesiastical order, which pertains to them, not the *respublica*, which pertains to kings, let the pope not order us to have a king who, in our faraway lands, cannot help us against the sudden and frequent attacks of the pagans; and let him not command us, who are Franks, to be slaves. For his predecessors did not impose such a yoke on our predecessors; and we cannot bear it, we who have heard it written in the Sacred Books that we should fight until death for our freedom and our patrimony."²¹

In other words, the Lotharingian bishops want the Pope to confine his ministry to the ecclesiastical order and to leave the *respublica* to the King in whose care it lies. They assert the King's freedom, in the political realm, from interference by the Pope. They appeal to Scripture to justify the liberty of the Franks to fight until death for their freedom and their patrimony. They also go further and remind the present Pope of his predecessors' more restrained attitude. That is, they appeal to an older tradition over and against the present Pope's judgment. As for Hincmar, he cannot be blamed for the position of the Lotharingian bishops, since, as he reminds the Pope, he does not rank higher than other metropolitans, either in personal merit or in virtue of the dignity of his city.²² He also needs to remain on good terms with these bishops and their king, since part of his province and of his diocese lies in Lothair's country.²³ How far he agrees with the bishops' assertion of the King's autonomy he abstains from saying. Were he to continue to uphold the Pope's position, however, he would, as he states frankly, find himself impeded in his duties, being able indeed to "sing at the altar," but without influence on men: "Should I persist in my position, I could sing at the altar of my church, but I would have no influence on events and on men. . . ." ²⁴ Be that as it may, Hincmar leans toward an understanding of episcopal power which the bishops, as reported by himself, had made quite clear: "And if a bishop breaks the law when he excommunicates a Christian, he loses his power to bind; and from no one can he take away eternal life, unless the sins of this person do take it away."²⁵ In the argu-

²⁰ *Epistola 27* (PL 126, 181A).

²¹ *Ibid.* (181B).

²² *Ibid.* (178D-179A).

²³ *Ibid.* (181D).

²⁴ *Ibid.* (183A).

²⁵ *Ibid.* (181D).

ment of Lothair's bishops, this was directed at the Pope. Hincmar's formulation is undoubtedly milder: the power of the keys passed

to the other apostles and to all the churches. . . . But one believes especially Peter, since the "form" of Peter is proposed to all the rectors of the churches. Peter's privilege remains, therefore, wherever sentence is passed with Peter's equity. And neither severity nor leniency is excessive when nothing is bound, nothing loosed, unless what blessed Peter would bind or would loose.²⁶

This passage explicitly refers to Pope Leo I (*ut dicit Leo*). It slightly shortens a longer quotation from Leo which Hincmar uses also in *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* to the same purpose: he wants to show that the Petrine power of the keys has been bestowed on all the bishops.²⁷ Again, Hincmar's exegesis of Mt 16, in *Epistola 30*, follows the same line: "For, as Peter answered for all the apostles who were addressed by Christ, so Christ also talked to the apostles and to all their successors in Peter. This privilege remains with them when they pass sentence with the apostles' equity, as St. Leo and Gregory patently show."²⁸

In other words, the privilege of the keys does not belong only to Peter. All the apostles and all the bishops have received it. It comes to life in the justice of its exercise; outside of this justice it is void. All bishops must follow the image or example of Peter. And Hincmar's involved last sentence in the quotation from *Epistola 27*, which hinges on

²⁶ *Ibid.* (183A-B). The episode of Lothair's divorce helps to see Hincmar's position in perspective. Several Lotharingian synods, after condemning Queen Tetberga to public penance for alleged premarital incest (Aix-la-Chapelle, 860), annulled her marriage to Lothair for impediment of crime and authorized Lothair to marry Waldrade (Aix-la-Chapelle, 863; Metz, 863). Two archbishops, Gunther of Cologne and Theutgand of Treves, traveled to Rome as Lothair's legates to explain the matter to Nicholas I. The Pope, however, was particularly angered by this; for he had intended the Synod of Metz to be widely representative of the episcopate of the three kingdoms of the Franks, and he had himself sent two papal legates to it with the mission of righting the wrong made to the Queen. At a Roman synod of 863, he voided the Synod of Metz: "Ex tunc et nunc et in aeternum iudicamus esse cassatum et cum Ephesino latrocinio reputatum" (*Annales Bertiniani* [PL 125, 1213B]). He also deposed the two Archbishops, threatening excommunication, should they presume to exercise episcopal functions (*ibid.* [1214]). According to Lothair, Gunther of Cologne continued to celebrate Mass until the King forbade him to do so, whereas Theutgand complied with the Roman sentence (*Epistola 1 ad Nicolaum papam* [PL 121, 371-74]). Before leaving Rome, however, the Archbishops "excommunicated" the Pope (*In Nicolaum papam capitula* [PL 121, 377-80]). Gunther apologized to Nicholas' successor, Hadrian II (PL 121, 381-82). In *Annales Bertiniani* Hincmar calls the *capitula* against Pope Nicholas "diabolica et hactenus inaudita" (PL 125, 1217A). His *De divortio Lothari* was composed after the Synod of Aix-la-Chapelle (January 860).

²⁷ *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* (PL 125, 362A-B).

²⁸ *Epistola 31* (PL 126, 227D).

three negatives (neither, nothing, unless), obscurely suggests to the Pope that excess in either direction does not work. To be truly effective, the Petrine privilege must be used according to *justitia*, the fundamental political virtue which is at the basis of all society.

That Hincmar upholds the privileges of the Roman See is a recurring claim of his in his long and painful polemic against his nephew. The point needed to be belabored; for if Hincmar of Reims may be considered a predecessor of "Gallican" thought in his stress on the rights and duties of bishops as holders of the Petrine function, his nephew on the contrary accused him of slighting the universal primacy of the Roman See. Hincmar had to show that his views on the episcopate respected the unique status of the bishop of Rome. The following text is altogether remarkable. It links the Roman primacy, not only to the promise by which Jesus made Peter "the rock of the apostles," and to the universality of Jesus' lordship over all the earth, but also to the outstanding position of Rome in pagan times.

For thousands of years it was already the head of the world, and not only from the time when, as the head receives a prince, one see deserved to receive Peter, the rock of the apostles, to whom the Lord said: "You are Peter, and on this rock," that is, on this firm and steadfast confession of faith, "I will build my Church" (Mt. 16); and: "You in turn must strengthen your brethren" (Lk. 22); and: "If you love me, feed my sheep" (Jn 20), that is, those who are in the whole world, wherever the Catholic Church spreads, which, although she is dispersed through the countries of the earth, is maintained in one flock by unity of faith under Christ, the one shepherd and the prince of shepherds. And it has remained and it perdures . . . as the mother and teacher of all the churches in the whole world.²⁹

The reference to pagan Rome is not insignificant. Hincmar is acquainted with the notion—embodied in the 28th canon of Chalcedon, which Leo I refused to accept—that the dignity of an ecclesiastical see follows the civic importance of the city. This even constitutes one of his arguments against his nephew: Reims already had eleven cities under its wings, when there was not even a bishop at Laon. Furthermore, Laon was so unimportant in pagan times that we find neither its name nor its location among cities.³⁰

In the case of Laon, however, Hincmar pushes the argument further than he would do with Rome. And there is an element here which is obviously missing at Laon: the See of Rome "deserved" to hold the primacy because of Peter's solid faith, which this See has always preserved. According to his uncle, the Bishop of Laon pays only lip service

²⁹ *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* (PL 126, 456B-C).

³⁰ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 334B-D).

to the primacy, for his appeal to it does not follow the canons. As the Archbishop of Reims often states, these were given by the Holy Spirit and the Church in Rome steadfastly adheres to them: "She herself venerates and obeys them."³¹ The sacred canons, which the Bishop of Laon does not respect, have been "approved, as truly made by the Spirit of God, by the first See itself and by all the Catholic Church."³² Hincmar plainly tells his nephew that he lies when he accuses his uncle and Metropolitan of disobeying Pope Nicholas: "For what Pope Nicholas decided about Lothair or about Wulfad I did not contradict, but I took care to obey according to his judgment."³³

MATER ET MAGISTRA

Undoubtedly, Hincmar's championship of the See of Rome and its unique function as *mater et magistra* in the Church is more than a tool in his argumentation against his nephew; it is indeed a keystone of his understanding of the Church's total structure. At the beginning of his long report on the matter of Lothair's divorce, composed after January 860, the principle of the primacy is stated without the polemical edge of his writings against his nephew. It is described as a right to decide matters of faith and piety that have remained doubtful or obscure:

On all doubtful or obscure points pertaining to the nature of the right faith or to the dogmas of piety, one must consult the Holy Roman Church, as mother and teacher, nurse and doctor of all the churches; and its healthful exhortations must be applied especially by those who live in areas where divine grace begat all men in the faith through its preaching, and nourished with Catholic milk those it predestined to eternal life.³⁴

Likewise, in the debate over Gottschalk's predestinarian views, Hincmar forcefully affirms the Roman primacy of doctrine:

We follow what the catholic and apostolic holy Roman Church teaches us: she begat us in the faith, fed us with Catholic milk, prepared us for solid food with her heaven-filled breasts, led us to perfection with her orthodox discipline, commissioned us to teach others with her approbation, and established us with honor in the chair of doctrine, with the benevolence and assistance of the Lord.³⁵

And again, in similar terms:

What the holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, mother of all the churches, teaches can and must suffice for pious, devoted, and Catholic men. For, as a

³¹ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 456C).

³² *Epistola ad Hincmarum Laudunensem* (PL 126, 510A).

³³ *Ibid.* (510A).

³⁴ *De divortio Lothari et Tetbergae* (PL 125, 623A-B).

³⁵ *De praedestinatione dissertatio posterior* (PL 125, 88C).

mother, she begat us to Christ, nourished us with religion, taught us with doctrine; she who, as a firm rock, had received us from Christ in St. Peter, made us doctors; and she formed us to teach others after nourishing us with Catholic milk and leading us to perfection.³⁶

This last quotation concludes a rather long justification of Roman authority which Hincmar hurls at Gottschalk. Here the Archbishop of Reims refers to the death of Peter and Paul (with the help of a spurious decree attributed to Anacletus in the Isidorian False Decretals).³⁷ Yet the heart of his demonstration rests on a parallel between Rome and Jerusalem. The privilege given to Rome does not derive "from a man or through a man, but through the Lord Jesus Christ, like the apostleship of Peter and Paul."³⁸ That is to say, the "sovereignty over all cities,"³⁹ which Rome has received, is an extension of the apostolate of Peter and Paul. It also results from the transfer to Rome of the status and function of Jerusalem in the Old Testament. Jerusalem used to be called the "city of justice and the mother of cities";⁴⁰ of it the Psalmist sang: "Great things are said about you, o city of God" (Ps 86:3). Yet it lost this glory through its nonrecognition of Christ. Where Jerusalem lapsed, Rome, in Peter, affirmed the faith. "Thus she is glorified by the Lord of prophets with the presence of the great Peter, prince of the apostles, to whom the true Son of God . . . said: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church (Mt 16:18).'"⁴¹ Given this origin, the primacy must be patterned on that of Peter. It is a service to the Church, which Paul, referring to himself, called the "care of all the churches": "The holy Roman Church, to which the care of all the churches was committed in blessed Peter, prince of the apostles. . . ."⁴²

In this context Hincmar argues from his claim that Rome has taught the right faith concerning predestination. This horizon blinded him to a question which his parallel between Jerusalem and Rome suggests: Can Rome also lose its primacy, as Jerusalem jettisoned it? Hincmar never argues hypothetically; he states what he considers to be facts; such a question was quite out of the range of his thought.

At any rate, the functions and privileges of the Roman primacy are always set by Hincmar in their proper context in the Church's total communion. He never isolates them from the general apostolicity of the

³⁶ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 214B).

³⁷ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 212D).

³⁸ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 212D).

³⁹ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 212D).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 212D).

⁴¹ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 212B-C).

⁴² *Epistola 30* (PL 126, 190B).

Church and specifically of the episcopate. The pope never stands in isolation, apart from the bishops, yet ready to judge the cases which are appealed to him according to the canons. Rather, he belongs with and among the bishops, who also have received the promises made to Peter; for the promises were Christ's response to Peter's faith. And this faith does not persist in Rome only: it vivifies the entire Church in the succession of the legitimate bishops.

Thus, the Letter to Charles the Bald which introduced the lost *Dissertatio prima de praedestinatione* explains the standard of orthodoxy in the matter of predestination. The Church of Rome is "the mother of all churches,"⁴³ "the summit of the churches,"⁴⁴ the source "from which the stream of religion, of ecclesiastical order, and of canonical jurisdiction springs up."⁴⁵ Hincmar, who admits the authenticity of the Gelasian decree, attributes the canon of the New Testament to Rome's decision. He himself would not receive doctrines that are not conformed "to the divine and authentic Scriptures, the catholic and apostolic Church, the faith of the holy Roman See, and the sense of the orthodox Fathers who presided over the same holy mother the Church, and whom the same apostolic Roman See gave us to be received as the rule. . . ."⁴⁶ Therefore, the church in Rome, mother of all churches, is always in accord with the universal Church. Hincmar associates the two inseparably: "That is true and Catholic which the mother of all the churches and the universal Church have taught."⁴⁷

The principle of orthodoxy is formulated again at the beginning of the second *De praedestinatione*:

This is the injunction of the divine laws and the primitive custom of the former leaders: whenever something new emerges in the Catholic faith or the divine religion, judgment belongs first to a meeting of the bishops. What, according to their opinion, to the authority of the holy Scriptures, and to the doctrine of the orthodox masters, and in keeping with the canonical authority and the decrees of the Roman pontiffs, the vicars of Christ our God and the presidents of the holy Church decree as having to be believed, followed, held, and preached: this must be heartily believed by all for the sake of justice, must be confessed orally for the sake of salvation, must be followed as a vocation, must be held as a crown, and must be preached for our profit.⁴⁸

⁴³ *Epistola ad Carolum regem* (PL 125, 54A).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 54D).

⁴⁵ *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* (PL 126, 421A).

⁴⁶ *Epistola ad Carolum regem* (PL 125, 54A).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 54A).

⁴⁸ *De praedestinatione dissertatio posterior* (PL 125, 65C).

Compared with the previous formula, where the higher place of Rome was stressed, this criterion carefully enshrines the See of Rome within the wider ecclesial context. Yet there is no contradiction between the two points of view. For the "mother of all the churches" may be seen both as the guide of the others and as one among them. Likewise, the epilogue to the *De praedestinatione dissertatio posterior* reaches to eloquence on the oneness of Rome and the whole Church. This epilogue briefly sums up the doctrine which the thirty-seven chapters of the book have detailed minutely. Hincmar starts with the statement that the right predestinarian doctrine has already been settled by episcopal and synodal authority, "safeguarding in all things the privilege of the holy, catholic, and apostolic Roman Church and of the pontiff of this first see in the whole world."⁴⁹ He warns that dissenters are out of harmony with the holy, catholic, and apostolic unity, and outside "the communion of unity."⁵⁰ By the time he writes the second *De praedestinatione* (859–60), Hincmar has already received the blow dealt at his doctrine by the Lotharingian Synod of Valence (855), where a number of notable bishops and theologians—among them the Archbishop of Lyon, Remi, the Bishop of Troyes, Prudence, the celebrated monk Ratramnus of Corbie, and Loup, Abbot of Ferrières—have contradicted him. He has already been surprised by John Scot Eriugena, the most daring theologian of his time, who, in answer to Hincmar's appeal for support, wrote a *De praedestinatione*⁵¹ which differed both from the theology of Gottschalk and from that of Hincmar. The Archbishop, however, undaunted by opposition, perseveres in condemning Gottschalk's double predestination: this, he asserts, contradicting the prima-facie evidence, has already been condemned by the entire Church. Here the communion is, for him, a criterion of orthodoxy. It has a double focus, being a communion in faith and in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

The communion of faith is symbolized by the seamless tunic of the Savior: "For every catholic Church has always held that those who agree in one communion are held together by one dogma, one charity, one consensus. Just as one communion comes from many and returns to many, not by bodily combination but by divine virtue, so unanimity is manifested in all who share in it. This is shown by the Savior's tunic."⁵² The other garments of Jesus, divided into four parts, symbolize the universality of the Church, spread over the four parts of the world, "and

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 418C).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 418C).

⁵¹ PL 122, 355–440.

⁵² *De praedestinatione dissertatio posterior* (PL 125, 418D).

present in all these parts equally, that is, in concord."⁵³ The tunic signifies "the unanimity of all the parts, which are held together by the bonds of charity."⁵⁴ Unanimity results from the grace of God, which, given to all sections of the Church, unites them together in harmony.

The communion of faith is "mystically" celebrated in the Eucharist. Hincmar beautifully depicts this coherence of the members in the body and blood of the Lord. For, he asks, "if communion is not the sign of consensus, what is it which is mystically celebrated to confess the harmony of every church, when we pray God the Father Almighty through our Lord Jesus Christ that the holy, pure sacrifices be accepted and consecrated, that (the Church) be pacified, preserved, united, and ruled over all the earth, and for all those who offer them in unity?"⁵⁵

No one will recognize the Lord at the breaking of the bread "if he does not share in His Body, that is, the Church, whose unity the Apostle extols in the sacrament of the bread (1 Cor 10:17)."⁵⁶ No doubt, obstacles to the recognition of the Savior come from Satan; yet Christ promised that, in the sacrament of the bread, participation in His Body would remove Satan's impediments. The sacrament is received to quench men's hunger and thirst, for it makes them "immortal and incorruptible: it is the very society of the saints, where there will be peace with full and perfect unity."⁵⁷ The sacrament is made with material that has been gathered into unity as bread and wine. Thus many come to unity in the Church, which is itself communion: "For as the mouth and the hands are members of the same body, so ordainers and ordained, priests and people are members of one and the same Church, Catholics with Catholics, or unbelievers with unbelievers."⁵⁸ In this body, however, the *populus* can answer only for its own sins and breaks of communion, whereas the *sacerdos* must account both for himself and for the people.⁵⁹ Thus the oneness and cohesion of the communion, which is inseparably Eucharistic and ecclesial, throws light on the special task and function of the *sacerdotium*. This *sacerdotium*, however, needs some explanation.

EPISCOPAL COMMUNION

The priesthood, for Hincmar, is essentially the episcopate. One could not be clearer on this point than he is. If indeed he associates the Petrine

⁵³ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 418A).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 418A).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 419B).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 419B).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 419C).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 420B).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 420C).

succession with Rome, he also sees it at work in all the churches. Addressing the priests of his diocese, he enjoins them to read his instruction to the people "just after the Apostle, that is, after the Epistle . . . since—would that this be not said in condemnation—we too are apostles of God, that is, legates of God."⁶⁰ The bishop is an "apostle of God."

This is neither a quaint manner of speech nor a gentle way of impressing his own authority on clergy and people. Rather, this belief derives from the very source of the episcopate, which, as Hincmar reminds Louis III of Bavaria (d. 882), son of Louis the German (d. 876), originates in Christ Himself: "Christ, from whom all legitimate episcopate has its beginning."⁶¹ In the bishop the Spirit Himself acts: "The episcopal ministry does not work without the Holy Spirit."⁶² Louis runs, therefore, a great spiritual danger in obstructing the election of bishops: he acts against the Spirit.

Later, in the same letter of remonstrance, he serves notice that no account may be taken, in such a matter, of his own affection for the King. As Hincmar's unfortunate nephew soon discovered, the bishop, as understood by the Metropolitan of Reims, knows no family ties: "Whence, in this episcopal ministry, I recognize with carnal affection neither a blood relation nor a friend close to my soul. . . ."⁶³ This applies equally to all bishops: Hincmar will not relate to them by any other ties than those of the sacred ministry. And this requires, besides ordination, holiness of life and ministry: "And therefore I elect, I acknowledge, I receive no one, unless he has access through the keys of the Church to this episcopal ministry with his life, his mores, his teaching of Catholic science, and unless he knows and does what the sacred ministry requires."⁶⁴ The sacred canons must remain the absolute rule of episcopal behavior. Far from this being only Hincmar's point of view, it is the very doctrine of Christ, the apostles, and the saints in heaven, which he, as "vicar of Christ and successor of the apostles," must uphold:

From heaven, Christ, His holy apostles, and His saints who already reign with Him in heaven proclaim these things. As to us, bishops on earth, sinners though we are, we are also the vicars of Christ and the apostles' successors on earth; we follow them with His strength and ministry, wishing to imitate what we sing about the just man: for the law of his God he fought till death. For he was grounded in solid rock. The rock, the Apostles says, was Christ (1 Cor 10: 14).⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *Epistola 17* (PL 126, 101C).

⁶¹ *Epistola 19* (PL 126, 113A).

⁶² *Ibid.* (PL 126, 113B).

⁶³ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 116B).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 116C).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 117C).

In this context the “Petrine” authority, shared by all bishops, is that of Christ Himself. As Hincmar writes in a short *De officiis episcoporum*, it is “in the apostles and with the apostles” that the bishops “received, not by merit but by divine grace, the power to bind and to loose.”⁶⁶

To ailing Hildebold of Soissons, who had wished to receive absolution from his archbishop, Hincmar as metropolitan willingly grants it, emphasizing that apostolic succession links the episcopate with Christ: absolution is given “by the ecclesiastical power of apostolic authority, which our Lord Jesus Christ gave His disciples and apostles . . . ; and He gave the same power to their successors through the same apostles, whose places we, however unworthy, do hold, not by merit, yet in virtue of the name and reception of our function.”⁶⁷ To Pope Hadrian, as we have already seen, he wrote that the power of binding and loosing given to Peter passed to all the apostles and to all those who preside over the churches: to all of them the Petrine model, *Petri forma*,⁶⁸ is proposed. In an argument against the translation of bishops from one see to another, Hincmar states three principles: the Son of God received the “form of a servant”; the apostles were sent to serve and to teach service to others; then: “The bishops take their place in the Church. It is about them that, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Psalmist prophesied, as though addressing face to face the Church founded through the apostles: Sons were born to you instead of your fathers (Ps 44:17).”⁶⁹

At the beginning of his *opusculum* on King Lothair’s divorce from Queen Tetberga, Hincmar unequivocally acknowledges the Roman primacy; later in the same work he also extols those who, shepherding the Church of God in his time, apply the laws promulgated in the past by “the vicars of Christ and the successors of the apostles”: “And all of us who preside over God’s Church in their stead have stated them [the laws] at this point. . . .”⁷⁰ Thus the bishop follows those who before him upheld the rules of the community, which derive from Christ and the Holy Spirit. The idea formulated in *Epistola 31* that the bishops stand in succession to the apostles like sons to their fathers, appears also to advantage in a letter sent to Louis the German by Hincmar for the bishops of the provinces of Reims and Rouen, whom Hincmar had gathered in synod at Reims in 858. After invading Charles’s territory, Louis was holding an imperial assembly at Quierzy. The letter from the Synod of Reims supports Charles against Louis and invites Louis to

⁶⁶ *De officiis episcoporum* (PL 125, 1090B).

⁶⁷ *Epistola 26* (PL 126, 173A–B).

⁶⁸ *Epistola 27* (PL 126, 183D).

⁶⁹ *Epistola 31* (PL 126, 210C).

⁷⁰ *De divortio Lothari et Tetbergae* (PL 125, 653A).

make peace and to respect the borders between his kingdom and that of his brother. At the same time respectful, courageous, and forceful, the bishops hint that some of the Eastern King's advisers may be sons of the devil. As to themselves, they are sons of the apostles:

Know for certain that Christ, King of kings, conquered, extended, and ruled His kingdom, that is, the Church, with our parents, that is, the apostles; and that the Lord Jesus Christ daily acquires, enlarges, and governs the same Church, His kingdom, through us and with us—be it not said for our condemnation—as it was said by the Lord to the Church through the prophet; Sons were born to you instead of your Fathers, that is: Instead of apostles he created for you bishops who must rule and teach you.⁷¹

Hincmar, therefore, conceives apostolic succession as much more than a juridical formula giving the bishops legitimate authority. It is a spiritual phenomenon by which they dwell in close vicinity to Christ and the Spirit. By this relationship the bishop is spiritually tied both to the universal communion and to a local church. In relation to the universal Church, the bishops will strive to speak with one voice. Indeed, there are not as many pastors as there are bishops. Rather, the bishops, all together, are only one shepherd. The following beautiful text makes this point well:

As all the people of God, redeemed and unified at such a great price, is one flock under one shepherd, and as all the shepherds of this flock must live as one shepherd through unity of faith and unanimity of solicitude under and in the one prince of shepherds, it is necessary for them to be united in such love, coupled in such a community of the Spirit, that they are most willing to share and bear one another's burdens, and that they feel an urgent daily solicitude for all the churches, so that, if one member suffers, all members suffer, if one is pleased, all rejoice. This solicitude in the blessed apostles, and in the blessed apostles' successors, that is, in the rectors of the churches of God, has always made the one flock of the Lord, the one custodian of religion, the one mother Church love with one soul and minister with unanimous devotion.⁷²

In relation to the local church, the bishop must remain in the see to which he has been elected. He is not free to abandon it and to "invade" another one. Once deposed according to the canonical rules, he may no longer attempt to return to his see, from which he has been severed on account of infidelity and misdemeanor. This had been the cause of Hincmar's friction with his deposed predecessor, Ebbo, and of his suspension

⁷¹ *Epistola 1* (PL 126, 25).

⁷² *De coercendo raptu viduarum* (PL 125, 1017-18). This memorandum was addressed to King Carloman in the name of the bishops of "the Gauls and the Germanies." Carloman succeeded his father, Louis of Bavaria, in 876.

of the clerics ordained during Ebbo's short, illegitimate "invasion" of Reims after his deposition. The ties between the bishop and his see are described very graphically by Hincmar in terms of a marriage: his *Epistola 31* applies to the bishop the logia of the New Testament about man and wife. The break between them, manifested by nonresidence, abandonment, ambition that aims at another and more lucrative see, neglect and mistreatment of the diocese by not fulfilling the episcopal duties or by not applying the canons, is an adultery. What is said of divorce between man and wife "should correctly be understood and followed also in the matter of the spiritual union between the bishop and the Church in which he was first ordained."⁷³ "For unless the lawful union of husband and wife were relevant for the mystery of the bishop and the church united to him, the great Council of Chalcedon would not have called widowed the church whose bishop has died."⁷⁴ As the husband has no power over his body, but the wife, likewise the bishop has no right "to abandon his church, that is, his people, and to invade and usurp another."⁷⁵ This would be "spiritual adultery,"⁷⁶ which, Hincmar states, is more sinful than carnal fornication. Even should his "spouse" be sick, that is, should his diocese be persecuted, poor, or otherwise uncomfortable, the bishop must remain faithful to it. Like Paul, he should "preach constantly" instead of running away, even if most of the people in his parts are pagan. For who knows how many of them, being "predestined to life," will eventually believe?⁷⁷ In order to safeguard the spiritual monogamy of the bishop, new legislation has been passed by those Hincmar calls *nos moderni et gallicani episcopi*,⁷⁸ that is, the bishops of Western Frankland.

To his profound view of episcopal communion within a diocese we may attribute Hincmar's untiring zeal in denouncing lukewarm or deficient bishops and in fighting the elevation to the episcopate of men whose integrity or competence he doubts. This also explains his harshness toward his nephew, accused by clerics of Laon who have run to Reims to complain about their bishop. By the same token, we owe to it the urgency and earnestness of Hincmar, whether he writes his *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* in preparation for the Synod of Attigny (June 870) or the *Schedula* for the Synod of Douzy (871).

The communion of the bishop with his people is essential to his task and function. What is the episcopal function? Writing to King Carloman (d. 880), the son of Louis the German, in the name of all the bishops,

⁷³ *Epistola 31* (PL 126, 226C).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 227B-C).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 226B).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 226A).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 226C).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 226A).

Hincmar complains of reports that, in some parts of the kingdom, widows, young girls, and even consecrated virgins have been kidnaped by men who wanted to marry them. Hincmar urges the King to listen "to the established ministers of the kingdom of God, rectors of the Christian people, guardians and protectors of divine religion and ecclesiastical holiness."⁷⁹ These are, then, the tasks of the bishop: to lead the Christian people, to keep and defend religion and holiness.

Bishop and people are, like the mouth and the hands, comembers of one body. An unfaithful bishop makes his people unfaithful; a Catholic bishop makes his people Catholic.⁸⁰ The invader of another episcopal see than his own makes the people of this see fornicate with him.⁸¹ Yet such a close unity never justifies consensus in evil. Communion or consensus does not suffice to excuse wrongdoing. Not one of the faithful or of the bishops can lose his spiritual responsibility by reason of the consensus and communion of the Church. "Even though," Hincmar warns his nephew, "all the priests and the world should agree, damnation is the fruit of their unanimity, and their consensus does not absolve them from sin."⁸² Above all, the bishop must fulfil his task according to justice and in keeping with the canons. In practice, the canons to which Hincmar refers in connection with the episcopal order are primarily those of the Councils of Nicaea (325) and of Sardica (343). In his eyes, these two councils, which he did not confuse, were general councils, though not of the same rank. A general synod has three characteristics: "It is obvious . . . that synods are called universal and general when more bishops than in some of the above-mentioned synods meet, following the command of the Apostolic See and convocation by the emperor."⁸³ That is, a general synod is guaranteed by numbers, imperial sanction, and the authority of the Roman See. Beyond that, a true council meets in the Holy Spirit. This is so even for local synods. Addressing his *Schedula seu libellus expostulationis* against his nephew to the Synod of Douzy, where Hincmar of Laon will be deposed, the Archbishop of Reims expresses the hope that the Holy Spirit will still move the heart of the accused bishop, this Spirit "who blows where He wills and to whose presence your holy gathering witnesses."⁸⁴ Granted this trust that the Spirit presides over and acts through the synods of the Church, no wonder that Hincmar calls the Council of Nicaea "sacred and mystical."

⁷⁹ *De coercendo raptu viduarum* (PL 125, 1018).

⁸⁰ *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* (PL 126, 478A).

⁸¹ *Epistola 31* (PL 126, 226B).

⁸² *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* (PL 126, 478C).

⁸³ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 361A).

⁸⁴ *Schedula seu libellus expostulationis* (PL 126, 567B).

What makes this Council “mystical” is that it was “confirmed by a mystical number of *sacerdotes*,”⁷⁸⁵ namely, the legendary 318 bishops attending the Council. There is, however, a deeper reason for the mystical status of the councils: through them the Spirit expounds mysteries that are reserved to Him. Since mortal men cannot penetrate all the Word of God, “it remains that what we must fathom of the mystery of the divine Word, we should humbly reserve to the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁸⁶

Among general councils a small number, therefore, rank most highly. Hincmar lists Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II, and Constantinople III. As the seventh council he mentions the *pseudosynodus de imaginibus* according to the Greeks, but the Council of Frankfurt as the real one.⁷⁸⁷ Because the council implies the universality of the episcopate together with the unique place of the Roman See, it eloquently embodies the communion of the Church. And what is true of a general council at the universal level applies also, in Hincmar’s view, to a provincial synod in the province. Called by the metropolitan, it is analogous, in the context of the province, to a universal council called by the authority of the Roman pontiff: “Therefore, as universal synods are especially called by the authority of the Apostolic See, so provincial canonical synods are called, in keeping with the decree of the Apostolic See, by metropolitans and provincial primates.”⁷⁸⁸

METROPOLITAN AND BISHOP

This brings us to Hincmar’s profound conviction that, although all bishops are successors of the apostles, nevertheless they are not all equal. The hierarchy within the Church is not new: it existed already in the “Church of the Old People,” as established by Moses. “Today also in the Church, which is called the kingdom of heaven, we read that, like the heavenly hierarchies, the ministers have been established by rank, by the Lord’s institution and apostolic tradition.”⁷⁸⁹ Not only is the Roman privilege to be respected in the whole Church, but the metropolitan privilege also must be honored. This is one of the chief motifs of his polemic against his nephew, who not only did not, in Hincmar’s judgment, properly fulfil his task as Bishop of Laon, but furthermore refused to abide by the archiepiscopal authority of the Metropolitan of Reims, his legitimate superior according to the canons. Thus Hincmar claims over his nephew, besides the moral authority of having been his chief consecrator (a

⁷⁸⁵ *De una et non trina deitate* (PL 125, 505D).

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 504D-505A).

⁷⁸⁷ *Opusculum 55 capitulorum* (PL 126, 359-60).

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 362A).

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 326B-C).

point which, however, weighed little in Hincmar's quarrel with Rothad of Soissons, who had consecrated him), the legal authority of the archbishop over the bishop. As Hincmar understands the Church's structure, each patriarchal see⁹⁰ (Rome, but also, in their respective territories, Alexandria and Antioch, in keeping with canon 6 of Nicaea) has jurisdiction over a number of archiepiscopal or metropolitan sees, which themselves wield authority over several episcopal sees. The metropolitans are elected by the bishops of their province without reference to any higher authority, and they consecrate a bishop to a vacant see also without higher reference. The sign of their authority is the pallium. Hincmar's position is most clear in the following text:

The rights of these metropolitans must be preserved by all means in keeping with the sacred Nicene canons. The metropolitans are often called primates in the sacred canons; at the death of archbishops and metropolitans, they are ordained by the bishops of each Province without having recourse to a higher primate. According to the law of ancient custom, they are usually endowed with the mark of the pallium by the Apostolic See, to which the solicitude and presidency of the churches were assigned in the primacy of St. Peter; at the death of bishops, they can ordain bishops in their province without consulting, or being authorized by, another primate.⁹¹

In other words, a metropolitan is like a small pope. He must indeed rule, like every authority in the Church, according to the previous canons, decrees, and customs. And his authority must be recognized and respected, in keeping with the same canons, by the bishops under him as well as by any new primate who may be appointed over him by the Roman pontiff. Against his nephew's somewhat insolent behavior toward King Charles the Bald⁹² (for which Hincmar of Laon will eventually lose his liberty and his sight), the Archbishop of Reims invokes an African canon: "Lower bishops must bow to higher ones, and not presume to act in anything without consulting them."⁹³ As interpreted by Hincmar in this instance, this leaves little authority or initiative to the bishop. As to primates, Hincmar had his share of concerns about having anyone but the Roman pontiff above himself. In 876, John VIII, apparently prompted by Charles the Bald, was to appoint the Bishop of Sens, Angesis, as his legate in Gaul and Germany.⁹⁴ Hincmar, who was far from pleased at this, took the occasion of the nomination to send the bishops of his prov-

⁹⁰ *Epistola 30* (PL 126, 190C).

⁹¹ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 191A-B).

⁹² *Schedula seu libellus expostulationis* (PL 126, 570-72).

⁹³ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 571D-572A).

⁹⁴ *Epistola 15* (PL 126, 660).

ince a long memorandum on the rights of metropolitans. In it he admits the existence of a "Gallican primate" as well as of "other primates among the Gauls, the Belgians, and the Germans";⁹⁶ he upholds the "order and prerogative of the primacy," which must be respected "among bishops . . . and indeed among priests";⁹⁶ yet he also reminds them that Drogo of Metz (801-55), who received the primacy over Cisalpine Gaul from Pope Sergius II (844-47), never exercised it: "What he desired with envy, he never held in fact; and what he could not obtain in fact, since those who were touched by it did not consent, he bore most patiently, as was proper, lest, creating scandal among his brethren and copriests, he would introduce schism into the holy Church."⁹⁷

This is saying clearly enough that, unlike the ancient rights of metropolitans, these new primacies or legations cannot be imposed; they depend on the consensus of the bishops in the area concerned. After a thirty or forty years' prescription, Drogo's primacy has now lapsed. The peace and quiet of the bishops of Cisalpine Gaul shows that another primacy over Gaul is totally unneeded. Besides, Hincmar deems it an intolerable scandal that any bishop should ambition one at this time: "Should each of us elect to follow in all things, as we ought to, the pastoral rule of blessed Gregory, we would not at all go beyond the limits of our measure, and we would avoid desiring what our own city has not merited."⁹⁸ Here again Hincmar holds together the two horns of the episcopal dilemma: a bishop is made so by his election and consecration, and as such he succeeds the apostles; yet a bishop is also made by his virtues and his devotion to duty. Should he fail here, he ought to be deposed. The higher his place in the firmament of the Church, the more conspicuous will his faults be. A bishop who is one in all the meaning of the term is a humble man who abides by the rules and canons of the Church, for he strives to follow the Spirit who dictated them.

All in all, however, a bishop is, even in his own diocese, a secondary personage. He may be a successor to the apostles; yet he must carefully restrain his usage of authority. In Hincmar's doctrine, the metropolitan wields much more effective authority, since he oversees the bishop, re-

⁹⁶ *Epistola 30* (PL 126, 198B).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 198C).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 206C-D). Drogo was one of Charlemagne's illegitimate sons. Distrusted at first by Louis the Pious, who restricted him to a monastery, he gained the Emperor's confidence and was made bishop of Metz in 823. In 844 Louis decided to investigate the validity of Pope Sergius II's election. Drogo, who headed the *ad hoc* commission, approved the election and was subsequently named primate by Sergius. The only primatial act that Drogo seems to have exercised was the presidency of the Synod of Yutz (near Thionville, Moselle) in October 844.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 207B).

ceives appeals against him, is alone empowered to call a provincial council, and is himself bound to bow to the Roman pontiff only in extraordinary cases. Peter's *sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* weighs also on the metropolitan's shoulder, though at a lower level of universality, and therefore with much more effective possibilities, than on the Roman pontiff. To the Synod of Douzy Hincmar writes that his patience has reached its end in the matter of the Bishop of Laon: "I dare not leave him any longer without correction, for God's sake and for the sake of the metropolitan care entrusted to me, though I am unworthy of it."⁹⁹

Admittedly, Hincmar's views were challenged to his very face: by his nephew himself, by Wulfad, by Rothad. Nor did they correspond exactly to those which prevailed at Rome itself. Popes Nicholas I (858-67) and John VIII (872-82) were both actively engaged in enlarging their authority at the expense of the Byzantine Patriarchate: the former, though with notable failure, in Bulgaria and, with better success but with fateful consequences, at the beginning of the Photius affair; the latter again in relation to Bulgaria and to the later phases of the Photius affair. It was hardly in keeping with their policy to exalt the rights of metropolitans. Hincmar's relations with them, while respectful and at times apologetic, were not particularly warm, even when he had recourse to hyperbolic expressions in praise of the Roman See and pontiff. They were, at times, less than good with Hadrian II, whom—though in the King's name, not in his own: but does this make much of a difference?—he insulted in a letter of 872. In this the King responded to several letters from Pope Hadrian, especially to the one which suspended the decision of the Synod of Douzy against Hincmar of Laon. The Pope is told bluntly: "We even find in those letters that you give us a counsel, if indeed it may be called a counsel, which is contrary to the Lord's example and opposed to the decrees of the fathers, namely, to use your words, that all the dictates of the Apostolic See, over which you preside by the grace of God, must be accepted promptly. Now it has been written to us in your name that we are guilty of perjury, tyranny, and disloyalty and that we are a squanderer of the Church's goods. And this we should accept promptly, embrace with gratitude, and receive with humility?"¹⁰⁰ The Pope is further warned to respect the things that are Caesar's.¹⁰¹ He is reminded that "we, the Kings of the Franks, born of royal blood, have been treated hitherto as lords of the land, not as lieutenants of bishops."¹⁰² He is told that "the privilege of Peter does not persist when judgment is not passed with

⁹⁹ *Schedula seu libellus expostulationis* (PL 126, 567B).

¹⁰⁰ Charles the Bald, *Epistola* 8 (PL 124, 883B).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* (PL 124, 887A).

¹⁰² *Ibid.* (PL 124, 886D).

Peter's equity."¹⁰³ The King finally threatens to go to Rome himself as an *accusator idoneus* of Hincmar of Laon, together with many other witnesses.¹⁰⁴ The last shaft expresses the thought that, if the present letter is not entirely proper, this is the Pope's fault: "If, writing to your most reverend Paternity, I have become unwise beyond what is fitting to us and to you, you yourself have forced me to it."¹⁰⁵

This letter certainly expresses the thought of the Metropolitan of Reims no less than of Charles the Bald.

BISHOP AND PRESBYTER

Be that as it may, we are now led to ask a complementary question: If an ordinary bishop, successor to the apostles though he were, held such a secondary place in his diocese as Hincmar thought, how did the priest—as *presbyter*, not as *sacerdos*, a term which is used chiefly, though not exclusively, for bishops—fare in Hincmar's interpretation of the hierarchy?

The principle of Hincmar's theology of the presbyterate is clearly explained in one of the letters which, toward the end of his life, he wrote on behalf of King Carloman after the deaths of Louis the Stammerer (d. 879), Carloman's father, and of Louis III (d. 882), his brother.¹⁰⁶ Jesus Christ, he states, selected the twelve apostles. Today the bishops "hold their place in the Church." Then he mentions the priests: "He also selected seventy-two others: as no one doubts that the twelve apostles manifested and at the same time anticipated the 'form' of the bishops, so one should know that those seventy-two carried the image of the presbyters, that is, of the priests of the second rank."¹⁰⁷

Thus the *presbyterium* no less than the *sacerdotium* would derive directly from the New Testament as a distinct order. Hincmar, however,

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* (PL 124, 894C).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* (PL 124, 895C).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* (PL 124, 896B). This letter contains a clear allusion to the spurious nature of the canonical collection on which Hincmar of Laon based his appeal to Rome over and above his metropolitan: "Quod ex apostolicae sedis nomine, secundum sanctorum Scripturarum tramitem praedicationemque majorum et orthodoxorum decreta scribitur, sequendum et tenendum non ignoramus, et quod secus a quoquam fuerit compilatum aut confictum, non solum respuendum sed et redarguendum esse cognoscimus" (PL 124, 896A). The False Decretals in question are those of the *Collectio Isidori mercatoris*, used by Hincmar of Laon and Rothad of Soissons against Hincmar and the King, and introduced by Rothad to Rome in 864.

¹⁰⁶ Given the Carolingian practice of dividing the kingdom between the king's sons, and the eventual ambition of some of these to reunify the kingdom, problems of succession were delicate. In this case Angesis of Sens crowned both Louis III and Carloman at Ferrières at the death of Louis the Stammerer. Louis III died in 882, Carloman in 884.

¹⁰⁷ *Ad episcopos regni* (PL 125, 1009D).

is too good a historian not to know that the evidence is not so clear as this would suggest. He admits it: "In the first period of the Church, as witness the apostolic Scriptures, both were called presbyters and bishops, the one term indicating the maturity of wisdom, the other the task of pastoral care. Nonetheless, the Sacred Rules use only one word for their dignity, although their functions are distinct in several points."¹⁰⁸ The New Testament uses the two words, priest and bishop, interchangeably. The former evokes the minister's wisdom, the latter his pastoral task. Both wisdom and shepherding pertain to priests as well as to bishops. Indeed, the *Schedula* for the Synod of Douzy goes as far as to say that priests have also received the Petrine power of the keys:

Although apparently given by the Lord to Peter alone, the power to loose and to bind must be acknowledged, without any doubt, as given also to the other apostles. . . . For, as all were addressed in general, the one Peter answered for all; likewise, what the Lord answered Peter he answered all in Peter. Similarly today, the same function is given the whole Church in the bishops and the priests.¹⁰⁹

Yet the distinction between priests and bishops which is manifest in the Church's traditions and the canons is integrally maintained: presbyters are priests of the second order, whereas bishops are *sacerdotes* in a fuller sense. In a bishop, as Hincmar says with a reference to St. Ambrose, "all the orders are, for he is the first priest (*sacerdos*), that is, the prince of priests, and prophet, and evangelist, and he contains in himself the functions of the other ministers in order to fulfil them in ministering to the faithful."¹¹⁰ Yet priests and bishops belong together: if the holiness of the faithful is the "temple of God," the "priestly ministry" is "the very altar of the Lord."¹¹¹ The *sacerdotes*—without specifying their rank—are "the Church's spiritual physicians," who "can give medicinal and healthful advice concerning the sinful disease secretly confessed to them."¹¹² Hincmar begins a letter to the priests of his diocese with these words: "As I have often told you, *sacerdotes* are spiritual doctors, and the sinners are the sick men."¹¹³

The idea that priests are *in forma discipulorum* is so fundamental to Hincmar's theology that one may speak of a "presbyteral succession" parallel to and, by ordination, dependent on the apostolic succession of bishops. As in the case of the apostles and the bishops, this presbyteral succession is expressed in terms of the *forma* of the seventy-two disci-

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 1009D–1010A).

¹⁰⁹ *Schedula seu libellus expostulationis* (PL 126, 609D).

¹¹⁰ *Ad episcopos regni* (PL 125, 1010B).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* (PL 125, 1020A).

¹¹² *De divortio Lothari et Tetbergae* (PL 125, 653D).

¹¹³ *Epistola 17* (PL 126, 101B).

ples, which must also be the *forma* of the priests. Hincmar exhorts his clergy to study this *forma*: "Let each priest carefully read and understand the forty homilies of Gregory. In order to know that he has been raised to the ecclesiastical ministry according to the 'form' of the seventy-two disciples, let him fully study and learn by heart the sermon of this doctor on the seventy-two disciples whom the Lord sent out to preach."¹¹⁴

What is the full import of this *forma*? The seventy-two disciples are models for priests, as Peter and the apostles are models for bishops. However, there seems to be more to it than imitation, if we take the notion of "promotion according to the form of the disciples" in the full sense of the terms. In the case of the bishops, the *forma* corresponds to their succession; it implies a participation in the apostleship of the Twelve. Likewise, the *forma* to which the priests are promoted implies a corresponding participation in the discipleship of the seventy-two. Priests "succeed" the seventy-two disciples, as bishops "succeed" the apostles. This, admittedly, is not spelled out clearly by Hincmar, yet it is implied in the logic of his thought and in the analogy: apostles-bishops, seventy-two disciples-priests. The *forma* of bishops and of priests may also be related to the *forma servi* which Christ received: it is the very symbol and meaning of their mission.¹¹⁵ In any case, priests stand to the seventy-two disciples as bishops to the apostles. This is so important an element of the Church's structure that Hincmar includes it in a letter he wrote to John VIII on behalf of Charles the Bald in 877: that this *Epistola* 32 reminds the Pope of the proper way to treat trials and appeals of bishops and priests, sufficiently shows that this is no place for adventurous theology.¹¹⁶ Hincmar stands by the theological tradition as firmly as he upholds the canonical tradition.

When there is cause and occasion, Hincmar does not hesitate to remind kings of the respect they owe presbyters. To Louis the German he writes in the synodal letter of 858: "Endeavor to preserve the proper dignity and the due rights of priests, as stated in the canons and ordinances of your grandfather and your father."¹¹⁷ Parallel to this is their duty toward bishops: "Command that bishops enjoy in peace the freedom to travel in their dioceses, to preach, to confirm, and to keep order."¹¹⁸ However, Hincmar's monitions and instructions to his priests consistently impress upon them that a presbyter cannot legitimately function

¹¹⁴ *Capitula presbyteris data anno 852* (PL 125, 774D-775A). Hincmar also argues from this homily in *Ad episcopos regni* (PL 126, 1010D).

¹¹⁵ *Epistola 31* (PL 126, 210C).

¹¹⁶ *Epistola 32* (PL 126, 232A-B).

¹¹⁷ *Epistola 1* (PL 126, 14B).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* (PL 126, 14B).

outside of his bishop's supervision. His synodal and personal instructions, that are at times extremely detailed—as, for instance, his *Epistola 18* on baptism¹¹⁹—leave presbyters no room for initiative. Their task is to apply the rules of Holy Church, the customs and traditions concerning sacraments, the canons that regulate clerical behavior, the instructions received from bishops and synods.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion to this study of episcopacy and apostolic succession, I would suggest that several assumptions of ninth-century theology are relevant to current discussions of ministry.

The notion of collegiality, which came to the fore during the debates of Vatican II on the Church, already lay at the heart of Hincmar's ecclesiology, where it took the form of the conciliarity or synodality of episcopal authority: both at the level of the universal Church and at that of the metropolitan province, the Church functions by virtue of the agreement of its bishops, who gather frequently for the purpose of ascertaining their unanimity. Admittedly, Hincmar does not apply this principle to the interior structure of his diocese, and his priests do not share his episcopal government. Synodality, for him, ties each bishop to his colleagues, first in the ecclesiastical province, then in the kingdom, and, beyond, in the universal Church. It does not affect the internal administration of a diocese.

The collective or corporate government of the Church remains bound by past synodal decisions. The canons represent the continuing guidance of the Church by the Spirit. This does not rule out an eventual updating of the canons. Yet such an *aggiornamento* can be done only in the context of a synod, at the level of universality corresponding to the importance of the canons in question. Although Hincmar often argues from local canons, he nonetheless admits that not all provincial laws apply to the entire Church. What is proper and fitting in Gaul and Germany may not be appropriate in Britain or Italy.

The place of the Church of Rome and of its bishop is clear. The Archbishop of Reims regards the pope as the first bishop, who enjoys the right to hear appeals according to the canons. The pope's interventions in the affairs of the Church at large are themselves regulated by the canons of the Church. Much of Hincmar's quarrels with Rothad or Hincmar of Laon stemmed from his judgment that these bishops' appeal to Rome was uncanonical and therefore invalid. His irritation with Hadrian II had the same cause: Hadrian received appeals that were made against the rules.

¹¹⁹ *Epistola 18* (PL 126, 104–10).

Hincmar's case had considerable merit, since his opponents' canonical innovations were based in part on the False Decretals. Further, Hincmar was acute enough to detect the spurious nature of the *Collectio Isidori mercatoris*. His judgment of this point derived from his thorough knowledge of the authentic law.

The lasting relevance of Hincmar's understanding of the primacy lies in his insistence that the church and the bishop of Rome must be seen in the context of the universal episcopate and of the universal Church. In more modern terms, he placed the pope within the episcopal college. The insistence of Vatican II that the bishop of Rome stands also above the college (*De ecclesia*, no. 23) has no parallel in Hincmar's theory. Nonetheless, when Hadrian II and John VIII differed from his own decisions, Hincmar did in fact bow to papal judgments with which he disagreed because he deemed them opposed to the canons. Thus he did acknowledge an authority of the bishop of Rome which he would not see in any other bishop, and of which he did not formulate the theory.

As seen by Hincmar, all the bishops succeed Peter, in whom and with whom they received the power of the keys. All the priests succeed the seventy-two disciples. Thus succession is a broad concept, which later theology narrowed. It applies to the entire priestly office, all the traditional forms of which derive from the New Testament and from the apostolic order therein depicted. The ambiguity of the New Testament terms *episcopoi* and *presbyteroi* does not escape the Archbishop of Reims. Yet Hincmar carefully relates not only the episcopate (Mt 16: 19) but also the presbyterate to the time of the revelation.

Although modern theology rightly objects to such a reading of the texts, one important point must remain: all priestly ministry in the Church is of apostolic origin. Rather than attempt to relate the three traditional orders of priesthood (episcopate, presbyterate, diaconate) separately to different sections of the New Testament and to distinct offices in the early Church, we ought to see the continuity of the ministry as a totality. In this case the traditional forms of the ministry, taken together, embody the apostolic succession in office. This succession seems more meaningful when the three degrees of ministry are seen as a whole than when considered singly. The same point may be made about the place of the bishop of Rome in the episcopal college: set in the totality of the college, his unique office makes more sense than when defined as the single privilege of one bishop based on specific logia of the New Testament and relating this bishop to the one office of Peter in the primitive community.

The theology of Hincmar leaves a great deal of ambiguity around a point on which he evidently held deep convictions: episcopal authority, including that of the bishop of Rome, depends in its exercise on the

bishop's adherence to what Hincmar calls *justitia* or "Peter's equity." The power of the keys inherited from Peter must be used according to the mind of Peter. This was so important a principle that Hincmar did all he could to unseat bishops he deemed unfaithful to Peter's high standards of ecclesiastical government. In the case of the bishops under his metropolitan jurisdiction, a machinery could be used to remove the dichotomy between the holder of the Petrine authority and the injustice of its exercise: the bishop could be deposed. But no such device was available to unseat a bad pope if the principle was to be honored: *Prima sedes a nemine judicatur*. Hincmar's bitter exchanges with Hadrian II show that with Charles the Bald he chafed under the impossibility of righting a wrong if the pope had authored the wrong. Yet, however much he might have deplored the situation, he endorsed the Gelasian principle and accepted this major exception and illogicality in the structure of authority. Thus, if episcopal power was clear and clearly restricted in most bishops, it was singularly ambiguous in the case of the bishop of the *prima sedes*. The canons did not provide for proper recourse against a pope who acted against them. Hincmar was left with the sole option of threatening the pope with what he knew were empty threats.

Hincmar, who commonly associates ministry in the Church with the power of the keys, insists rather less on the necessary link of ministerial service with the sacramental, especially the Eucharistic, ministry and with the preaching of the Word. These two constitutive elements of the ministerial function are certainly not absent from his concerns. Yet they are secondary, as they follow upon the bishops' endowment with the power of the keys: the duty of providing the faithful with spiritual nourishment in the sacraments and in the Word results from the primary episcopal function of governing and ruling. Such an approach made good sense in the Carolingian society where Hincmar lived, when authority was believed to be entrusted by God to the king or the emperor and to flow from these highest of officers to their subordinates and delegates. This was not a perfect analogy for ecclesiastical authority; for this authority passed from Christ to the bishop by way of the other bishops of the province, who, with the king's leave, proceeded to the election of the new bishop, whose metropolitan normally consecrated him. There was no intervention, as in more recent times, by the supreme pontiff save, in extraordinary cases, by way of exception. Yet the analogy properly applied to the kind of authority that was received: it was the authority to rule. Within the Church, of course, ruling entailed making the sacraments available, preaching the Christian message, exhorting to live according to the gospel. Yet the focus of ministerial authority on the power of the keys enjoyed such a predominant position that it still prevailed in most of the

ordinals devised by the Reformers in the sixteenth century. I should think, however, that it would be more fruitful today to reverse the proportion: in this case the ministerial function pertains primarily to the sacraments and to the Word, whereas ruling and government, symbolized by the power of the keys, are implied in, and consequential to, the sacramental and preaching functions.

But does not the power of the keys convey authority to forgive sins rather than to govern? In a corporate understanding of forgiveness these two tasks coalesce, since forgiveness means in the first place reconciliation with the Church. This was certainly the understanding of penance in the ninth century. Despite the spread of private confession, forgiveness was not yet conceived as a direct reconciliation with God of the Christian who repents his sin. It rather restored the sinner within the community of salvation.

This brings me to the last point. The chief focus of Hincmar's theology may be identified: it is his concern for the Church as the community of salvation, in which God brings to Himself not a collection of individuals but the collectivity of a people. For this reason, among others, Hincmar rejected Gottschalk's double predestination: the reprobate cannot be reprobate as long as they are in the Church here below, where they still belong to the community of salvation. For the same reason, Hincmar was very much aware of the national identity of the church of the Franks, although he carefully avoided tying it too closely with the Frankish Kingdoms, whose borders changed at the death of each king and at the ensuing succession struggle. Much more than some others, like the Lotharingian bishops under Lothair II, however, he asserted the universal nature of the Church. Only one Church exists throughout the world, adopting national characteristics in the various lands with whose people it is identified. Thus the one Church has room for both universal unity and national cultures.

In our time apostolic succession, priesthood, universality, and national identity in the Church are in question; collegiality tries to find modern and efficient forms; and the ecumenical problem suggests the possibility of a unity of ministry within the differing forms it takes in the various Christian communities. A study of the questions about ministry that were brought up in the past may help us to find the right balance between tradition and innovation. However inadequate they may be, the solutions and answers that were found formerly may point to better solutions tomorrow.