I. THE ROMANO-GERMANIC WORLD AND THE PREFIGURATION OF THE CHRISTIAN-FEUDAL ORDER

Posted on 29/05/2026 by Redacción

Fecha:1967

Throughout the imperial period, the border of the West Roman area had frequently been crossed by Germanic groups abandoning regions they were settled in to work their way into the Empire and participate in its life in one way or another. The name of Rome certainly exerted a strong magnetism over the peoples who had reached its boundaries and was embellished by a secular prestige which confused its ambit with that of the political universe. But it was also indubitably an area of such vigorous economic development that emigrant groups could be certain of finding uncommon prospects there. They therefore worked their way into it, openly or surreptitiously, to perform a variety of functions, confident of improving their lot in life and of gaining a higher standard of living than they had enjoyed in their places of origin.

To some extent, the slow penetration of Germanic groups influenced the life of the Empire. But when, in the fifth century, under substantially different circumstances, armed Germanic bands pounced on the imperial territory in order to seize control, the invaders' role became radically different, as did the consequences of the facts they accomplished.

The invasions of the fifth century were certainly no 'catastrophe', as used to be claimed, for the Empire was no longer the flourishing world of the days of the Antonines, nor was the invaders' purpose its systematic destruction. On the contrary, they moved in to take possession of what they admired and wished to preserve for their pleasure. Which was precisely why the consequences of the invasion were decisive: they involved the substitution of one political power for another.

Certainly, the new political power would, little by little, bring about a substantial change in the imperial order, as it imposed its unique way of thinking on all aspects of life. But it affected the general situation right from the outset, not only because it interrupted the process of internal adjustment that had been taking place across the Empire since the third century, but because, de facto, it created situations that became definite.

Firstly, new national groups were incorporated into Roman society; those groups would ultimately affect the ethnic make-up of the West Roman area, but before that, they had already upset every aspect of the social order, bringing about not only the transfer of political power but that of landed property as well, with the subsequent readjustment of the reciprocal situation of the society's different groups. Secondly, new political entities – the Romano-Germanic kingdoms – were formed which instantly abandoned the Empire's unitarian objectives and very soon registered distinct and even conflicting interests that would be served by different politics with a succession of conflicts and repeated readjustment processes. And finally, religious groups – Roman Catholics, Arians and pagans – clashed in violent conflicts in which new racial and political trends were interwoven with

purely religious ones.

All this meant that the process that started up then, which was even being channelled in certain directions that worked their way into imperial life, would carve out paths of its own. One might say that, when it broke out, the crisis in the Empire was renewed and what had been a general crisis of consumption became a veritable paroxysm on account of the vigour of the new social and cultural forces that took charge of the world in crisis. A certain continuity of style in the decline of Roman imperial culture was still noticeable until the time of the invasions; but it disappeared with them, and a period of unusual chaotic creative force began, in which creation co-existed with the annihilation or salvation of certain elements of tradition.

The imperial political order had suffered terrible upheavals since the days of the Severans; such strange disturbances as the pronounced deviation in the forms of political power towards the *dominatus* since the days of Diocletian, and Postumus's and Zenobia's revealing attempts at provincial secession, had been manifested at its heart. The Empire's socio-economic structure and cultural ambiance had certainly witnessed radical disruption in the two centuries preceding the Germanic invasions. But the physiognomy of the Roman world prior to the death of Theodosius the Great showed the recovery of a degree of inner equilibrium that ensured for it a very different fate than the one it had as a consequence of the mobilization of the Germanic bands. That equilibrium lay fundamentally in the curious adaptation between Romanity and Christianity that had come about.

This adaptation was visible in all walks of life. At the religious and intellectual levels, it combined the neo-Platonic elements of the classical tradition with Christian doctrine and took advantage of the marked tendency to accept the belief in salvation, now also being expressed in the West Roman area, especially after the Severan period; and at the social level, it eventually led to a notion of state saturated with the principles of the Christian religion – made the official religion of the Empire by Theodosius in 380 – a notion that acquired precise features by the time of Saint Ambrose.

By that time, the forms of mentality characteristic of traditional Romanity had already collapsed, and Saint Jerome could laugh at the love of dignities, devotion to the *res publica* and the vain aspiration to glory still shown by some Romans. But these had been replaced by other forms, hybridised by the pronounced influence of Christianity, whose currency was growing so vigorously that Saint Jerome and Saint Augustine were able to believe it was their own world that was in danger of collapsing when the barbarians violated the Roman borders, and they bemoaned the lot of their cities, which had fallen into the hands of countless extremely ferocious peoples. 'There is between the Roman and barbarian worlds the same distance as there is between four-footed and two-footed creatures, or between the dumb brute and the man endowed with the gift of speech,' claimed the poet

Prudentius. Such hybridised mentalities would have found it difficult to fuel the forces required to preserve the imperial world in the state and situation it found itself in at the start of the fifth century; the crisis of the Romano-Christian world was undoubtedly inevitable; but its course seemed to have been marked out by the phenomenon of the adaptation between Romanity and Christianity, which was by that time almost complete. This course was profoundly altered by the invasion of the Germanic peoples.

The fate of the Eastern Roman Empire may perhaps help to understand the processes involved in this marriage: a march towards a kind of theocracy, disturbed in reality by a thousand accidents but taken up again and again by the curious intermeshing of the spheres of God and Caesar. The situation in the Western Empire was very different. In the field of cultural and social relations, it seemed as if things were returning to the days before Constantine, as if the Church's long and sustained effort to subject power to its precepts were being wasted, not only in practice but in terms of the principles themselves and the theory of justification of the state through the service of God, which, not long before, Saint Augustine took to be almost triumphant. The religious controversies driven by Arianism, which had been made strong by the faith of the Goths, resurfaced, as did paganism, all the more forcefully now that it was upheld by peoples of naive and superstitious faith who were strangers to any theological experience. And beneath the unusual de facto situations arising in the field of social reality, other no less strange and unusual situations began to be drawn at the cultural level through the juxtaposition of sundry ideas and beliefs, whose bearers were, in turn, juxtaposed in a complex mosaic.

These were the conditions that, from then on, characterised life in the West Roman area, which, by this stage, had transmuted into the Romano-Germanic Area. There the groups that attained situations of privilege by force strove to consolidate an order that did nothing but enshrine a de facto situation. Indeed, de facto situations in the social and cultural orders characterised the centuries between the start of the invasions and the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire. While the different ethnic and social groups – in various combinations – sought to accommodate each other through a constant struggle for power, wealth and privilege, different currents of ideas and beliefs co-existed and strove for domination in muted struggle: those that had already been subject to rigorous organization and systematization, those that battled for clarification and order, and those that only survived as isolated off-shoots of old outmoded or partially invalidated conceptions.

The predominance of de facto situations at the level of both social and cultural life reveals the multiplicity of factors that came together in them. The contemporary consciousness seems to have perceived the significance of this conflict-ridden meeting of traditions and interests before and after Charlemagne: whatever his moralist intentions, the lamentations of Saint Isidore in his first book of *Synonyms* bears eloquent witness to this, for, if he could be seen as wishing to reflect man's

eternal state in a world dominated by sin, his own testimony in his *Chronicles* stands as clarification of the meaning; as, in the same vein, do those of Bede and Gregory of Tours when describing the conditions of social existence in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms or among the Franks. Social instability, individual insecurity and the clash between apparently incompatible conceptions of the world and life created the conditions necessary for a new, free adventure of men and ideas.

I. The Socio-Economic Situation

1. The Romano-Germanic kingdoms

While the social situation prevailing in the Late Empire – founded on the co-existence of various groups of unequal levels – appeared to be justified by the slow process that led up to it and was consequently tolerated as a necessary, fatal order, the social situation brought about by the Germanic conquest of the West Roman area was characterised by the sudden changes that occurred, the state of subversion created by the conquest and the air of adventure and arbitrariness this introduced. This latter trait was to have a decisive influence on the subsequent development of social evolution. Some of the conquerors – Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Anglo-Saxons – had entered the territories they later occupied as peaceful allies – the conquerors bidden by the Empire, the allies by the Britons; but, like the Franks in Gaul, those who entered by violence discovered that the existing social situation yielded before their thrust and eventually collapsed; so, they superimposed themselves on it and found a way in through its gaps when it suited them, suddenly and arbitrarily complicating the traditional order. Hence the social physiognomy of the pre-Carolingian period: a world of social elements in unstable equilibrium that could be modified by force without any valid pre-established principle, a conflict situation in which, over time, those who sought to consolidate certain privileges would try to introduce a degree of order.

In this conflict situation, the norm, the principle, was inequality, the radical inequality between each group's status, an inequality which, in spite of the development the Christian idea had achieved, was previous to any discussion. The Church undoubtedly sought to instil in the social reality some of the traits entailed by doctrine: it sporadically manumitted slaves or rescued captives, as did Caesarius of Arles, Germain of Paris or Saint Gregory the Great with sustained commitment, but these were still nothing but minor, intermittent efforts of no great scope or possibility to alter a state of affairs that rested on intangible situations and which the Church itself consented to by adapting to it. Forceful and unchallenged in practice, the principle of inequality imposed and entrenched itself, with the peculiarity, however, that it did not as yet involve an overly strict principle of social immobility.

This peculiarity stemmed precisely from the situation created by the conquest. The principle of race was introduced through the cracks in the existing order of late-Empire society during the period of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms to create a new norm of privilege. This privilege fell to the Germanic conquerors in general, but to different extents depending on whether the individual was simply an *ingenuus* or formed part of the nobility that had been set up and endured primarily through the *comitatus*. That nobility – a true elite within an aristocracy – in turn evinced a differentiation in the Romano-Germanic kingdoms between nobility of birth and nobility of service, the latter shaped by the accident of royal choice through which, little by little, the principle of race was broken, for Romans attaining to such nobility were in no short supply. *Antrustiones*,*gasindi*,*gesiths*, *thegns*,*gardingos* and, in general, *fidelesregis* were the names given to the members of this nobility, which drew its force essentially from proximity to the king and his favour. Over time, the nobility by right of inheritance and those who became noble after being called to the service of the king merged into one. Members of this section of the nobilitywere usually referred to as *optimates* or*potentes*.

Below them came the German *ingenui*, privileged in principle on the grounds of race and also – like the nobility, albeit to a lesser degree – made over into estate owners; and, in time, once the principle of race weakened, the Roman ingenui who kept part of their property merged with them. This complex of free men was further subdivided.
The *maiores*, *mediocres, minores*, *minimi*, *inferiores*,*humiliores* and *vilioresingenuos* came to be differentiated on the basis of their social and economic status; these were categories not always easy to specify in terms of their meanings but alluded primarily to the extension of property, which, in certain legislations like the Lombardy of King Aistulf, was expressly fixed.

This process of differentiation – originally Roman, later interfered with by the conquest and the principle of race and finally resolved in a new ordering of classes – recognised not just economic but political causes. These political causes had a decisive influence on the constitution of the aristocracy through radically arbitrary royal favour prompted by immediate political needs; they also influenced the ordering of the various groups of ingenui because of the growing power of the aristocracy, who were granted immunity, and led, in each case, to both promotion and demotion because the social forces acted in both directions. On the one hand, there was a strong tendency to reduce to a situation of semi-freedom free peasants powerless against big landowners, who were also politically powerful, and, on the other, a tendency among the unfree to attain situations of semi-freedom to varying degrees.

The sign of social differentiation amongst the ingenui was the *wergeld*. A principle of Germanic law, the wergeld formed the basis of penal law and fixed the value of the man in the event of violent death. But this value was variable. It was set in relation to the extent of land – sometimes, as among

the Anglo-Saxons, in extremely minute detail – but also to the individual's personal status, and its amount was occasionally adjusted when political reasons made it advisable to do so: for example, in order to defend the Lombard gasindi in King Liutprand's attempted anti-aristocratic reaction or to protect bishops and priests. Extra-judicial composition worked in the same way, also conditioned by the social situation. Among the group of free men, the wergeld differentiated nobles from simple ingenui; but it drew a sharper distinction between ingenui and semi-free, who derived their status from the ancient situation of the *lites* and to whom a wergeld equivalent to half that of the ingenuus was allocated. The serf, on the other hand, lacked any wergeld.

Be that as it may, the social situation in the Romano-Germanic area was characterised above all by the condition of groups of semi-freemen and those lacking freedom, due in part to their vast membership and in part to the mobility of these groups, especially those of the semi-freemen, who were destined to play an exceptional role in transforming the society.

The serfs were a highly numerous mass of fundamental importance to the production regime, especially within the large estates. They generally originated as war-time captives, and their numbers therefore grew as a result of the invasions, as there was subjugation aplenty of the defeated populations by the conquerors. However, their situation was not burdened by any immutable prejudice, rather by a simple economic need that gave their status a purely factual character. Indeed, it was not only the remote – but growing – prestige of the Romanity of their origins that could work in their favour, but the Church's preaching for their manumission. Yet it was the Church that admitted the de facto situation and defended its right to own slaves as a patrimonial asset, banning their manumission at the Council of Agde in 506 and, in 541, at the Fourth Council of Orléans, arguing for the need to keep the descendants of slaves in servitude in order to insure against potential damages through manumissions or protections of freedmen by the laity. How was this attitude reconciled with many ecclesiastics' particular efforts to manumit serfs? This fact is further proof of the conflict-ridden nature of the situation. Principles and ideals clashed with the real situation, in which power relations prevailed, and it was vital for the Church to maintain its standing in the general war of all against all. But precisely because this was a conflict-ridden situation, prejudices were not a heavy burden, and manumission was possible and plentiful if the economic situation allowed; and in those cases, serfs rose to the condition of freedmen.

Tied to the glebe sometimes for reasons of birth and sometimes for loss of freedom under contingent circumstances, this was as high as the serf could aspire. But he could be manumitted if the circumstances were favourable, and then he entered the category of freedmen.

This category was a key group in the society of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms. By the vastness of

their numbers and the peculiarity of their juridical and social condition, freedmen played an extremely important role in the development of society. They were semi-free *lites* and therefore legal subjects, albeit bound by a relation of protection or patronage and having no freedom of movement. But these limitations did not prevent semi-freemen as individuals being able to climb through the gaps in Romano-Germanic society. In fact, they were preferred by monarchy and magnates for positions of trust in their houses. They were *ministerials* but attained even more important functions: they performed the duties of counts and were incorporated into the army with high ranks, and, as a reward for their military or economic services, they received significant benefits that renewed their status and opened up new prospects of social promotion to them. Furthermore, in the monarchy's struggle against the nobility, freedmen served as an auxiliary force for the monarchy and opposed the nobility, while approaching it through the privileges their members obtained and, little by little, coming to form a new privileged sector.

In constant and unstable relation with simple ingenui, the freedmen fed the constantly renewed flow in the society of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms. If social relations may, at every moment, have appeared defined and stable, the set of individuals forming the various groups was unstable, mobile and changeable. Individual adventures – Ebroin, Mummolus, Fredegunda, Victor – were always possible: all one needed was either to attain power by wealth or wealth by power.

Only the aristocracy, whose unstable make-up lent it the air of a class in full growth, achieved true significance as an active, powerful social group. Its situation in the society of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms was one of absolute privilege, but it was formed and began to organise itself at the same time as the line of monarchical power was being defined. Hence, the social physiognomy of the entire Romano-Germanic period would be set by this conflict, whereby these two forces – aristocracy and monarchy – sought their relative levels. Neither had sufficient or conclusive titles to assert their superiority. Neither could put an end to the other. And this struggle between the two great forces became the sign of the times, of which Charlemagne's triumph was but an ephemeral stage.

The terms of the conflict, however, concealed the terms of a possible convergence, which it forged in the form of the Christian-feudal order. It was the spontaneous, irreducible tendencies of the aristocracy and those adopted by the monarchy that combined first to sketch it out and later to institutionalise it within the doctrinaire frames provided by the Church.

2. Tendencies in aristocracy

The highest and most powerful groups that belonged to Romano-Germanic society from the sixth century on formed an extremely diverse whole in which certain sustained and uniform tendencies began to emerge but which did not yet show any signs of the typical characters of a closed nobility. Quite the reverse, this was an open class, access to which, albeit not easy, was possible provided certain conditions were met, which, incidentally, did not always depend on the aristocracy itself. First the diversity of its members' origins, then the heterogeneity of its composition contributed to attributing this character to the Romano-Germanic aristocracy, as did the characteristic mobility of the society, determined as it was by both political and economic reasons.

There were certainly survivals of the old Germanic aristocracy of blood, which as a whole was perhaps on the wane but whose members could maintain the situation thanks to other circumstances – such as royal favour, for example – to which they would add the prestige and perhaps the spirit of their groups of origin. And, alongside this, there also survived remains of the Roman aristocracy of blood, strong because it had maintained part of its lands and especially because it had risen to new positions. For, effectively, the most important nucleus of the aristocracy was a sector that boasted no original title whatever: it was this nucleus that set the tone of the new aristocracy, into which the other groups melted, authorised essentially by an acquired condition and barely accentuated by its original title.

The new aristocracy was made up primarily of a nobility of service, that is, of those who, for services rendered to the monarchy, had received from it titles or ranks that publicly ennobled them and benefits that ensured a solid economic base for their personal *status*. Linked to the personal service of the king or designated for the exercise of political, administrative, judicial or military functions, those to whom the monarchy entrusted a function received territorial donations from fiscal possessions or, sometimes, from confiscations. A privileged position was thereby acquired de facto, and one came to form part of the *proceres*, *honestiores* or*maiores*, designations that used to characterise members of the aristocracy. Thus, the royal will acted only in the constitution of this class, and peoples from highly diverse origins, Germanic and Roman, could join it, without distinction of class, for, alongside those who belonged to the ancient Germanic or Roman aristocracies, simple ingenui and even semi-freemen joined it, the latter in significant numbers in certain times and kingdoms. In this way, the aristocracy maintained itself for a long time as an open order within which persons of diverse origins circulated with considerable freedom and possibilities for promotion, without the principles of stagnation that would appear later on preventing them.

Eventually, in practice, Church dignitaries came to form part of the aristocracy. As of the fourth century, the Church had begun to garner power as a proprietor, so much so that, by the second half of the sixth century, Chilperic could claim that 'Herein lies the impoverishment of our treasury and the transferral of our riches to the Church; no one reigns but the bishops; our dignity ends and is

transferred to the bishops of the cities.' These riches – for the most part land – were certainly inalienable, by virtue of a string of provisions from the ecclesiastical and civil powers; yet, in spite of this, the bishops and abbots had many resources at their disposal to wield the force bestowed on them by their wealth, parcelling out land in the form of *precaria* and organising around it a crowd of people connected to them; this hegemonic situation was even more striking in the cities, where the bishops had inherited at least part of the authority of the Roman curia and had a powerful social influence. These high dignitaries came almost to a man from the old Roman nobility. The link they maintained in the Visigoth kingdom with the Empire of Constantinople was no accident, nor was the good will through which they viewed the arrival of imperial troops in Vandal Africa and Ostrogoth Italy. But wherever they coincided with the monarchy, as in the Frankish kingdom, they promptly became their instruments and faithful servants. And this circumstance – equally visible in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, in the Frankish kingdom, in the Visigothic kingdom after Recarred and in the Lombard kingdom – made sure the bishoprics were at the disposal of the monarchy, introducing the same criterion of chance in the formation of this section of the aristocracy as in the others. By ascending to the upper ecclesiastical echelons, one could, from any social stratum, reach a state of privilege entailing not just ecclesiastical but secular authority, not to mention the public functions usually reserved for bishops. Hence the warring ambitions that gave rise to so many conflicts, justified by a situation that offered the possibility of promotion in a society where promotion meant privilege.

Thus constituted, the aristocracy manifested certain tendencies that revealed the general tone of the period. The key feature was the mobility of the social organization and, above all, the particular condition of the non-privileged and especially the semi-freemen; rather than a general class tendency, what was in operation was, first and foremost, an individual tendency to social promotion through the winning of royal favour. The society of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms knew no predetermined, rigorous order and there were consequently no inescapable paths for the individual; instead, by meeting certain conditions, free adventure was possible. Everything favoured the individual tendency to try it out.

But for those who already had access to privileged groups, the tendency was clearly conservative, geared first towards consolidating privileges and then towards improving them. In order to consolidate privileges the holder of a rank that brought with it economic and social benefits sought to perpetuate this by making it hereditary, and, little by little, this purpose was achieved in practice. Yet the aristocracy also managed to ensure that royal officials, especially counts, were not appointed among men from outside the region, so that, through a curious confluence of interests, the new aristocracy became markedly local. This sentiment grew very strong over time and helped to weaken royal power considerably, especially where the attempt coincided with an entrenched regional sentiment. To round off their privileges, the usufructuaries of benefits tried to obtain or

consolidate immunity, in other words, a situation of exemption from tax burdens and judicial intervention by the king. Immunity was a Roman institution and was enjoyed by imperial and a few private domains. It was established in the Romano-Germanic kingdoms for royal domains and could be attached to the benefits – as these did not lose their status as royal land – and to the lands of the Church as a special concession. The holders of benefits fought to achieve such a concession for their lands, the Franks, for example, finally acquiring it in the seventh century and the Visigoths and Anglo-Saxons around the same time.

The social and economic consolidation of the aristocracy was, then, a result of the policy of the monarchy, which thereby demonstrated its strength and fought to increase it by creating a class of faithful followers; yet the power of the aristocracy increased in like measure: far from declaring its solidarity with the monarchy, it became aware of its strength and began to shape its own political class interests, as summarised in its members' designs to reach the crown and, conversely, in the collective plan to curb royal power. Thus, in the second half of the sixth century, the aristocracy acquired the remarkable political militancy which characterised the history of the Frankish, Visigoth and Lombard kingdoms and which reached its greatest potency in the groups constituting the 'palace', that is, precisely the most favoured section of the aristocracy: the nobility of service.

As a class with an awareness as such and as a political party with clear designs, the aristocracy, especially the Palatine nobility, clashed with the monarchy. That struggle finally clarified the frame of the conflictive situation prevailing in the society of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms. But it would not be perceptible in all its intensity without taking into account the peculiar development of the monarchy.

3. Tendencies in monarchy

The Germanic conquerors took with them to the new kingdoms they formed a conception of royal power in the Germanic tradition, characterised by a tendency among the social community to restrict individual power. The old organization of principalities was retained only by the Saxons, but therein can be seen a remote pattern that, in one way or another, had a bearing on the conception of political life. The circumstances had, however, gradually been changing that conception: the very development of the Germanic peoples, then the Roman influence and finally the fact of conquest. But the most important groups' tendency to set limits on individual power – groups who at least retained the right to be heard in the most serious matters, a right later transmuted into one of the vassalic duties – was always fairly robust.

Whatever the influence of Roman policy on the evolution of monarchical power during the Empire, what most altered this conception was the fact of conquest, which expanded the potential for individual action. The monarchy then acquired the prominence that those wielding power were able to bring to it, and so two distinct approaches appeared, displaying common features certainly, but also different elements that were beginning to show; two conceptions which, incidentally, sometimes co-existed in the same persons, but which hinted at different tendencies.

One such conception was signally represented in the figure of Clovis. Certain vestiges of the traditions of restrictive individual power had acted upon him, but his military and political personality was too much for them and eventually led him to create what was, to all intents and purposes, an unlimited autocracy. That kind of power knew no other basis than the king's personal authority, and there was no legal principle to exalt or bolster it in the event of its weakening: it was simply a de facto power; an authority that did not filiate independently in accordance with principles of law – either Germanic or Roman – and in which the principles of Christianity had made no dent. This type of authority was exercised, for example, by Clothar, Chilperic, Gaiseric, Liuvigild, Chindasuinth, Alboin, Penda and others, including Brunhilda. An unstable social situation provided favourable opportunities for such unlimited exercise of personal authority, especially among those who came to power by virtue of de facto situations: the conquest of territory or power.

The other conception was signally represented by Theodoric. I figure of great authority on account of his personal prestige, Roman and Christian influences acted upon him, as well as the vague restrictive tendency of the Germanic tradition. Whatever the real situation of the Empire, the political conception that prevailed among those who lived within its ambit was that the state constituted a legal order and that politics – the best politics – consisted in establishing a system of norms that constituted the normal state of co-existence. It mattered not that this system was violated now and again. The general tendency was towards a permanent order, in which, moreover, conquest did not play a fundamental role. In addition to Roman influence, there was also Christian influence, which had a pronounced effect on some kings. This type of authority was the one exercised preferentially by Gontrand, Dagobert, Grimoald, Gundobad, Euric, Alaric II, Edwin or Oswald. It is no surprise that they should have found the Roman sources more favourable; but irrespective of that, it is clear that they revealed a constant concern to make the status of persons and the fundamental principles of law compatible, at least, with the de facto situation. This effort was not always fruitful, nor did it succeed in the formation of a stable legal order, and its repeated failure revealed that the conception of monarchy as a mere power structure was out of kilter with the social situation.

Indeed, despite the efforts of those who attempted to set up a type of legal and Christian authority (or one of both), the general tone of political life in the society of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms was characterised by a type of authority based on the fact of the conquest of power, whence

derived its most salient features.

Significant among these is the indeterminacy of territorial scope. Strictly speaking, and in spite of the gravitational pull exerted by Roman provincial borders, the new political formations were installed within limits set exclusively by de facto situations. This was the case with the kingdoms of the Angles, Jutes and Saxons, the history of the Visigoth borders before and after the Battle of Vouillé, the case of Septimania and the Lombard dukedoms, especially the Franks, as well as the kingdoms that rise and fall, like those of the Gepids, Suebians, Alans, Vandals and Burgundians. In vain did Bede and Saint Isidore recall the greatness of ancient Spain and ancient Britain. Those boundaries were already nothing but political or cultural ideals that had nothing to do with the political reality, closely conditioned as it was by the immediate effectiveness of military force.

This circumstance is what explains the abandonment of the principles of traditional Roman public law and the tendency to consider the territorial domain as a mere personal patrimony of kings; only in a few cases did the principle of tanistry prevail, and the normal state of affairs was that, when a king had sufficient authority to bequeath his kingdom, he would do so by dividing it among his children. The same was true of the patrimonial system obtaining in matters of taxation and the fisc.

It was but another sign of the autocratism deriving from conquest, from the absolutism to which led the factual source of power. The individual and absolute power of the Romano-Germanic kings was not pre-established by any legal tradition, nor was it always and everywhere exercised. It was born outside the legal traditions of Rome and the Germanic peoples, outside the principles implicit in Christian doctrine, even amongst already converted peoples, and developed only where and when the individual authority of the king was sufficient to achieve it, without any tradition or circumstance being able to set against it any other curb than that of another power capable of countervailing it. In his appeal to the Merovingian kings to cease their civil strife, Gregory of Tours made this emphatic judgment: ‘Remember what Clovis has done, he who marches at the head of all your victories, he who has slain the enemy kings, annihilated opposing nations, subjugated countries and peoples; thus has he left you a kingdom in all its strength and integrity; and when he did these things, he had no gold nor silver, as you have in your exchequers.’ He had, then, no more than his personal authority and his strength, and on this he founded his power, as did all the Romano-Germanic kings insofar as they possessed it within their own people.

In order to exercise this absolute individual power, the Romano-Germanic monarchy had no another instrument in effect than force. It made use of a constant and repeated appeal to violence and the de facto solutions governed by naked political realism. And acting cautiously in the face of force, many factors sought to limit it with limited success and repeated failure: the Roman legal tradition,

Germanic custom, Christian principles. The history of Romano-Germanic royal authority is the history of the progressive and variable relationship between the fundamental principle of de facto power and the constricting tendencies that tried to limit it.

But such tendencies could be successful only on a small scale and at a superficial level, because none of those three great systems of principles were suited to the complex and tumultuous reality of Romano-Germanic societies: neither Roman legal tradition, which was the result of the secular co-existence of a homogeneous community, now altered by invasion and conquest; nor Germanic custom, appropriated for small communities in very precise economic and social conditions; nor Christian principles, which fundamentally contradicted those of the conquerors and those indispensable to maintaining and consolidating conquest. Thus, the equation between the radical power structure on which the Romano-Germanic monarchy rested and the legal order which the groups resisting spontaneous absolutism to some extent were seeking to consolidate could initially only come about with increased advantage of monarchy, which suited the radical situation of the societies over which power was to be exercised.

As a result, there was constant fluctuation in the political tendencies of the Romano-Germanic monarchy. In the interplay of social forces and the interplay of alliances, the Romano-Germanic monarchy lacked fixed principles and served no other purpose than to secure – or simply exercise – power. The pretexts or terms of the legal or moral foundations accumulated by aulic counsellors did not stand in the way (though they did matter in the long run), nor did the justifications extracted from legal texts or customs or passages of Scripture; the monarchy conceived of power as nothing but the sum of power, and any diminution compromised it substantially. Such was the consequence of its struggles with the aristocracy, which gave rise to political formulae that ultimately entailed the annihilation of royal power, as would be seen in the last projection of those struggles, namely, the Christian-feudal order.

4. Tensions between aristocracy and monarchy

The crisis of royal power was the result of its struggle with the aristocracy and of the course taken by that struggle. It was littered with truces, when one of the two warring parties was forced to admit the other's superiority, but these lasted only until the vanquished party could recover. Monarchy and aristocracy were two inseparable terms of the political equation in the Romano-Germanic kingdoms, and the conflict arose out of the instability of their relations, because neither was given the chance to exercise authority for long enough or in stable enough conditions to establish their power and fix it in legal formulas justified and consecrated by their long-standing efficacy. So, if both the

monarchy's and the aristocracy's were de facto powers, the political resultant of that tension may also be considered de facto, which is to say the entire system of Romano-Germanic social life.

As political forces, aristocracy and monarchy had antithetical aims, and it was a long time before the new Romano-Germanic aristocracy designed the type of monarchy it needed – which it could not do without – and which did not exceed its own interests; meanwhile, every time it conquered the crown and bestowed it on one of its members, it inevitably found that the monarchy went its own way and again became hostile towards it. This situation of clashing interests did not exist among the Germanic peoples but was created by conquest and occupation, with the numerous possibilities it opened up for exercising power over the conquered. Athaulf and Sigeric fell victim to their own through the appearance of this diversity of possibilities among the new conquerors; Clovis yielded or pressed depending on the potential of his strength; Gundobad feared the revolt of his own, if we are to believe Avitus's accusation; Edwin submitted to the grandees his intention to convert to Christianity; and Eadbald dared not defy his opinion, just as Clovis himself feared the bishops, as also happens with Clothar and Chilperic.

The monarchy, in many instances, succeeded in becoming predominant, as it had powerful means to do so. It deployed two favourite methods: on the one hand, creating a devoted nobility – the service or palatine nobility, often consisting of people of lowly extraction, including freedmen – to whom land was granted under certain conditions which seemed to ensure their loyalty; and on the other, acting swiftly and effectively against the nobility's attempts at reaction – even the palatine nobility's – which, from time to time, when the occasions beckoned, sought to contain or seize royal power and grant it to one of its members in pursuit of a readjustment of reciprocal relations.

These occasions seem to have escalated from the second half of the sixth century. Monarchy was in those days travailed as an institution by its own internal crisis: instability, lack of precision in the regime of succession, loss of prestige and renewed territorial problems, as the aristocracy grew strong on its economic might and local prestige. Weak and unstable as it was, a certain sense of class had begun to appear among its members, leading to accentuated tensions with the monarchy to the point of degenerating into a state of perpetual war.

Among the Vandals, it was Gelimer who unleashed the persecution of the nobility. The Visigoths, as Gregory of Tours says repeatedly, 'had taken up this detestable habit: when they did not like their kings, they stormed them with arms and elected in their place one who suited them.' So fell Theudis, Theudigisel and Agila, victims of conspiracies. Kingship acquired an authoritarian air with Athanagild and his successors under the influence of the Byzantine tradition. But, says Gregory of Tours, Liuvigild, to secure his power, 'made perish, without leaving a single one, all those in the habit

of killing kings'; and adds Saint Isidore, 'Anyone who looked most powerful or most noble to him, either he cut off his head or sent him into exile,' among his victims being his own son Hermenegild. Recarred had to deal with several uprisings. Two were the result of the union of the lay and ecclesiastical Arian aristocracy, while another, led by Duke Argimund, was clearly political. Shortly after his death, his son Liuva was dispossessed and killed by Witteric, and he, in turn, was killed by a plot among his own people. Not long after, Suintila came to power and lost it again because of a fresh plot by Sisenand with the support of the entire aristocracy. So, between the second half of the sixth century and the first half of the seventh, a singular power struggle was waged, with the aristocracy consistently opposing the monarchy, even when the crown had again passed to one of its members shortly before each crisis because the exercise of royal power led its depository inexorably towards a different policy from that pursued by the aristocracy. This process occurred among the Visigoths precisely when bloody civil struggles were emerging among the Franks, which lasted from 573 until 613 with appalling consequences.

At the start of his account of these internecine wars, Gregory of Tours asked the kings fighting amongst themselves, 'What to do? What do you ask? What is it you have not in abundance? The delights in your houses exceed your wishes; your pantries overflow with wine, wheat, oil; gold and silver pile up in your treasuries. Yet you are missing one thing: the grace of God, for you do not keep the peace amongst yourselves.' But the Bishop of Tours was wrong about the subject of the episode he set out to narrate. The war was only apparently a conflict among the kings; as well as a conflict over territorial expansion and regional unity, it was a struggle of all against all, and especially of the aristocracy against the monarchy, with the addition – though we possess but scant information – of the mobilization of the other social classes. In 584, three years after the murder of Sigebert and shortly after that of Chilperic, King Gontrand said in the Cathedral of Paris, addressing the assembled throng, 'I entreat you, men and women here present, to place in me an inviolable fidelity and not slay me, as you have lately slain my brothers; that I may at least for three years educate my nieces and nephews, whom I have made my foster children, for fear that – Heaven forbid! – after my death you should not appear with those children, for no strong man of our family shall be left to defend you.' Previously he had 'returned all the goods that Chilperic's faithful had unjustly snatched away from sundry people', and 'showed benevolence to a large number of people and did great good for the needy.' The same Gontrand threatened the dukes whose armies had devastated his own domains, saying, 'If you spurn the royal orders, if you neglect to carry out what I order, your head must fall under the axe.' To which the dukes replied, 'What can we do when the people surrenders to vices of all kinds, when every man indulges in iniquity? No one fears the king, no one respects the duke nor the count! And when one of us reproaches such conduct, when he wishes to suppress it to preserve his life, the people rises up, rioting breaks out and all rush to set upon the wise man and only with difficulty can he escape should he not decide to keep silence.'

In this war ridden with rancour and cruelty, whose actions played out across a vast territory and in line with circumstantial interests, the aristocracy's design to preserve and enhance its power survived as a constant backdrop. The Treaty of Andelot (November 587) – which distributed Charibert's inheritance between Gontrand, Childebert II and Brunehilda – reiterated provisions from an earlier treaty between Gontrand and Sigebert in relation to the political and economic situation of the leudes. The benefits that the aristocracy – ecclesiastical and secular alike – had received would be maintained, whatever the outcome of the war, and those that had been wrested from them would be restored, as if the treaty put the land-owning aristocracy's status above the accidents of the conflict among the kings. But the aristocracy, both among the Franks and in the other Romano-Germanic kingdoms, aspired to still more.

Indeed, with the perpetuation of its economic benefits and even its political situation in the different regional areas secured de facto, the aristocracy was aspiring to ensure that royal power served its own interests. The end of the Merovingian civil war was marked by the 614 Edict of Paris promulgated by Chlothar II, registering a considerable increase in the power of the secular and ecclesiastical aristocracy, which, as well as the restitution of any assets its members may have lost for remaining loyal to their lords, was assured that judges would be elected within the region they were to administrate. Chlothar later once again acquiesced to new claims from the Burgundian aristocracy; but, apart from the concrete advantages he granted, the general tone of the edict betrays a tendency to acknowledge the constant pressure from the aristocracy: 'Quod contra rationis ordinem acta vel ordinata sunt, ne inantea, quod avertat divinitas, contingat, disposuimos Christo praesole per huius edicti nostri tenorem generaliter emendare.' The subsequent course of events goes a long way to clarifying the direction of this step by the monarchy, which, little by little, had to leave shreds of its authority in the hands of the mayors of the palace and the powerful groups of the aristocracy.

Not long after, in 633, the Visigoth secular and ecclesiastical aristocracy won a signal victory over the monarchy's autocratic tendency to impose the measures set out in Canon LXXV of the Fourth Council of Toledo. This Canon ordained that no sovereign legally occupies the throne unless elected by a synod assembling in Toledo and attended by members of the secular aristocracy and the episcopate. The general tendency of the political process of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms was specified unequivocally: the making of a limited power emerging from the privileged classes that heralded the shape of feudal monarchy to come.

Neither among the Franks nor the Visigoths did the aristocracy fully achieve its purpose at the time. The tendency to exercise absolute individual authority sporadically resurfaced with varying features. One time, it was an old dynast like Dagobert that regained traditional power: 'then forgetting the justice he had at one time loved, inflamed with greed for the assets of the Church and leudes, he

wanted to fill new treasuries with the spoils he amassed from all parts.' On other occasions, it was the newcomer to power, sometimes as king by election, as among the Visigoths, and sometimes as mayor of the palace, an official who wielded great power among the Merovingians. Having gained the throne through a plot by grandees, Chindasuinth, 'knowing the Goths' custom of dethroning their kings, because he himself had taken part in similar plots with them, had all those he had seen rise up against previously overthrown kings successively slaughtered; he condemned others to exile and gave their wives to his leudes along with their daughters and chattels. It is told that, to suppress this criminal habit, he had two hundred grandees killed among the highest of the Goths, five hundred of middling stock…' The Fifth Council of Toledo established an anathema against those purporting to guess when the king would die with a view to succeeding him, a provision repeated in the codex of laws known as the 'Fuero Juzgo'; and there was a further attempt to legislate vigorously against conspiracies in the Seventh Council of Toledo.

The aristocracy definitely did not manage to install anyone on the Visigoth throne who would later represent its interests without falling into the temptation of autocracy. This was more or less what happened with the Frankish nobility around the same time. It propelled to power a mayor of the palace, but there immediately arose either the non-conformity of some groups of the aristocracy, or the mayor of the palace's tendency to wield power autocratically. Flaochad was chosen during the regency of Queen Nanthild 'by election of all the bishops and all the dukes' and 'promised' all the dukes and bishops of the kingdom of Burgundy by charter and oath 'that he would maintain them all in their possessions and their honours, and that he would retain their friendship'; but Willibad the Patrician soon revolted against him. Grimoald, mayor of the palace of Austrasia and son of Pippin the Elder, not only readied himself to govern vigorously but revealed his intentions by trying to usurp the throne in order to entrust it to his son under the name of Childebert; but his attempt was thwarted, as Ebroin's, the mayor of the palace of Neustria and Burgundy, would be, against whom the entire aristocracy rose up in violence.

If one looks at the situation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms around this time, with their strange alliances between pagans and Britons against the recently Christianised kingdoms, the progressive triumph of the Frankish mayors of the palace up to Charles Martel 'who distinguished themselves by crushing the tyrants' and the fate of the Visigoth monarchy in its last days, one notices that the stormy state of affairs created by the conflict between the two social forces went beyond any system of balance or any formula of stability hitherto known or imagined. Other schemes conceived on the basis of royal situations will emerge, and such schemes, as devised by the Carolingians, will eventually prove effective and lead to the kind of feudal monarchy organised on the ruins of the Carolingian Empire, which was a brief pause in the course of this process.

II. Forms of Life and Mentality

For the de facto situation at the socio-economic level there was a corresponding de facto situation at the socio-cultural level. The Germanic invasions operated on an ambit in which change on a gigantic scale had been under way for several centuries. On Roman culture – which already contained a variety of heterogeneous elements but within which there had been a considerable effort to homogenise in the first two centuries of the Roman Empire – the influence of eastern cultures began to be keenly felt and, from the third century, especially the influence of Christianity, which was at the same time experiencing a process of change under the influence of certain currents foreign to its original stem. As the fourth century drew to a close, the system of ideas and beliefs already displayed a pronounced inconsistency in the western area of the Empire. Attacked by Christianity, the Roman conception of life, the system of ideas and beliefs associated with it and the set of derived norms broke down; the old beliefs still stood in many parts, but what remained hidden in them of superstition and magic flourished, and the proof of these beliefs' effectiveness, which was used to try to defend them against Christianity, reinforced the tendency. With these beliefs in decline, the ideas and principles depending on them fell apart, lost their meaning and were left as isolated reminiscences that either fed into certain marginal groups or combined with and altered other trends of thought. The general feature was a resurgence of superstition, partly rooted in the Roman but greatly strengthened by contact with oriental superstitions arriving from the East from the age of the Severans on. These were above all solar cults and cults that, like these, imported certain beliefs in salvation which violently shook up people's consciousnesses. And overlaid on that tendency, somewhere between magic and religion, stood Christianity, which was besides no longer a single line of doctrine but a complex torrent. Influencing it, above all, were elements of Neoplatonism and also the divergent and inconclusive influence of the Old and the New Testaments, all of which made extremely intricate not only the framework of beliefs but also that of the ideas and principles deriving from them. On such a complex framework as this the impact of Germanic influence was felt, altering the currency of certain doctrines and principles, and introducing its own spiritual apparatus, accentuated by the social preponderance of its carriers. This triggered the chaotic situation that predominated at the sociocultural level. The first evidence for this was the dislocation of forms of life.

1. Forms of life.

Contemporary experience and sensibility registered certain features peculiar to the period. It was noted that the love of letters and capacity for spiritual matters was being lost, and there was a marked sense of inferiority vis-à-vis the writers of Antiquity. Gregory of Tours claimed that 'culture

was disappearing in the cities of Gaul' and further on said, 'a wretched time ours, for the study of letters is perishing among us.'

Fredegar, for his part, noted that 'the blade of wisdom in us is dulled; no man of this time is equal to the orators of bygone days, nor even dares to claim so'; and not long after, Einhard, though remarking that some of his contemporaries trusted that their time should not merit oblivion – especially considering the personality of Charlemagne – pointed out that his audience consisted of people who 'were bored by even the works of the best and most learned writers' and that he himself was 'a *homo barbaras* who, barely an initiate in the use of the Latin phrase, nevertheless believed he could write in a decent or becoming manner in this language.' Culture, then, seemed to be classical culture par excellence, the culture that Isidore of Seville would do his utmost to save, and it is curious that even Isidore, so well versed in Christian texts, should not exalt Christian wisdom in that it could form a whole homogeneous with pagan knowledge, as if he were certain they constituted two parallel worlds irreducible to a single unit. But at the loss of familiarity with classical knowledge, intellectual life declined. It seemed worthy of mention in the sixth century that some people should cultivate studies, and Gregory of Tours drew attention to Andarchius as being 'remarkable for his instruction, knowing the works of Virgil, the laws of the Theodosian Code and the science of calculation.'

But Isidore of Seville's very insistence testifies to the certainty that the studies were of barely any interest now, save in very narrow, preferably ecclesiastical circles. The tradition of using leisure for the cultivation of knowledge was being lost, and spiritual concerns were geared more towards salvation in a troubled, easily startled world. But it is curious that it was a representative of the Christian spirit who, like Bede and Alcuin after him, would endeavour to save pagan knowledge and cultivate those studies without insisting overmuch on their ultimate importance as a negation of the Christian spirit.

More curious is the importance Isidore devotes in the *Etymologies* to war and games. In the customs of the new aristocracy of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms, war occupied a pivotal role. The Germanic tradition ascribed marked importance to manly exercises, in which respect it coincided with a certain Roman tradition. But what would remain of this was, above all, the enthusiasm for spectacle, which persisted among the new aristocracy. Chilperic had circuses built in Soissons and Paris, 'where he supplied the people with spectacles'. The lingering-on of such a custom is significant for the assent the new lords gave to it, but still more significant is the importance Saint Isidore seems to attribute to it, who devotes much of Book XVIII of the *Etymologies* to spectacles. He criticises them from time to time and recommends Christians to keep away from them – 'Be thou a stranger to this place occupied by Satan, for it is steeped in the Devil and his henchmen' – but stops to describe and explain them at length, as if they merited recognition no doubt for the favour they

enjoyed or for the erstwhile prestige with which were still adorned.

Despite the purported original severity of Germanic life, the new aristocracy clung to all forms of Roman aristocratic life, with its cult of leisure, games and feasting. Venantius Fortunatus surprises us with the account of one of those feasts: 'Behold, lucky guest, consider these happy delights which scent adorns before taste approves: the burning red flowers smile afresh and not the very fields offer such roses as this table where, midst cloths of purple, they blanch the milk-white lilies. The room exhales perfumes vying to prevail; dainties rest on branches still exuding. So great is the abundance one might think a soft meadow of serene flowers is greening 'neath the rooves. If we are captivated by these fleeting charms that part and fade so soon, how much more must we be drawn, O Paradise, by your banquets!' Perhaps less refined, banquets as well supplied as this one were held all too often in the bosom of the aristocracy and the court. But it is curious that this one, which Venantius Fortunatus tells us about, was held in a monastery: the monastery at Poitiers, founded by Radegund. Many another poem by Venantius Fortunatus proves that this atmosphere was the norm in the monastery: what is more, we know that there were baths for the nuns and that playing dice was allowed, none of which seemed too strange, as was made clear before the ecclesiastical court presiding over Chrodielda's allegations against Abbess Basina in 590. The pressure of worldly customs had, therefore, held considerable sway even over those strongholds in which the ascetic life was to be retained and cultivated by perpetuating the habits of the Roman aristocracy, characterised by a sensuality and refinement that had once violently excoriated Christian preaching.

A violent contrast between Christian piety, Roman legality and the prevalence of violence was also manifested. War was the normal state of affairs in the Romano-Germanic kingdoms, and chronicles and biographies are saturated with its horrors. It was accompanied by looting and destruction, perhaps no more brutal than what prevailed in the Empire, but a good deal more frequent given the prevailing conflictive situation. Bede's description of the situation in Britain during the reign of Edwin is, by contrast, a curious one: 'It is told that there was then so perfect a peace in Britain while King Edwin reigned, that, as the proverb still runs, a woman with a new-born child could march from one end of the island to the other, from sea to sea, without receiving harm.' It was certainly an exceptional situation worthy of note, and the chronicles confirm this contrast. Unrest and insecurity within each kingdom and tension between neighbouring kingdoms was the norm. Germanic trial by ordeal added new harms to the original, sometimes so disproportionate that they exceeded the harm that had originated it. Gregory of Tours recounts that the inquiry into who had hunted a buffalo in one of King Gontrand's forests cost three lives. Revenge – also Germanic in origin (*faida*) – became widespread irrespective of the interventions of public power and was responsible for strings of deaths; and crime, used as a normal course of action, proliferated and spread as an outlet for the passions and a viable means to certain ends. Many are the political crimes whose mentions fill the chronicles of the period; the sinister history of the Frankish civil wars revolving around the two

impressive figures of Fredegund and Brunhilda is eloquent testimony; but more eloquent are the attempts to assassinate Saint Benedict reported by Gregory the Great.

Gregory of Tours calls it a 'custom' of the Visigoths to assassinate their kings, and there is no shortage of testimonies that this tendency existed both in the lay and the ecclesiastical aristocracies. In fact, religious men and women came from social classes that picked up the dominant tendencies and yielded to their pressure without religious convictions being enough to counteract them, for in such a society the Christian virtues – meekness, humility – were almost impracticable save for spirits of exceptional mettle. This explains the lay aristocracy's feelings towards the religious state: they sought to eliminate priests from political life or to limit their action; they were mixed up in crimes and the religious were no example of holiness; to rule Eboric, king of the Suevi, out of the struggle for power, Andeca, 'after making him a monk, condemned him to a monastery'; but Liuvigild later defeated Andeca and put him in the same situation, for 'after tonsuring him, after the royal honours, he subjected him to the duties of the presbyterate.' This is the same procedure we find being used in other cases: Gregory of Tours tells us it was applied to Senator Avitus, who came to be Emperor, 'but the unruliness of his conduct caused him to be rejected by the Senate, and he was later ordained bishop of Piacenza.' It was thereafter applied to Chararic and his son by Clovis, to Merovech by Chilperic and to Gundoald by Chlothar. And that was the end of the Merovingian dynasty. As high-minded as the Christian's idea of the priesthood might be, such an assessment was only exceptionally able to impose itself on the de facto power represented by the Romano-Germanic aristocracy, an exponent of a conception of life in which non-Christian traditions prevailed and were deeply imbued with the value of the earthly; perhaps that was why the priesthood sought to acquire another power by appealing to its spiritual strength, and perhaps more frequently to the supernatural. 'You are threatened by God's judgment,' said Bishop Gregory to King Chilperic in one interview; and recalling the punishment of the Count of Angoulême, he apostrophised as follows: 'Let everyone marvel, admire and fear to insult the bishops! For God avenges His servants who trust in Him.' This appeal to the priest's supernatural power won him part of the ascendancy denied him by the elemental value system whereby the lay aristocracy and powerful were ruled. Some feared them for it, and Bede offers this curious reference: 'The king came to the island and, sitting in the open air, commanded Augustine and his comrades to be brought into his presence, for he had taken precaution that they should not be introduced to him within a house for fear that, according to an ancient superstition, they might prevail and get the better of him if they practiced some magic art.'

A hearty contrast also came about between traditions in contact where family life, the institution of marriage and the filiation of children were concerned. Examples of family crimes abound. Isidore of Seville describes Liuva as being 'born of an ignoble mother, but conspicuous for the nature of his virtues.' This was not uncommon and certainly not limited just to kings. Indeed, so common was it amongst them that it was considered normal, and a certain principle was admitted, which Gregory of

Tours states explicitly: speaking of King Guntram, he recounts Bishop Sagittarius as declaring 'that his sons could not possess his kingdom because his mother had been taken from among the maidservants of Magnacharius to enter the king's bed, unaware that now, regardless of the status of women, those whom the king has begotten are considered to be the king's sons.' The chronicler makes abundant references to the polygamy of kings. Isidore, referring to Theudigisel, and Gregory alluding to Childeric, speak of how they systematically prostituted the women of their people, and the kings' wives are sometimes listed. No doubt the repetition of the act weakened the Church's condemnation and perhaps the resistance of the Roman legal tradition; but when the time was ripe, the Church voiced criticism, especially if the censor enjoyed such high authority that they could be shielded from the irritation of the kings. Of the greatest significance is the incident of Saint Colombanus with King Thierry and Queen Brunhilda, in which Saint Columbanus reproached Thierry for keeping several paramours on the grounds that a legitimate marriage would lend the crown and his successors prestige; Brunhilda objected and provocatively presented Thierry's paramours and their various children to Saint Columbanus for his blessing, but the monk refused, claiming they would never possess the royal sceptre; the king promised to mend his ways but soon yielded to temptation again and embarked on an offensive against the monk. It is curious that the king reproached Saint Columbanus for his intransigence, a quality that distinguished him from the other bishops; but the observation is less inexplicable if one takes into account Gregory of Tours's sensible moral recommendation as an aside to the story of the wild-living Abbot Dagulf: 'Let this example be a lesson to the clergy not to have commerce with the women of their fellow men, which is forbidden them by canon law and by all the Holy Scriptures, and to be content with those they may possess without crime.' This explains why Isidore of Seville on the subject of marriage said: 'it is far better to have good manners than riches; today, however, wealth or beauty is more sought after than probity of manners.'

There was an undeniable persistence of the preaching of Christian morality and an equally undeniable influence of the examples of asceticism and humility offered by those who had chosen to follow their precepts. But such preaching and example proved their ineffectiveness and the persistence of traditions with a very different meaning, set alongside which were those norms opening up an irreducible set of possibilities. There was choice, but there were very different possibilities due to the simultaneous validity of various moral systems. It was, then, a conflict situation at the moral level, which was but the reflection of the conflict situation at the level of ideas and beliefs.

2. Currents of ideas and beliefs

This conflict situation stemmed from the simultaneous presence of different cultural currents. The

appearance of the Germanic populations in the West Roman area entailed the introduction of a certain wash of ideas and beliefs which, while not reinforced by the reputation of its spiritual superiority, was, to some extent and for some time, reinforced by the state of social dominance of its bearers. But this wash of ideas and beliefs was not founded on an even field, for Roman traditions and Christianity made it difficult to adjust to it, and even Christianity constituted a complex system of beliefs.

The invasions played out on Christianised territory, where the fusion between paganism and Christianity was still precarious. The ancient pagan religion having been formally rejected, its worship had been relegated to the recalcitrant; yet the ideas and beliefs that stemmed from Roman polytheism had certainly not disappeared, even in Rome itself. On the first occasion, when the usurper Eugenius seized power in 392, the supporters of the old traditions succeeded in having the statue of Victory, which had already been the cause of bitter disputes, re-erected in the Senate. One can assume the vigour that those traditions would retain if they could even mobilise their bearers in daring defence of their symbols. Boethius still considered it a glory to have attained public dignities, but there is no shortage of other testimonies, for both Saint Jerome and Saint Augustine will repeatedly return to the subject. These traditions were more alive in other parts and preserved their full force in rural areas. But this force was noticeably waning and losing its capacity to oppose the pervasive catechesis supported by the state and by the vigorous organization of the Church.

Indeed, the strength of Christianity was overwhelming and achieved victory after victory. The Church became a privileged institution, and the doctrine attended to various spiritual needs with appropriate solutions. At the most elemental strata, thaumaturgy effectively answered the need to perceive the supernatural force immediately, and ritual satisfied the aspiration to mystery. But Christianity did not stop there. It offered a doctrine of salvation for all those worried about the afterlife, and also an escape from reality for those seeking one. Vigorous Roman realism (Boethius still repeated that 'preserving life is the greatest thought men have') was opposed by a tendency to underestimate reality, which was, of course, to constitute one of the deepest features of cultural change in the centuries to come.

It was from Neoplatonism, above all, that Christianity drew a marked tendency to despise sensible reality as fallible and precarious, and to locate man's purpose only in the world of the intelligible, which Christianity understood as the kingdom of God. Little by little, alongside the image of the earthly world – a sensible world – as the exclusive setting for human adventure appeared another image of it as a mere place of transit in which none of the enduring, fundamental values resided. And a conflict would arise between these two concepts, the former of which gradually gave way to the latter as it grew stronger.

The Germanic peoples added to this conflict situation a new flow of ideas and beliefs. Already converted to Arian Christianity, some groups – Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Burgunds, Suevi, Lombards – joined the Western sphere; others, on the other hand, like the Franks, the Angles, the Saxons, kept up their old Odinic beliefs, but even the former group showed scant penetration of the doctrine and in all of them there remained a strong naturalistic trend that implied a vague connection between sensible reality and a supernatural world in which unknown forces were at work that transcended the real world. Certain groups, in direct early contact with the Roman Empire and later disconnected from the old hearths of the Germanic line, gave in sooner to Romano-Christian influence, while those that long remained in direct contact with the unconverted populations outside Christianity's sphere of action, persisted longer in their beliefs and kept certain original tendencies hidden. The process of spiritual agglutination and reduction of the whole social complex of the Western world to the common denominator of Christianity was, then, conducted on very different foundations, its stages were many and highly various and the results at every instant varied greatly according to circumstances of time and place. This explains why, at the level of ideas and beliefs, a conflict situation is found that is comparable and parallel to the one seen in the system of social relations.

3. The image of the world: reality and unreality

This conflict situation is most noticeable in the gradual change undergone by the image of the world, reflecting the shift in values acting upon sensible reality. Unambiguous and unmistakable terms such as reality and unreality in the Roman image of the world began to blur their boundaries and project an imprecise scale for the appraisal of life.

All the cultural currents that flowed together in the Romano-Germanic area admitted an undeniable, albeit obscure relationship between the natural and the social reality; this belief grew steadily stronger and tended to become a strict system, capable of providing clear norms. A strange meeting of ideas allowed Isidore of Seville, speaking of nature, to say that 'the rivers grow exceedingly not only to inflict a present damage, but also, sometimes, to signify certain things to come.' This correlation might indifferently entail either the indirect expression of the divine will or a vague animistic or pantheistic idea, or an imprecise astrological doctrine. But whatever the implications of such a judgment, the close, necessary relationship between these two aspects of reality was rooted in people's minds and was one of the criteria for interpreting social reality and its changes. Isidore himself applies it on more than one occasion, at one point using a careful description of the physical phenomenon, to which he adds two side notes: one on the relationship between the magnitude of the historical event and the abundance of signs, and another on the evidence of the divine design to accentuate the significance of the event, and Gregory of Tours comes back to the same criterion

time and again. The relationship appears to be so obvious that the historian describes the sign by pointing to the fortuitous imminence of the phenomenon it was supposed to herald even if this was unknown or unimagined.

But this relationship admitted more than one explanation, according to the currently held beliefs. Christians attributed the signs to their gods and saints as a matter of utmost obviousness, but Isidore is quick to point out that there were some who saw other forces in those signs and that others besides Christian priests claimed the ability to interpret them according to their beliefs. Litorius, the head of the Roman army, had been taken in 'by the signs of the demons and the answers of the haruspices,' and Isidore, bewailing the consequences of his mistake, admits that, though 'misleading', there are 'wonders of devils' to be observed; that is, certain supernatural forces are manifested, but without their signs exactly matching the course of events ordained by Providence.

Inasmuch as it affirmed the need for historical order, Christian providencialism, then, coincided with other beliefs according to which nature vaguely or precisely expressed the course of history as moved by gods – which the Christians considered devils – or by mysterious imprecise forces that were only recognised through these signs. Little by little Christian providencialism swept along all these beliefs and tried to reduce all mysterious forces to the idea of God, but, underlying this, all those beliefs – some Roman, others Germanic – remained valid. One idea, however, grew stronger in the struggle between the different explanatory systems: that reality – both natural and social – reflected a mysterious world and expressed the decisive hidden forces dwelling within it.

This world seemed to go beyond the world of sensible reality and take it by such storm that a range of intelligible and unintelligible phenomena were offered up simultaneously to experience. To prove that contemporary experience showed vigorous signs of the presence of intelligible phenomena, it should suffice that it seemed necessary to stress, assert and substantiate the existence of unintelligible phenomena. References to wonders abound, but this very abundance proves the vitality of the immediate experience where explicable and intelligible phenomena are concerned. Unintelligible or supernatural phenomena tend to affirm the co-existence of what experience deemed normal and what abnormal. And it is undeniable that dissemination of the belief in the supernatural set the tendency not to discriminate between reality and unreality or between normal and abnormal reality.

But in the first few centuries following the conquest, the process of systematically imposing the supernatural on immediate experience was still under way. The strength of the latter demanded that the full force of what contradicted it should be vigorously asserted; and while there were elements in all the cultural traditions converging in the area at the time, prompting that progressive

indiscrimination between normal and abnormal reality, none, however, felt the need to assert the reality of unreality as vigorously as Christianity did. And this was what channelled those vague tendencies towards the mysterious that operated in the Roman and Germanic spirits.

The spectacle of the celestial vault seemed to hold unfathomable mysteries. At times the appearance of a comet was remarked upon, at others the darkening of the moon, the red colour of the sky, the appearance of fireballs or strange circles around the sun and, on some occasions, it rained blood: 'many people,' says Gregory of Tours, 'received it on their clothing spattered so gorily that they stripped them off themselves in horror.' There seemed to be no shortage of similar wonders on earth: mountains that low for sixty days and finally collapse, lakes whose waters boil or turn to blood, trees that bloom out of season or bear fruit different from their kind, waters that possess mysterious powers. But surely wonders could not be imagined as coming about without a cause. If nature veered off its regular track and onto a different one, it was because it wished to signal something that truly mattered in the field of socio-cultural life. There are bodies that are not corrupted by death, but they are those of the martyrs or saints; wonders occur around certain tombs or certain places linked in one way or another to a saint; grass grows lusher or a magical power is transmitted to objects related to the episode or even to the dust of the place; blood flows from the host or fountains mysteriously fill on a certain date corresponding to Easter, according to the orthodox thesis. This appeal to the wonder presupposed a will to interpret reality supernaturally. Bede tells us that one traveller observed that, on a certain patch of ground, the grass grew 'greener and more beautiful than the others,' and adds that 'he wisely inferred that there could be no other cause for that unusually intense green colour than that some man holier than the others had perished there'; and he also composed his *De tonitruislibellus* to explain the significance of thunder. This type of evidence of the supernatural's action on nature would have vast implications; once admitted, it encouraged all reality to be eventually interpreted according to this principle: the abnormal behaviour of nature itself, the action of irrational beings and human action, attributing to evil a value of punishment and a divine instrument to its author; but the naturalistic interpretation remained powerful; a certain sometimes conspicuous realism stalks the pages of the chroniclers, bearing witness to naturalism's reluctance to yield totally to a supernatural explanation. This confluence of interpretations is the source of a curious interpenetration of reality and unreality. In a digression on the resurrection, after adducing numerous texts, Gregory of Tours says to an unbeliever: 'This resurrection is shown to us by elements visible to our eyes; we see the grasses, covered with foliage in the summer, divested of it in the winter, and regaining their mantle of foliage in the spring as if resurrected. It is recognised even in the seeds cast to the earth, entrusted to the furrows; they eventually die but are immediately reborn in an abundance of fruit, as Paul the apostle says: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die?" All these things are made manifest to the world that it may believe in the resurrection.' The phenomenon that escapes sensible experience is, then, assimilated to the one known through sensible experience, thus tending to

assert the intimate interpenetration of reality and unreality.

But this world of unreality – which would develop even further – was already little by little gathering remarkable scope. It constituted, in principle, a sphere with an existence of its own which could be discovered by various channels but concealed its particular structure. It was the world of God and the blessed, and also of the mysterious beings in which different traditions believed and which Christianity lumped together under the label of devils; and it was also a world of fantastic beings. This world was bursting onto the scene and showing itself adventitiously to man, but it was still possible for man – in waking or in dreams – to enter into it and even to have a precise and direct image of it: nothing will subsequently characterise 'adventure' as much as its possible development in the world of unreality.

Christianity offered a relatively clear idea of the afterworld. The kingdom of God and the blessed might vary in the descriptions, but it could be presented in a coherent way. However, when it came to spreading this idea in the Roman and Germanic minds, certain clashes occurred, from which there resulted a particular conception of unreality. Even accepting the idea of the Christian God in theory, the idea of vernacular gods was allowed to survive, and a certain type of belief in their existence and power may obscurely have been upheld. There was no shortage of comparisons. If, in the memorable episode of Coifi, the high priest of Northumbria, the contrast favoured the Christian God as it did in so many other stories, the thought that Gregory of Tours places in the mouth of the dying King Chlothar in 561 is significant. In the midst of his suffering, he said: 'Alas, what do you think He is, that God of heaven who puts to death such powerful kings thus?' There is an abundance of texts drawing attention to the mechanism of conversion, which was almost always driven by a criterion of effectiveness. The divinity of Christianity ended up seeming more powerful, and the intervention of thaumaturgy in this decision is well known. But this mechanism proves that it was not absolutely necessary to sacrifice the earlier belief to the new one, not to mention the fact that the operative religious sentiment here was, on the whole, quite elementary. It is not unbelievable, then, that for many people after the conversions, the world of unreality was populated simultaneously by the Christian god and the blessed, and by numerous beings of a divine, perchance imprecise nature that co-existed with them. Maintained by superstition, by atavism, the gravity of their influence varied depending on the degree of profundity attained by the Christian faith in each consciousness; but they did not disappear from the world of beliefs, and they operated in different ways. They were remembered by the traditions of the Germanic peoples, a memory fed particularly by the persistence of the old beliefs in the still unconverted branches, and they long survived the onslaught Christianity launched against them. Bede himself recalls Woden as a fourth-generation ancestor of Hengist and Horsa.

Martin of Dumio and Isidore of Seville offer a typically euhemeristic explanation of the pagan

gods and avoid naming the Germanic gods or explaining their nature; Gregory of Tours reminds us that 'the Franks had fashioned idols for themselves from the woods, waters, birds and wild beasts, and from other objects, and were in the custom of worshipping them as divinities and offering sacrifices up to them,' and he puts an oft-repeated argument into Clotilde's mouth about the pagans' so-called gods being made 'of stone, wood or metal'; but the gods' Germanic names are avoided and confused with Latin names. Martin of Dumio also speaks of the worship paid to 'rocks, trees and fountains; of the custom of lighting candles at crossroads, adorning tables, dishing out laurels, throwing food and wine in the fire or bread into fountains, and many other superstitions.' Bede claimed that evil spirits strode the air. These, then, were denied, but their character as existing beings and as supernatural in origin was, on occasion, accepted, and they were assimilated as devils.

A ready accommodation assimilated devils plural to *the* Devil singular. Once the ancient gods had been relegated, they were transformed into evil spirits, but, their circumstantial power asserted itself and prevented them being forgotten, thus compelling Christianity to fight them. The method involved precisely this assimilation to devils, the retinue and army of the Devil of the Christian tradition. In this imagining of the world of unreality, the role of the Devil and his retinue of evil spirits was immense. They were deemed to be the necessary cause of all evils, sometimes by way of hypothesis, yet appealing to unanimous consensus; one is reminded that 'he never sleeps', that he is the 'ancient enemy' of man and that 'he knows many future things'; but the most important thing is that the Devil 'has a thousand artifices for evildoing'; sometimes he creates illusions that deceive man, sometimes he adopts the most unlikely forms: a bird, a woman, a black boy or simply with the conventional, imprecise appearance of a strange being shooting fire from his eyes. Reality thus virtually acquired the possibility of never being what it appeared to be, and an inkling of doubt about what it was and was not crept in. Reality and unreality thereby constituted a single entity, with no possibility of any certain discrimination. And sometimes, the Devil ensconces himself in a human being and dominates his reason or instincts; the 'possessed' is characterised by certain external signs: tremors, spasms, gnashing of teeth and, above all, mental derangement, which sometimes puts the individual into a trance and affords him certain extraordinary capabilities. Man appears as such but is merely an instrument of a malign power that defies human reason with the enigma of what his true nature is. Saint Cuthbert, Bede recounts, looked at the symptoms of a woman's disease and came to the conclusion that 'it was no ordinary illness but a visit from the Devil.' Ordinary illness belonged to the realm of what Isidore of Seville called 'known nature'; but nature for him is the reflection of God's will and therefore includes not just known nature but also nature that appears abnormal, extraordinary or portentous. The world of unreality, then, is enriched. It not only contains celestial and diabolic beings but also those in which the divine will or evil beings sought to express their own power in uncommon fashion. Generally following Pliny, Isidore of Seville, elaborates on the latter. He speaks of beings that transform themselves and change species, being founded 'on

history, not on fable', or on reasonings which he erroneously deems appropriate to the description of nature, as when he claims that 'from the putrid flesh of the bullock issue bees, beetles from horses, lobsters from the mule and crabs from the scorpion, as we read in Ovid.' He claims there is much talk of marvels that are false but admits that 'there are, in the universe, certain monstruous peoples, such as those of the giants, the cynocephali, cyclops, etc.,' and recalls that the Strait of Sicily is 'full of fabulous monsters' and that Ethiopia 'has a multitude of wild beasts and serpents; the rhinoceros, the giraffe, basilisks and enormous dragons, from whose brains precious stones are extracted.' Isidore refers to *draconite*, of which he says elsewhere that 'it is extracted from the brain of the dragon and does not form a gem save by cutting off the head of the live dragon, wherefore diviners are said to cut off the head while it sleeps.' What, then, distinguishes the plausible from the implausible? The distinction itself appears to lack sense, for only nourished by the mysterious afterworld does the sensible world appear to make sense, only through it does it becomes intelligible by going beyond what would seem to be understood as a true 'naïve realism'. That afterworld is the strict domain of unreality, which was, nevertheless, imagined not as such but as a particular kind of reality.

Unreality increasingly became the supreme goal of knowledge due to the value conferred on it by mystery and the curiosity it awoke, not to mention the value placed on it as being higher than natural, sensible reality. This was implicit in a certain imprecise knowledge that brought together elements of all three traditions: Roman, Germanic and Christian; this knowledge assigned traits of sensible natural reality to certain manifestations of unreality – dwarves, dragons, giants – but did not allocate them to a certain realm of unreality which the Christian tradition had applied itself to defining, namely, the world beyond the grave, the vision of which was radically different from the vague shadow worlds of the Roman tradition and the Germanic Valhalla. The Christian tradition fought dauntlessly to remove from the idea of the afterworld the traits that both enemy traditions – Roman and Germanic – assigned it, while seeking to secure and disseminate its own. The undertaking was difficult enough if attempted in the Hellenic sphere, with its sturdy speculative tradition, but even more so if attempted in the Romano-Germanic area. There seemed to be a need to define, to characterise in sensible images what had not originally been designed per se to be specified in that way; and the effort of catechesis could not be made without concessions.

Regarding the afterworld, there was no place for direct knowledge, only that derived from revelation. One way to attain this directly – or to have the illusion of access – was the vision, a kind of experience that was afforded a supreme value. Gregory the Great explained that the vision was possible because the spirit is 'of a more agile nature than the body' and, carried away by God, it expands to attain a vision similar to that of God himself; in that way, it attained a knowledge of the invisible. Visions sometimes occurred through the eyes of the body, sometimes through the spirit and other times through the intuition of the mind, according to Saint Isidore. Through them man

became clear-sighted and penetrated the unfathomable, the true kingdom of truth.

Sometimes, in a vision, one came to see the world in its totality and in the totality of its misery, radiant in the fires of falsehood, greed, discord and iniquity; sometimes the seer recognised the world of the damned in the form of 'a river of fire into which tumbled a multitude of people running along its edge like a swarm of bees' or of a 'foul and fiery pit' that was the mouth of hell or a cavern of flame full of people, in which the seer might make out the very place set aside for him. Somewhere the judgment took place, and someone envisioned the bitter struggle over a soul between angels and demons. Others glimpsed the heavenly dwellings, heard the choir of angels or the voice of God, smelt intoxicating perfumes that sated hunger and thirst, and perceived extraordinary splendours, or discovered the saints because 'their garments were magnificent and their faces pleasing and lovely such as I had never seen before.' Sometimes, the seer perceived strange, mysterious beings or holy men who had died and returned to predict the future or to advise someone. And occasionally the vision would warn of someone's death, an imminent event or grace granted to someone, as in the curious passage of Caedmon's dream.

A remarkable overflow of imagination tended to specify the form and features of this vague world for which an immensely higher value was asserted than for the world perceived by the senses. As imprecise and vague as its imagining may have been, it prevailed upon the spirit, and its real existence was established with as many – or more – merits as natural empirical reality, which, moreover, was enriched as nature with a virtual reality not verified by experience, but admitted, and made up of beings and things other than those known to empirical experience. All of this went to make up reality – without differentiating between what was empirically real and empirically unreal – and integrated the world. 'Know,' said Bishop Salvius before describing his visions, 'that all you see in this world is nothing', and, on discussing the problem of conversion, one of King Edwin's knights recalled that 'the life of man appears as a short space of time, but we are wholly ignorant of what goes before and what comes after.' This doubt propelled spirits towards the search for mystery and couched the contrast between empirical reality and unreality in terms of dramatic indecision, a contrast accentuated by the unstable tension between the several traditions responding to the problem in different ways.

The rising value of unreality, which was overtaking empirical reality in prestige, is visible in the sense of the real world's finitude that lodges in many spirits. 'The world grows old,' remarked Fredegar melancholically in justifying the decay of wisdom. Gregory of Tours noted that it was 'the terror wrought in some by the view that the end of the world is nigh' that had decided him to write his chronicle, and, with even more authority and basing himself in the Scriptures, Pope Gregory the Great asserted that 'they are near at hand the end of this present world and the kingdom of the saints, which shall never end.' By this point, sensible reality would have disappeared and the

confusion would have disappeared with it: the only reality would be the unreality of the senses.

4. The interaction between reality and unreality

Even identified theoretically, the worlds of empirical reality and unreality presented differences, at least in the type of knowledge whereby man believed he could reach them. At every turn, experiences and beliefs insinuated their contradictions, and man distrusted his experience based on certain beliefs, while tending to resist beliefs based on experience. The resolution of this contradiction seemed be found – in favour of the assertion of the belief in unreality – in a systematic interpretation of the relations of interaction between reality and unreality.

The supernatural interpretation of reality found its supreme expression in the interpretation of human destiny as the result of a justice wielded in an immediate way on earth by Providence as a foretaste of the last justice. In spite of all the risks of interpretation, there was a tendency to justify happiness or misfortune, success or blunder, as subject to the direct will of Providence, no doubt as a result of Christianity's pressing need to accentuate the significance of the afterworld. Unreality was thus claimed to act upon reality, thereby determining the fate of man, to whom a supreme and indisputable authority meted out the reward or punishment on earth that he deserved. The interpretation was undoubtedly over-elaborate and had a marked credulity about it, arising precisely from the tendency to admit unreality. But the reiteration of this interpretation concluded by forming a definite *forma mentis*.

The vigour of the belief in unreality becomes clear when one looks at how the problem of opinions about death was sidestepped. When listing the people who had died on a such and such a date, Gregory of Tours asserted that they were 'called to God', and controversially added: 'for I look upon those as favoured and pleasing to God whom He calls thus from our earth to His paradise.' But death is, at other times, a punishment, and the criterion is, on occasion, confusing or misleading: for example, in one episode of the Orthodox Christians' persecution by Huneric, king of the Arian Vandals, Isidore confirms the death of persecutor and persecuted; but he grades both, pre-empting the heavenly judgment of their conduct, and accordingly considers the persecutor's death to be an evil act, deeming it a punishment, and the persecuted's death to be an act of goodness, deeming it a passage to heaven. A similar criterion was used by Gregory of Tours regarding the two sons of Clovis and Clotilde. Their baptised firstborn child dies after a few days, and they are posed with the problem of responsibility. Clovis believes the child would have lived had he been consecrated to their own gods rather than being baptised a Christian; but Clotilde claims the death of the child is a comfort to her, seeing it as proof that God has not judged her unworthy of bearing a son who should

ascend to the kingdom of heaven. The criterion proposed by Gregory of Tours is reversed shortly after, when he points out that, at his mother's behest, her second son was granted health.

The conflict was certainly nothing new; it was implicit in Christian doctrine but deepened in the spiritual atmosphere of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms due to the particular breed of catechesis practiced by the Church, given the belief system upon which it was supposed to act. It appeared essential – for reasons of catechesis – to accentuate unreality's ability to act upon reality. And the interpretation that emerged – more a child of the Old Testament than the New – consisted of establishing a strong causal relationship between the facts of reality and certain powerful forces of unreality, a relationship in which the Christian moral system and the policy of the Church played a key role. 'Should someone wish to look upon this event as an effect of chance…' says Gregory of Tours. In principle, fire, plague, disease and every other calamity were signs of divine wrath as manifested in concrete facts about the conduct of certain groups or individuals. But despite evidence to the contrary in so many unjust victories, victory and the conquest of new territories could signify the prize awarded by Providence. It is no surprise that Bede should take it as read that King Edwin of Northumbria – whom he describes as virtuous and accepting of the new Christian faith – should receive, 'as a token of his participation in the kingdom of heaven, an increase of what he enjoyed on earth'; but it does come as a surprise when Gregory of Tours voices the opinion that Clovis, whose crimes he had described at length, was victorious because he 'walked with straight heart before the Lord and did the things that are pleasing to His eyes.'

The relationship between reality and unreality was certainly asserted as necessary; Bede plainly states that the Saxons, whom Bishop Wilfrid had benefited by obtaining rains and abundant fishing through thaumaturgical means, trustingly began to 'await heavenly goods, seeing that they had, through his aid, secured worldly goods.'

To reinforce this idea there were tailored interpretations of the Scriptures and prophecies. It was not hard to adapt certain very general, vaguely prophetic passages to certain specific events, and there was no hesitation in using the procedure. Plagues, famines, persecutions, pillaging and killing, as well as the failure of certain plans appeared to be explainable by the occasional prophetic text mentioning such things. 'And so it was to fulfil what Scripture says,' remarks the interpreter, establishing a direct, unequivocal relationship between vague prediction and real concrete fact. But this relationship did not seem to be an arbitrary adjudication of the exegete but a precise determination of the sacred text, which seemed to be accepted as speaking generally of a certain limited repertoire of human actions that had to conform again and again to those general schemata. Containing divine wisdom, it seemed inconceivable that it should not contain an explanation of every circumstance. This explains the curious procedure used to tell the future through the sacred books by opening them at random after placing them on a consecrated place

and consulting the text offered up chance. Moreover, the prophetic gift could act upon any person, for 'not only the good but also the wicked may have a prophetic spirit,' and reveal the intricacies of the reality that were hidden from the observer; cases abound, but those provided repeatedly by the life of Saint Benedict are truly exemplary, and the prophecy of Hospitius as recounted by Gregory of Tours is no less curious.

Disregarding, then, all the elements of reality that contradicted this close and necessary relationship between reality and unreality, the preoccupation with catechesis tended to force its evidence by accentuating unreality's capacity to act upon reality. But the principle that it was possible to operate on unreality through reality so that this, in turn, acted in a certain way upon reality also suited Christian catechesis, thus satisfying certain underlying tendencies in the other traditions upon which it operated.

Various currents of magical beliefs did indeed act to promote that principle, and Christian catechesis came up against them and acknowledged their presence. Isidore of Seville devoted a long and detailed chapter to magic, in which, while urging the Christian to keep away from it, he paused to explain its different forms, regarding the powers of magicians as real and attributing their origins to Zoroaster and Democritus – as Pliny does – but ascribing inspiration to 'wicked angels'. 'They disrupt the elements, disturb the minds of men and, without any poison, kill only by the violence of their verse', he says. Far from considering them mere charlatans, he admits that 'they invoke devils and dare to teach how to kill their enemies with evil arts' and that necromancers 'summon the dead, who foretell things hidden and answer their questions.' He points out that diviners 'pretend they are filled with God' but acknowledges that 'they predict the future to men with fraudulent craft.' He wishes to combat magic but implicitly recognises its importance, the credit it enjoys and that it is indeed a reprehensible but effective means of working upon unreality. A scholarly scruple obliges him to point out the magical virtues attributed to each of the gems.

The torrent of magical beliefs was enriched by the surviving traditions of the ancient indigenous populations of Romans and Germans. But what is significant is that these beliefs persisted among the converted peoples, a strange fact noted by Procopius in reference to the Goths. Christianity lacked the strength needed to erase belief in the efficacy of magical techniques and recognised that non-converted peoples set the force of magical powers against Christianity. Gregory of Tours discovered them amongst the Huns – a name he probably uses to label the Avars – whom he credited with having summoned ghosts before the eyes of the Franks with a view to defeating them; Einhard points them out among the Saxons and Ermold the Black among the Normans. These beliefs were no doubt invigorated as Christianity tried to oust them by replacing them with similar beliefs based on Christian thaumaturgy, for it goes without saying that, while the explanation differed, the general principle of the possibility of acting upon unreality was strengthened and would

resurface with its pre-Christian character whenever any circumstance empaled the prestige of Christianity.

Either way, beneath the declared belief in the principles of Christianity, magical beliefs cropped up again and again in all the Romano-Germanic peoples. Martin of Dumio devoted the treatise entitled *De correctionerusticorum* to pinpointing the beliefs that survived among the newly converted Suebi: superstitions about moths, mice, locusts; the enchantment of hares; the invocation of demons; the value attached to the flight of birds; the worship of stones, trees and springs. Among the Visigoths, there were countless conciliar and legal provisions condemning those who venerated idols, consulted diviners, worshiped springs, stones or trees, invoked devils, made bonds or performed enchantments. Bede noted that, among Northumbrians, 'many profaned the faith, and some would, in times of mortality, resort to incantations, spells and other secrets of the diabolic arts.' Among the Franks, there were those who practised the magical arts, such as Prefect Mummolus, and the women of Paris, who confessed that 'they had used curses and made a lot of people die', or the man from Bourges who 'foretold the future, announced diseases or other misfortunes, by arts diabolical and I know not what deceits'; so deeply rooted were these beliefs that magicians were followed by the masses; but they were also shared by kings and noblemen; Gontran Boson 'frequently consulted diviners and casters of fates' and Gundoald sent his deputies 'with hallowed wands, according to the custom of the Franks so that they should suffer no injury.' On one occasion, the Frankish kings who laid siege to Saragossa fled when they saw the besieged walking the walls dressed in the tunic of Saint Vincent, as 'they believed that they were weaving some evil spell'; and Fredegar recounts that King Adaloald of the Lombards, 'rubbed in the bath with I know not what ointment at the persuasion of Emperor Maurice's envoy, could not, on coming out of it, do anything but his bidding.' These beliefs were nevertheless still shared by the clergy: Bishop Palladius felt that his 'metropolitan suffered from a very great evil eye' and there were conciliar provisions that established the penalty of deposition for 'bishops, priests or clergymen' professing illicit arts and especially for anyone who said 'mass for the dead to cause another's death'.

The certainty that particular people possessed a special power to influence the world and life through mysterious forces whose existence was undoubted acted decisively, then, upon the predominant conception of reality in the Romano-Germanic area. Christianity anathematised this belief insofar as it relied on forces or divinities it did not tolerate and used rites stemming from cults and beliefs proscribed by it. But it did not and could not deny the radical fact that a supernatural force – now Providence – was acting upon the world and life nor that this force was prone to being induced in certain ways to given specific ends. Providential design resided in God himself, and God could be petitioned. But nearer at hand to men and more closely related to each specific community were individuals marked out by their holiness to whom a supernatural power was attributed in every region by virtue of what could be expected of their assistance or the thaumaturgical power

inhabiting their relics. For reasons of catechesis and because it suffered the influence of the dominant beliefs, Christianity transferred the virtues and powers that the thaumaturges saw in other forces to the saints; and, in a difficult period of propagation and affirmation of the faith, it sought and found refuge in the fear inspired by the power of the saints and its priests in those who kept magical beliefs alive and well. The fear inspired by Saint Martin of Tours is one of Gregory of Tours's pet themes. Clovis, Chlothar and Childebert altered their designs 'for fear of Saint Martin the bishop', who was sometimes said to punish directly anyone who desecrated his shrine, and Chilperic's soldiers would sometimes disobey his orders for the same reason. Isidore of Seville recounts that a Gothic magnate experienced sheer dread on hearing Saint Peter's name pronounced when he seized certain sacred vessels and ordered everything to be returned, saying 'he had waged war against the Romans, not against the apostles.' This sacred fear extended to priests who asserted the power of God and the saints; King Thierry retreated in panic at the threats of Saint Columbanus, and, when they expelled him from Luxeuil, his soldiers begged the monk to pardon them for having to carry out an order from the king. No doubt the fame of the wonder-working Christian priests was spreading. Such feats in the minds of those with but a rudimentary level of Christianity could only resemble those believed to be worked by magicians.

This fear was, at least, justified by widespread accounts of wonders worked sometimes by objects assumed to have a supernatural power and sometimes by people manifesting such a power. The objects were primarily relics: parts of the bodies of saints, the remnants of an object that had been familiar to them or any other object that had come into contact with them or their shrine.

In a show of defiance of the laws of nature, a drop of holy water could fill a cup over and over, a speck of dust on a saint's tomb could increase its volume when Providence wished to bring to an unbeliever's spirit the certainty of its power. Against all odds, a relic could avert a catastrophe, a shipwreck or a fire. The power of amulets and talismans had clearly been transferred to the relic. Where its action has most bearing and is most repeatedly highlighted is in regard to man himself and to his suffering: the relic is especially effective at curing illnesses, which are thereby automatically explained as being sent by a supernatural power. Sometimes it is the Devil, as in the case of the possessed, but Providence always has the power to tame him. The mad, the paralytic, the blind, all those suffering from grave maladies nurtured the hope that a relic would work the wonder in them, and the cure, should there be one, left a lasting memory which, moreover, it was sought to preserve properly in order to serve the purposes of catechesis. Merely spending time in the cave in Subiaco where Saint Benedict had lived was, according to Gregory the Great, enough to cure a deranged woman. The tombs of the saints, the objects in contact with them, the dust from their graves, they could all bring about the miracle cure. Possession of a relic enhanced the prestige of a monastery or church because, ostensibly, only through special grace of Providence did one come to own one, but above all because of the faith it inspired and the superstitious respect it

imposed. Belief in the magical power of a saint's relic may not have been accompanied by any sort of religious faith or compenetration with the principles of doctrine. Mummolus the patrician – who had a reputation as a magician – even dared to break Saint Sergius's finger bone, which he had taken by force in the certainty that one of its fragments would endow him with supernatural power. But at the same time as the Church made use of this transfer of amulets' and talismans' power to the relics of saints, it laid the foundations of a theory about them: rather than an ability to operate necessarily according to its owner's design or need, relics operated through the purpose of Providence to bring the certainty of their power 'to feeble spirits'; such is the theory developed by Gregory the Great. The wonder was, then, a sign of the existence and power of the afterworld and, according to the theory, only acted as divine grace, since magical beliefs interpreted it in practice as the result of a necessary relationship between reality and some higher power.

But the possibility of acting upon unreality through the power of relics was quite simply a practical problem. In spite of the thesis that Providence worked the wonder in order to manifest its will and existence before 'feeble spirits', there was in practice a belief in the power of the relic because it was assigned a mission similar to the one attributed to talismans and amulets. Regardless of Gregory the Great's theory, this was the belief stimulated by the Church, as it availed itself of it to enhance the prestige of churches and monasteries and, above all, to defend them and the priestly condition from the aggressions of secular power. Thaumaturgy, operated directly by 'men of God', as they were in the habit of calling themselves, held a similar meaning.

It is significant that John of Biclaro deemed it worth mentioning in his short chronicle that, at one time, 'Donato, abbot of the Servite monastery, is reputed to be an eminent thaumaturge.' Like relics, the thaumaturgy of one of its members had repercussions on the community's prestige; but it also served the cause of exalting the priestly class in a society that tended to underestimate it through the force of de facto situations. The defence of doctrine, Church and clergy needed this kind of support in order to counteract the de facto force of political and military power by appealing to another irrefragable force majeure. Christians felt secure as sharers in a supernatural force. Polemicising with the Arians in his account of an episode in which a woman dies from a poison administered to her in the chalice from which she was taking communion, Gregory of Tours goes so far as to say: 'Such a crime was indubiously the work of the Devil. How could those miserable Arian heretics deny it when the enemy finds a place amongst them even at the Eucharist? We who confess a Trinity equal in rank and power would have drunk the deadly poison, and it would have done us no harm.'

Partly due to leakage of the old magical beliefs and partly as a result of a deliberate purpose on the Church's part, thaumaturgical force, which was systematically spread by legend as being peculiar to certain individuals, had to be assimilated to magical power. Bede recalls that a Christian prisoner

who could not be bound and who was asked if he had a spell on him replied that he knew nothing of such artifices, 'but,' he added, 'I do have a brother who is a priest in my parts, and I know that, supposing me dead, he has ordered masses to be said for me.' A mechanical supplantation of one instrument for another allowed the idea to be perpetuated that it was possible to act upon reality through unreality.

Thaumaturgy involved a bold appeal to credulity, for numerous clergy tended, in terms of power, to emulate the thaumaturges whose wonders they spread abroad. These wonders were related to concrete everyday situations, which, repeated over and over again, repeatedly created the right occasions for the repetition of the wonder. But the growing certainty about the earthly world's dependency on the afterworld made it possible to overcome the empirical evidence when the wonder did not transpire, and certain systematically reiterated explanations about the merits justifying the gift of grace were sufficient.

Such situations preferably involved illness, suffering and death. Miracle cures were the most powerful weapon in the thaumaturge's arsenal, and the one whose power was wielded most effectively by legend. On occasion it was a king who worked the miracle, but usually it was clergymen. Sometimes it was enough for a holy man to touch the sick man, sometimes to pray for him, sometimes to invoke the sign of the cross, holy water, holy oils or consecrated host. The miracle of restoring sight to a blind man, speech to a mute or movement to an invalid left an enduring impression, as did delivering one possessed by the Devil. But what represented the consecration of the thaumaturge was the power to save a dying man or bring a dead man back to life. The thaumaturge's intervention can pluck a man from the gates of death but can sometimes restore him to life when he is already beyond its limits; twice Gregory the Great relates that Saint Benedict performed this miracle through the power of prayer despite declaring, when the miracle was demanded of him: 'Stand aside, brothers, stand aside, for these things are not for us but for the holy Apostles. Why do you wish to impose on us burdens that we cannot bear?'; and, through his prayers, Eparcus the monk succeeded in making a hanged man fall to the ground and regain life.

Resurrection presupposed a breach of natural law; and much as Boethius reminded us that nature has an inviolable order, hagiography admitted that the order of 'known' nature may – as Saint Isidore pointed out – be breached, and it was legitimate for the thaumaturge to do this many times over. He could make water gush where there seemed to be none or prevent rain from wetting a given place; he could change the winds or master a storm to save a ship from wreck, make the land yield a crop out of season or animals do his bidding. On occasion, he was granted the power to change water into wine or multiplying oil, and it did not seem beyond the realms of possibility that his strength might grow to superhuman limits or he might walk on water, for the thaumaturge – or those who helped weave his legend – always had before him the range of possibilities offered by the life

of Christ.

Thaumaturgical power also extended over men. Abbot Maxentius, ‘of admirable holiness’, was capable of staying the arm of a soldier who was about to cut off his head, and Saint Benedict had only to set eyes on a peasant whose hands had been bound by an Arian for his bonds to undo themselves ‘in wondrous fashion’. In one combat, Bishop Germanus could secure victory for his followers in spite of the actual strength of the combatants: as John of Biclaro notes, ‘it is not hard for Our Lord to bestow victory on the few against the many,’ a view he proved with the biblical example of Gideon and another contemporary one – that he wished to explain with that opinion – of Duke Claudio, who ‘drove off almost sixty thousand Franks with barely three hundred men and slew most of them with the sword.’

A halo of mystery surrounded the thaumaturge. He could be supposed to be a man endowed with supernatural powers by divine grace, a mere instrument of God or rewarded thus by his holiness. But there would always remain the uncertainty as to whether he whom fame had made a thaumaturge was not in fact a supernatural being that had taken on human form. Bede tells how the stranger who promised Edwin the throne vanished after he had spoken to him, so that ‘the king realised this was no man but a spirit,’ and Gregory of Tours describes as an angel the mysterious character in Antioch who, ‘raising his hand shook his scarf over the half of the city, whereupon the buildings collapsed.’ Once again, uncertainty about the limits between reality and unreality emerges as a distinctive feature of the image of the world that was taking shape.

The decisive proof of the existence of unreality lay precisely in its action upon reality, in such a way that the proof of what the real power dominating unreality was could only be attained through the efficacy of those invoking it. The reasoning that Gregory of Tours places in the mouth of Clovis on the occasion of combat with the Germans is similar to the one that Bede attributes to Coifi, the high priest of Northumbria and Ermold to Herold, king of the Normans; if those who have hitherto been regarded as gods are incapable of acting in favour of their faithful, it is also legitimate then to inquire which are the true ones – the effective ones, that is – and abandon the first ones for them. Conversely, Christian catechesis – and that of Roman orthodoxy vis-à-vis dissident sects – sought to demonstrate the superiority of its thaumaturges over those invoking another power or following heterodox paths. The prediction of a pythoness is imprecise, but the dream of Gregory of Tours on the same subject tallies exactly with the reality: ‘it is God of whom we have to ask these things; it is necessary not to believe what the Devil promises.’ Gregory of Tours himself points out that one of the causes of Recarred’s conversion was that he observed that ‘the bishops of the heretics visited no miraculous cure upon the sick’; and the certainty of the miracle’s impression upon spirits led the hagiographer to point up the successes scored by the thaumaturges of his faith as compared to others, sometimes in such real tournaments as those described by Bede: in the presence of the sick

man, he who performs the miracle shows he has invoked the true God and follows the path that God wishes. This efficacy of the thaumaturge, then, resolved the problem of the eminent significance of unreality for reality and made it possible to establish the correct ways to provoke its action upon reality.

Thaumaturgy – the last hope – seemed to compete advantageously with natural knowledge, and hagiography would highlight its triumphs. The natural knowledge of the time certainly lacked a sufficiently solid base – a theory of nature – to enable it to withstand the onslaught of beliefs which kindled an image of reality whose roots ran deep into unreality. Natural knowledge, insofar as being related to the duration of illnesses, was empirical and possessed a doctrinal support comparable to thaumaturgy's: a theory of suffering as punishment or proof counterbalanced by a hope in all-powerful grace. Uncertainty about the origin of evil announces the legitimacy of this fluctuation between confidence in natural knowledge and confidence in thaumaturgy. Speaking about Emperor Justinian, Juan of Biclaro claimed he was afflicted by a serious illness 'which some consider a disorder of the brain and others a demonic ailment.' The second thesis gained ground as the primacy of unreality conquered spirits, whilst the naturalist tradition lost it. Increasingly, thaumaturgy seemed to be the proper technique to combat an ailment, for it was not limited – as medical knowledge was – to attacking its signs or apparent causes but was directed at the force that was causing it. A mute who had an infection in the head clearly demonstrated the problem: the thaumaturge took upon himself the task of restoring his speech – which the hagiographer considered a miracle – but then delegated the curing of the infection to a physician, which only turned out well, however, because the thaumaturge aided the physician with his blessings. The hagiographers underline that profane knowledge recognises its inferiority to thaumaturgy. Bishop Germanus was suffering with a broken leg and could stand no medicine; but one night there appeared to him a strange being dressed in white who ordered him to stand, which he did without difficulty; the most skilled physicians of the monastery of Lindisfarne failed to cure the paralytic monk, who nevertheless recovered his health thanks to the shoes of Saint Cuthbert; and Cynefrith the physician admitted that the body of Queen Aethelthryth, who had retained her virginity and given up the throne in order to enter a monastery, was not only intact sixteen days after her death but the sore that had caused her death had healed. This evidence of the miracle also struck – according to the hagiographer – the Scottish scholar, a man schooled in earthly knowledge but unencumbered by the salvation of his soul, who turned to the relics of King Oswald in search of salvation and found it; not to mention those whom the miracle had not yet convinced, as Gregory of Tours reminded them, after relating the case of a blind man who had begun to regain his sight at the tomb of Saint Martin but who had lost it again because he had gone to see a Jewish doctor: 'May every Christian know, then, by this example, that when one has obtained heavenly remedies, one should not resort to worldly science.' This competition between worldly knowledge and thaumaturgy revealed the indecision between two conceptions of reality that stood side by side,

without, of course, the steady assertion of unreality ending in the annihilation of a naturalist realism with sturdy ancient roots.

III. The Tendency to Stabilization

A situation ridden with conflict at both the socio-economic and socio-cultural levels: that is the predominant feature of the Romano-Germanic area. But, revealing as the accounts of that indecision between social groups and currents of ideas in defining its supreme importance are, they cannot quite hide the signs of an incipient – or renewed – tendency towards the establishment of an order – a system of principles – that would underwrite the forms of social co-existence and opinions about the world and life. This tendency was manifested in those on whom the troubles conferred or maintained a privileged position in whatever walk of life and was embodied in the Roman Catholic Church and the groups holding political power. This tendency to order could be said to tend – or at least to entail the tendency – to resolve the situations of conflict.

But while the groups that held political power lacked any set criterion and, on the contrary, wavered between two political conceptions for which they could find no agreement or adjustment, the Church could claim a vigorous tradition. tried and tested in contact with reality under less challenging circumstances and upheld by an institutional edifice built on solid foundations. Amid such contradictory circumstances, it was therefore able subtly to introduce a tendency to order which had first to embrace the cultural level but which was very soon being projected at the social level. The order glimpsed then by the Roman Catholic Church was destined soon to succeed; but it only began to emerge through many difficulties and amidst glaring contradictions.

If the Church was able to articulate a conception of social co-existence and, above all, one of the world and life, this was because it was based on a doctrine and constituted a body that acted as one of the forces of social reality. By contrast, the Church clung to its institutional structure and doctrine, setting it as a whole against local situations and the ephemeral phenomena occurring around it. But the Church in and of itself possessed a constitutive tendency to order that stemmed from its very own doctrine. The creation constituted an order, and both the afterworld and the world were hierarchically ordered, as established by so-called Dionysius the Areopagite. The vast development of parish organization during the sixth and seventh centuries, and the traditional episcopal order at the head of the Church, provided it with a universal, regional and local organization beyond contemporary political organization and enabled it to feel like a stable, permanent mainstay of society, whereas political organization could be considered mutable and transitory. And as the tendency towards differentiation in local politics was introduced, the Church seemed to assert its

ecumenical structure; it accordingly sought the conversion of the whole of the West, so confident of success in the venture that it did not hesitate to project its episcopal organization onto unbelieving societies.

But, above all, the Church had a doctrine capable of withstanding the disintegrative tendencies inherent in the situation. This doctrine referred to the afterworld and the world. And although it was forced to yield or comply, it was strong enough never completely to lose sight of its fundamental principles. Yet what was most significant was the process of reducing the forms of social co-existence to its own models, precisely those forms on which the least docile of the conflicting elements – namely, the Germanic – exerted the most influence.

This process was driven by a longing for order at the civil and political levels, a longing the Church undoubtedly shared with the groups holding political power, but which it understood with greater breadth and perspective, because, while these groups could find no formula to express their vague aspirations – as feudal monarchy would later become – the Church possessed a theory of political power which, if not entirely compatible with reality, was at least consistent with its ideas about the world and life. This theory stemmed from the fusion of biblical and Roman elements, which had gradually coalesced, disguising certain internal contradictions; but, amid the uncertainties of this period, the Church did assert some coherent thinking. When it praised or vituperated kings, it was surely thinking, first and foremost, of whether they were hostile or favourable to the Church, but it was able to erect other evaluative criteria in the confidence of relying on certain values which it considered absolute. Faced with the politics imposed by a de facto situation – a politics of success, of advantage, of created situations – the Church raised aloft the banner of law and justice. Its models were traditional – Solomon, Augustus, Constantine or Nero – and the principles that nourished them were solid and consistent. In Book III of the *Sententiae*, Isidore of Seville provides a total picture of society, in which there are freemen and serfs – both by providential provision – and in which there are laws and princes who exercise power. The laws are, in fact, Roman laws, and the kind of power the prince has to exercise is the kind shaped by a Romano-Christian image of power, namely, one consisting of a burden – and not a source of pleasures – for anyone exercising it and of a set of duties towards those being governed. The process of bringing the society of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms into line with the Roman legal order, even if only to a limited extent, was hailed by the Church with rejoicing as a step towards the establishment of an order which was, in its eyes, *the* order par excellence. And insofar as it could exert its influence, it exalted the virtue of those in the political order who represented the Christian-Roman virtues and traditions of wisdom and prudence.

But the tendency to order introduced by the Church was not satisfied – even then – with a theory of just power. Ever since its conflicts with the Roman Empire, the Church had been grappling with the

problem of relations with the state and had taken up a clear stance. And as difficult as the circumstances may have been after the Germanic conquest, the Church aspired to establish an order in which civil power was subordinate to religious power, or at least to the ideals upheld by the Church. The goal was almost utopian under the circumstances, but the Church's design was clearly taking shape as an ideal: Saint Augustine had indicated it when he stated that happy were not the kings who had long reigned or dominated their enemies, but those who 'put their power at the service of the supreme majesty to spread the worship of God far and wide; those who fear God, love Him and honour Him.' Political power, which, in Roman and Germanic tradition, seemed to represent a supreme value, appeared in the eyes of the Christian thinker as a mere instrument in the service of the one true supreme value: God. 'The peoples,' said Isidore of Seville, 'reaped benefit by succumbing; but for this reason: because they were set in the discipline of the faithful, like the people of the nation of the Persians.' Everything, including political power, has to be subordinated to the supreme goal of faith and salvation. Isidore himself first formulates this idea categorically in the famous passage from the book of the *Sententiae:* 'Princes have sometimes to exercise this supreme power within the Church itself, seeking to defend its discipline. This occurs when it is necessary to force those who despise the words of the priest to obey the laws by terror.'

The growing prestige of the clergy in the Visigoth kingdom may explain why it was there that the thesis was first formulated so clearly. But one must not forget that nearly a century before Gregory of Tours put the following words addressed to Gundobad in the mouth of Avitus, bishop of Vienne, urging her to convert: 'If you go to war, you are at the head of the warriors, and they follow you wherever you lead. It is better that, marching after you, they should know the truth so they remain in terror after your death, for God is not to be trifled with, and He loves him not, who, for an earthly kingdom, refuses to confess Him in the world.' It was, then, a form of thinking that was making headway, that lay at the heart of the doctrine and was on the point of manifesting itself when circumstances permitted as an expression of the tendency towards establishing an order in which the earthly was necessarily being subordinated to the divine.

Circumstances changed. During the conversion period of the pagan or Arian peoples, the Church began by attempting to catechise the kings and then availed itself of their protection to act upon broader swathes of society; but as soon as it acquired a degree of security, it worked to subject civil power first to its ideals, then to its authority, insofar as it could advance its designs. The policy it followed in the Visigoth kingdom heralded the intentions that would manifest later towards Charlemagne. And when the circumstances were even more favourable, it fully asserted its conception of the earthly order, which it would later express in the doctrine of the two swords.

This notion of the earthly order did not coincide with that of the theorists who advocated a Roman-style royal power; but neither did the latter thesis deserve the support of the most important social

force to organise itself during the period, namely, the military land-owning aristocracy. If this aristocracy aspired to some degree of order, it was on condition that the monarchy should respect its eminent role and hierarchical organization and become, in a certain sense, its champion, with a reduced and controlled power, precisely as suited the Church. Thus, Church and aristocracy came together in shaping feudal monarchy and empire, which were well adapted to the framework of transcendent aims proposed by the Church and for which it provided the bedrock of its institutional structure.

To support this notion of the earthly order, the Church had the colossal strength of its doctrine and, above all, of its monopoly on written literature, which could be used as a valuable propaganda tool. Chronicles and hagiography moulded an image of life in consonance with the spirit of their writers, who inexorably did justice by destroying or elevating one or the other depending on their own criteria of value in accordance with a norm whose ultimate consequences are expressed by Bede in one extraordinarily eloquent passage: 'Oswald, the most Christian king of the Northumbrians, reigned nine years, including that year which must be considered accursed for the brutal impiety of the King of the Britons and the apostasy of the English kings; for, as has been said, it has been agreed by the unanimous consent of all that the names of the apostates should be erased from the register of Christian kings and no date be ascribed to their reigns.' This was the model for the type of the 'holy king', a mirror in which his successors were to gaze for centuries to come.

A clear model harmoniously combining aristocracy, monarchy and Church was thus outlined in the time of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms. After the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire, this model began gradually to permeate reality and was seen as the foundation of a new Christian and feudal order.

Notes

^ 1. See Alfons Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of EuropeanCivilization*; Ferdinand Lot, *La Fin du monde antique et le debut du Moyen Âge*; Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, 1937; Louis Halphen, 'L'Importance historique des "grandes invasions"', in *À travers l'histoire du Moyen Âge*.

^ 2. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social FoundationsofEuropean Civilization*; Michael Rostovtzeff, *Historia económica y social del Imperio Romano*; Theodor Mommsen, *El mundo de los*

Césares.

^ 3. On Spain, see Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, Introduction; on England, see Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.

^ 4. See Henry Osborn Taylor, *The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages*, and Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine*.

^ 5. See Jean-Rémy Palanque, *Saint Ambroise et l'Empire romain*.

^ 6. Saint Jerome, *Cartas*, XXX, XXXII, XXXIII and others.

^ 7. Saint Jerome, *Cartas*, CXXIII, *Ad Ageruchiam*. See also Saint Jerome, *Cartas*, XL, and Saint Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, I, xxxiii; Saint Jerome, *Cartas*, CXXVI.

^ 8. Prudentius, *Libri contra Symmachum*, II, 816–819.

^ 9. Saint Augustine, *Cartas* V, xxiv-xxvi.

^ 10. Saint Isidore, *Sinónimos*, I.

^ 11. Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita sancti Germani*, l. 74; Saint Gregory, *Epistolae*, VII, 13 and 28; VI, 12.

^ 12. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 206 ff.; Claudio Sánchez Albornoz y Menduiña, *Fideles y Gardingos*, especially chap. VII.

^ 13. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 215 ff.

^ 14. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 217 ff.

^ 15. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 225.

^ 16. Heinrich Brunner and Claudius von Schwerin (Ed.), *Historia del derechogermánico*, 77 ff.

^ 17. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 223 ff.

^ 18. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 212.

^ 19. Godefroid Kurth, *Los orígenes de la civilización moderna*, 357.

^ 20. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 224; See C. Sánchez Albornoz y Menduiña, *Fideles y Gardingos*, I, 197 ff. and notes.

^ 21. H. Brunner and C. von Schwerin, *Historia del derechogermánico*, 14.

^ 22. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 232.

^ 23. Monumenta Germaniae Historica (M.G.H.), *Concilia*, I, c. 62.

^ 24. M.G.H., *Concilia,* I, 89, v. IX; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* IV, xiii; A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 251.

^ 25. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 226 ff.; Manuel Torres López, *Institucioneseconómicas, sociales y político-administrativas de la peninsulahispánicadurantelos siglos V, VI y VII*, III, 197; F. Lot, 'Les Destinées de l'empire en Occident de 395 à 888', in G. Glotz (Ed.), *Histoire du Moyen Âge*, I.

^ 26. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xx et al.; IV, xlii et al.; LII et al.; Fredegarius, *Continuations*.

^ 27. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of EuropeanCivilization*, 202 ff.; C. Sánchez Albornoz y Menduiña, *Fideles y Gardingos*, I, passim; Manuel Torres López, *Institucioneseconómicas, sociales y político-administrativas de la peninsulahispánicadurante los siglos V, VI y VII*, III, 186 ff.; H. Brunner and C. von Schwerin, *Historia del derecho germánico*, 14; William Stubbs, *The ConstitutionalHistory of England, in its Origin and Development*, I, 95 ff.

^ 28. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 190, 197 and 206. The leudes entered the antrustionate by Salic law: C. Sánchez Albornoz y Menduiña, *Fideles y Gardingos*, 138.

^ 29. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, xlvi; F. Lot, *Histoire du Moyen Âge*, I, 339–340 and note 94.

^ 30. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 254–255.

^ 31. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social FoundationsofEuropean Civilization*; some reservations in C. Sánchez Albornoz y Menduiña, *Ruina y extinción del municipio romano en España e instituciones que le reemplazan*, 94 ff.

^ 32. José Luis Romero, *San Isidoro de Sevilla. Su pensamiento historicopolítico y sus relaciones con la historia visigoda*, 16 ff.

^ 33. Albert Hauck, *KirchengeschichteDeutschlands*, 14, 148 ff., cited by A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 263. "Clovis turned those men of Roman origin into patriotic citizens of the Frankish kingdom."

^ 34. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xxx, on the election of Bishop Avitus; IV, vii on the election of Cautin, Bishop of Clermont; VI, xi, on the conflict over the Bishopric of Marseilles; VI, xxxvi, over the Bishopric of Lisieux; X, xv ff., over the direction of the Monastery of Poitiers. On the purchase of the election: Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xxxv. On the general problem: Saint Isidore, *De losoficioseclesiásticos*, II, v.

^ 35. I fundamentally disagree with Johannes Bühler's characterization of this period in his *Vida y culturaen la Edad Media*, where he defines it as 'The period of the senectus'.

^ 36. The story of Mummolo: Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xlii ff.; the story of Sigiswald: Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, xvi; the story of Agricola: Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xxiv; the story of Bishops Salone and Sagittarius: Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xliii, and V, xxi; the story of Bishop Cautin: Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xii; the story of Malo: Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, iv. See the curious case of the pauper who helped Brunhilda after her expulsion from Austrasia and was made Bishop of Auxerre as a reward, in Fredegarius, *Continuations*, XIX.

^ 37. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 209. See the 'Edict of Paris', promulgated by Chlothar II in 614, M.G.H., *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, I, 22.

^ 38. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 208, 'Edict of Paris', 614.

^ 39. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 207.

^ 40. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 210–211.

^ 41. For the Franks: Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V ff., on the civil wars between 573 and 613; Fredegarius, *Continuations*, passim; F. Lot, *La Fin du monde antique et le debut du Moyen Âge*, I, various but especially 321. For the Visigoths: Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 46 ff. (from the rebellion of Athanagild to the end); John of Biclaro, *Chronica*, passim; Manuel Torres López, *Institucioneseconómicas, sociales y político-administrativas de la península hispánicadurantelos siglos V, VI y VII*, 95 ff. For the Lombards: Paul the Deacon, *Historia langobardorum*. F. Lot, *La Fin du monde antique et le debut du Moyen Âge*, 212 ff.

^ 42. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, x. H. Brunner and C. von Schwerin, *Historia del derechogermánico*, 18.

^ 43. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 173 and notes.

^ 44. On the theses of Georg Waitz and Heinrich von Sybel, see A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, 183.

^ 45. See the episode of Clovis in Soissons, in Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xvii, and, in relation to the Saxon insurrection, the episode of Chlothar in Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xiv.

^ 46. In the passage cited (Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xvii), a warrior has said: 'Do what you please for none is strong enough to resist you.' And Bede, in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, v, compares Eadbald's authority with his father's: 'He had not as much authority in the kingdom as his father, nor was he capable of restoring the bishop in his church against the pagans' will.' Equally illustrative is the history of certain descendants of Clovis, in particular the history of

Guntram (Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, viii) and what Isidore says of Gaiseric (Saint Isidore, *Historia Vandalorum*, 74): 'Being unable to oppose him, Valentinian granted him peace and peacefully handed over the Vandals'.

^ 47. On Gundobad, see Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxxiii; Jordanes, *Historia Gothorum*, XIX on Theodoric; on Euric, see Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 35.

^ 48. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, ix; III, i, III, vi, Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 34, 49, 62; John of Biclaro, *Chronica*, years 569, 572–573, 581. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, i, iv, xiv, xx and xxii; IX, xx (Treaty of Andelot); Fredegarius, XX, XXXIII, XXXVII, LVII.

^ 49. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, Introduction; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, i.

^ 50. This is the expression used by F. Lot (*La Fin du monde antique et le debut du Moyen Âge*, I, 298) to define the Merovingian royalty; with nuances, it can be extended to all Romano-Germanic kingdoms whenever the king is strong enough.

^ 51. Tanistry was used by the Vandals and possibly also by the Burgundians, perhaps on the death of Gundioc. F. Lot. *La Fin du monde antique et le debut du Moyen Âge*, 190.

^ 52. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, xxiii.

^ 53. See Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, xxix, and VI, xlv.

^ 54. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, Prologue. V.

^ 55. See, among other texts, Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxxii (Godigisel against Gundobad); II, xl; II, xlii; III, and ff.; III, xvill; IV, xx; IV, xxvill; V, xix; VII, xxi; Fredegarius, XVII, XXXVIII; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, xiv; IV, xv; Fredegarius, LXXXII (on Chindasuinth). To the same kind of politics belongs the Ostrogoths' attitude towards the Roman Empire, despite Jordanes and the Angles' attitude towards the Britons (Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, xv).

^ 56. See Gregory of Tours's justification of Clovis in the *Historia Francorum*, II, xxxvi–xxxvii; the acceptance of the fact of his appointment as 'consul or Augustus'. Gregory of Tours, *Historia*

Francorum, II, xxxviii; his eulogy, Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xl; V. Prologue; Avitus's letter to Clovis after his conversion, 46, M.G.H.*Auctoresantiquissimi*, VI, 2, 75; the various passages by Bede of the following tenor: 'This Edwin, as a reward for having received the faith and as a pledge of what would be his in the kingdom of heaven, received an increase of what he enjoyed on earth'. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, ix; the eulogy of Suintila in Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 63–65; the eulogy of Chilperic, Sigebert and Charibert by Venantius Fortunatus; the eulogy of Guntram by Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IX, xxi.

^ 57. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 19 and 20.

^ 58. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxvii; XL, xlii.

^ 59. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxxiv.

^ 60. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, xiii.

^ 61. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, vi.

^ 62. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxxvii.

^ 63. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, ii.

^ 64. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xlviii-xlix.

^ 65. See above, 31.

^ 66. Saint Isidore, *Historia Vandalorum*, 83.

^ 67. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, xxx; IV, xxxviii.

^ 68. *Chronica Caesamugustana*, ad annum, 529; Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*,43.

^ 69. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*,44; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, xxx.

^ 70. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*,46.

^ 71. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xxxviii.

^ 72. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 51.

^ 73. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 49; John of Biclaro, *Chronica*, yr. 579, 584, 585.

^ 74. On the alliance between the Arian Bishop Athaloc and Granista and Wildigern, Counts of Septimania, Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, XI, xv; *Vitae patrorumEmeritensium*. On that of Bishop Sunna, and Counts Segga and Witteric, see John of Biclaro, *Chronica*, yr. 588; *Vitae patrorumEmeritensium.*

^ 75. John of Biclaro, *Chronica*, yr. 590, 3.

^ 76. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*,57.

^ 77. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*.

^ 78. Fredegarius, LXXIII.

^ 79. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, Prologue.

^ 80. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* VI, xxxi, speaks of the participation of 'the inhabitants of Bourges' and of the *minor populos* of Austrasia in the civil war; and in VII, xii, about the inhabitants of Tours, Poitiers and Bourges.

^ 81. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, viii.

^ 82. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, vii.

^ 83. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VIII, xxx.

^ 84. Greg, Tours, IX, xx; F. Lot, *La Fin du monde antique et le debut du Moyen Âge*, 262; Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *La Monarchie franque*, 602–611.

^ 85. M.G.H., *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, I, 20 ff.; M.G.H., *Concilia*, I, 185 ff. On this much debated issue, A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of EuropeanCivilization*, 200 et al.; F. Lot, *La Fin du monde antique et le debut du Moyen Âge*, 266–267, 321–322; Godefroid Kurth, *Los orígenes de la civilización moderna*, 323 and Appendix; N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, *La Monarchie franque*, 612–630; Christian Pfister, in Ernest Lavisse (Ed.), *Histoire de France depuis les origines jusqu'à la revolution*.

^ 86. Fredegarius, XLIV in fine.

^ 87. M.G.H., *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, I, 20.

^ 88. José Sáenz de Aguirre, *Collectio maximaconciliorumomniumHispaniae et Novi Orbis*, III, 379.

^ 89. Fredegarius, LX.

^ 90. Fredegarius, LXXXII.

^ 91. J. Sáenz de Aguirre, *Collectio maximaconciliorumomniumHispaniae et Novi Orbis* (V Toletanus, canon IV).

^ 92. *Fuero juzgo*, Book IV, title II, laws I, III and IV.

^ 93. J. Sáenz de Aguirre, *Collectio maximaconciliorumomniumHispaniae et Novi Orbis* (VII Toletanus, yr. 646.)

^ 94. Fredegarius, LXXXIX.

^ 95. F. Lot, *La Fin du monde antique et le debut du Moyen Âge*,282.

^ 96. *Passio Leugagerii*, M.G.H., *ScriptoresrerumMerovingicarum*, V, passim.

^ 97. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, xx.

^ 98. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 2.

^ 99. See H.O. Taylor, *The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages*, and C.N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*.

^ 100. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, Prologue.

^ 101. Fredegarius, Prologue.

^ 102. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*,Prologue.

^ 103. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xlvii.

^ 104. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, xviii.

^ 105. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XVIII. XLI. See the general comment in paragraph lix.

^ 106. Venantius Fortunatus, *Opera omnia*, Michelangelo Lucchi (Ed.), Pars prima, XI, xi.

^ 107. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, X, xvi.

^ 108. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, XVL.

^ 109. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, X, x.

^ 110. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, v. F. Lot, 'Les Destinées de l'empire en Occident de 395 à 888', in G. Glotz (Ed.), *Histoire du Moyen Âge*, I, 391.

^ 111. See notes 66 to 78.

^ 112. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, 5, and II, 11.

^ 113. Supra, note 67.

^ 114. Supra, note 34; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IX, viii and x; VIII, xxix; X, xix.

^ 115. Saint Isidore, *Historia Suevorum*, 92, and John of Biclaro, *Chronica*, yr. 595.

^ 116. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xi.

^ 117. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xlx

^ 118. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, xiv.

^ 119. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, xxxvi.

^ 120. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*., V, xix.

^ 121. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*., V, xxxvii.

^ 122. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, xxv.

^ 123. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, XVIII, xlii: III, v ss.; XVIII, XXII-xxvii; IV, xx; V, xxxiii; Fredegarius, XXXVII; LXX.

^ 124. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*,*57.*

^ 125. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, xxi.

^ 126. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 44.

^ 127. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xii.

^ 128. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, iii, xxv, xxvi and xxviii; Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 18.

^ 129. Fredegarius, XXXVI.

^ 130. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VIII, xix.

^ 131. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, IX, vii.

^ 132. Jean-Rémy Palanque, in Augustin Fliche and Victor Martin, *Histoire de l'Eglise depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*, III, 560 ff., and J.-R. Palanque, *Saint Ambroise et l'Empire romain.*

^ 133. See Jacques Zeiller, *Paganus : Étude de terminologie historique*, Paris, 1917, and Michel Roblin's curious observations in 'Paganisme et Rusticité : Un gros problème, une étude de mots', in *Annales*, VIII, 2, April–June 1953.

^ 134. Boethius, *De consolationephilosophiae*, II, Prose III.

^ 135. Saint Jerome, *Cartas*, XXII, XXX, XXXII and XXXIII.

^ 136. Boethius, *De consolationephilosophiae*, II, Prose IV.

^ 137. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XII, xxii.

^ 138. Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, I, 632–633, compare Saint Isidore's *Etymologiae*, III, xiv, xxvii, and III, lxxi, with Bede's *De natura rerum*, XIX, 2; XXII, 2–3; IX, 1–2; XXVI, 15. See also Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XVI, xvi, 7; XVI, xi, 1; (IV, xiii, 4, and Bede, *De natura rerum*, XVIII, 5–7.

^ 139. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*,26.

^ 140. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, xxxiii-xxxvi; VII, xi.

^ 141. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VIII, xvii; IV, ix; V, xxiv.

^ 142. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 32: 'terrified by the signs of the holy martyr Eulalia'.

^ 143. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 24.

^ 144. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 24.

^ 145. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, xxv. See also Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, xlii; VI, xxi and xliv; X, xxviii; Fredegarius, XVIII. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 26. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, III, lxx, 16; Bede, *De natura rerum*, XXIV

^ 146. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, ix; IV, xxxi; V, xxxiv; VI, XIV; VI, xliv; VIII, xxvi; Fredegarius, XVIII; Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIII, xiii.

^ 147. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xix and xxx; Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XLII.

^ 148. Fredegarius, XXII; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, x, xi and xiii; Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XLV and XLVI.

^ 149. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, xvii; X, xxxiii; V, xxxiv-xxxv, and VI, xxi.

^ 150. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, x.

^ 151. Cf. L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*,I, 635–636.

^ 152. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xlv.

^ 153. Saint Isidore, *Historia Vandalorum*, 73; *Historia Gothorum*, 29; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, vi.

^ 154. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, xiii.

^ 155. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xxi.

^ 156. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 7; Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmina in honorem HludowiciCaesaris*, l. 1882 ff.

^ 157. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, xv; *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, yr. 449.

^ 158. Martin of Dumio, *De correctionerusticorum*, 7, 8, 9; Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VIII, xi, 1: 'The gods so called by the pagans were formerly men who received worship after their death… By persuasion of the Devil… they held them to be gods'.

^ 159. N.B. These do not appear in book VIII of the *Etymologiae* on the Church and other sects.

^ 160. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, x; Tacitus, *Germania*, *IX*.

^ 161. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxix; the argument is repeated much later by Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmina in honoremHludowiciCaesaris*, l. 1946.

^ 162. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 7; Martin of Dumio, *De correctionerusticorum*, i et al. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, 12; Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 24; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, viii; Bede, *De natura rerum*, XXV.

^ 163. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xli: 'an astonishing crime that could not have been committed save by the work of the Devil'; VII, xxii and xxix; X, xxv; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, xvii; IV, xiii; IV, xviii.

^ 164. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, x; Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, 3, 12, 14, 20. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VIII, xi, 15–17; Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XXII.

^ 165. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VIII, xxxiv; Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XIII.

^ 166. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 24; Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XIII. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV xxix.

^ 167. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxi; Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, 4 and 7; Martin of Dumio, *De correctionerusticorum*,7; Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, 12.

^ 168. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, 20; Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*,XV and XLI; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xxii; VI, viii, xxix; VII, xxix, xxxv, xliv, VIII, xxxiv; X, xxv, xxix; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, xi.

^ 169. Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XV.

^ 170. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XI, iii 2.

^ 171. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XI, iv, 2. On what Isidore accepts in terms of wonders, see L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, I, 625 ff.

^ 172. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XI, iv, 2.

^ 173. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XI, iii, 28.

^ 174. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XI, iii, 12.

^ 175. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIII, xviii.

^ 176. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XII, iv, 6; XIV, v. 15.

^ 177. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XVI, xiv, 7.

^ 178. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, XXVI and LX.

^ 179. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VII, viii.

^ 180. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, xl; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, xix.

^ 181. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xxxiii.

^ 182. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, xii.

^ 183. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, xiv.

^ 184. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, xii.

^ 185. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, xix; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*. VI, xxix.

^ 186. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, xix; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, i; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, XII.

^ 187. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xiv.

^ 188. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, xii; IV, viii.

^ 189. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, iii; IX, xi, xxiii, xxix; *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XXVII and XXXIV.

^ 190. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xxv.

^ 191. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xxiv.

^ 192. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, i.

^ 193. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, xiii.

^ 194. Fredegarius, *Prologue*.

^ 195. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, I, *Prologue*.

^ 196. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, xxxii; Gregory the Great, *Epístolas*, III, 29; V, 18; IX, 123; XI, 6.

^ 197. Cf. supra, 55.

^ 198. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, vii.

^ 199. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 9 and 45; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, *Prologue.* IV,

xvi, xviii, xlix; VII, XL.

^ 200. Saint Isidore, *Historia Vandalorum*, 79,

^ 201. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxix.

^ 202. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, LV, xlix.

^ 203. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIV, iii; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, xxi; IV, xx; IV, xl; VIII, xx; X, xii.

^ 204. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, ix.

^ 205. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xl.

^ 206. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xiii.

^ 207. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xi; Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 19; *Historia Vandalorum*, 72 and 75.

^ 208. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xvi; V, xiv.

^ 209. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VII, viii, 41. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xxviii.

^ 210. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23 and 24.

^ 211. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, vi.

^ 212. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VIII, ix. Rabanus Maurus follows this chapter in *De consanguineorumnuptiis et de mayorumpraestigiisfalsisque,divinationibustractatus.* See L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, I, 630.

^ 213. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VIII, ix, 10 and 11.

^ 214. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VIII, ix, 14.

^ 215. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XVI, vii–xiv.

^ 216. See quotations in Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de losheterodoxosespañoles (1880–1886)*, II; and those cited by Isidore.

^ 217. Tacitus, *De origine et situ Germanorum*, X.

^ 218. Procopius, *De bello Gothico*, II, 25.

^ 219. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xxix.

^ 220. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 7.

^ 221. Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmina in honoremHludowiciCaesaris*, l. 1882 ff.

^ 222. Martin of Dumio, *De correctionerusticorum*, in *España Sagrada*, vol. XV, 425.

^ 223. J. Sáenz de Aguirre, *Collectio maxima conciliorum omnium Hispaniae et Novi Orbis*, V Toletanus (636), canon IV; XII Toletanus (686); XVI Toletanus, canon I; Concilio Aureli (533), canon 20; IV Concilio Turnensis (567), canon 17 and 22; Concilio Autissid (578), passim. Concilio Rem. (630), canon 14; Concilio Leptina (eighth century) 'Indiculus supertitionum'. *Fuero juzgo*, Book VI, title II, laws I, III and V.

^ 224. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xxvii.

^ 225. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, xxxv.

^ 226. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, X, xxv.

^ 227. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IX, x.

^ 228. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, xii.

^ 229. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, xxix.

^ 230. Fredegarius, XLIX.

^ 231. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VIII, ii.

^ 232. J. Sáenz de Aguirre, *Collectio maxima conciliorum omnium Hispaniae et Novi Orbis*, IV Toletanus (633), canon XXXIX; XVII Toletanus, canon V and XXI (supplement).

^ 233. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxxvii; IV, ii; IX, xxx.

^ 234. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, xii; IV, xvi, xvii, xviii, xxxvii; V, iv; VII, xlii.

^ 235. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xlix.

^ 236. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 16.

^ 237. Fredegarius, XXXVI.

^ 238. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* I, xxv.

^ 239. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, xii; VIII, xv.

^ 240. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, x; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, xii; VII, xxxi; VIII, xiv, xxxiii.

^ 241. See note 168.

^ 242. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, xliii.

^ 243. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VIII, xv; VIII, xvi;

Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, vii, xviii, III, ii, ix, xiii; IV, vi, xxxi, xxxii; V, xviii. Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XLIX. Fredegarius XXII.

^ 244. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VIII, xxxi.

^ 245. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, xxxv.

^ 246. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VII, xxxi.

^ 247. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, xliii.

^ 248. John of Biclaro, *Chronica*, yr. V of Emperor Justin and yr. III of King Liuvigild.

^ 249. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, III, xxxi.

^ 250. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xxii.

^ 251. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IX, xxi.

^ 252. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, xxxii.

^ 253. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, iii; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xxxii; VI, viii.

^ 254. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, viii. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, iv. Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XXV, XXX, XXXI, XXXIX.

^ 255. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, ix; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, ii.

^ 256. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, viii; IV, xxxii; IX, xxx.

^ 257. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, vi. Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XXXIII.

^ 258. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, xv, xxxvii.

^ 259. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, viii.

^ 260. Boethius, *De consolationephilosophiae*, I, Verse VI.

^ 261. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, vii; IV, xviii. Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*,XVIII. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xvi; X, xxix.

^ 262. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, xvii; III, xv. Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, III.

^ 263. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xxviii. Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XX.

^ 264. Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XXXV. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, XXXIV.

^ 265. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VIII, xvi. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, X.

^ 266. H.O. Taylor, *The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages*, 11–12, note 1.

^ 267. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxxvii.

^ 268. Gregory the Great, *Diálogos*, II, xxxvi.

^ 269. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, xx.

^ 270. John of Biclaro, *Chronica*, yr. VII of Emperor Maurice, 2.

^ 271. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, xii; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, X, xxiv.

^ 272. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxx.

^ 273. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, xiii.

^ 274. Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmina in honoremHludowiciCaesaris*, l. 2044 ff.

^ 275. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, xiv.

^ 276. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IX, xv.

^ 277. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, xviii, xxi, II, ii.

^ 278. John of Biclaro, *Chronica*, yr. VII of Emperor Justin.

^ 279. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, V, ii.

^ 280. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I xix.

^ 281. Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XLV.

^ 282. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, xix.

^ 283. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, xiii.

^ 284. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, V, VI.

^ 285. Dionysius the Areopagite, *Jerarquía celestial y jerarquíaeclesiástica*, the translation by Scotus Eriugena is from the ninth century, before which date the works cannot have been known in the West; the relationship between the order of the world and the afterworld nevertheless stemmed from this doctrine.

^ 286. F. Lot, 'Les Destinées de l'empire en Occident de 395 à 888', in G. Glotz (Ed.), *Histoire du Moyen Âge*, I, 335; A. Fliche and V. Martin, *Histoire de l'Eglise depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*, IV, 577 ff.

^ 287. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, I, xxix.

^ 288. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, VI, xlvi. See Sigebert's eulogy for Venantius Fortunatus

and Reccared's in Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 52–56.

^ 289. Saint Isidore, *Etymologiae*, V, i.

^ 290. Saint Isidore, *Sentencias*, III, xlviii.

^ 291. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, v. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxxiii; Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 35.

^ 292. Fredegarius, xviii; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, xlvii;
Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, xviii.

^ 293. Saint Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, V. XXIV.

^ 294. Saint Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, 28.

^ 295. Saint Isidore, *Sentencias*, III, 51.

^ 296. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, II, xxxiv. See also Avitus, *DialogiumGundobaudo*.

^ 297. See the curious passage by Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, II, v and vi, in which Bishops Mellitus and Justus leave Kent after the apostasy of the successors of Aethelberht.

^ 298. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, III, ix