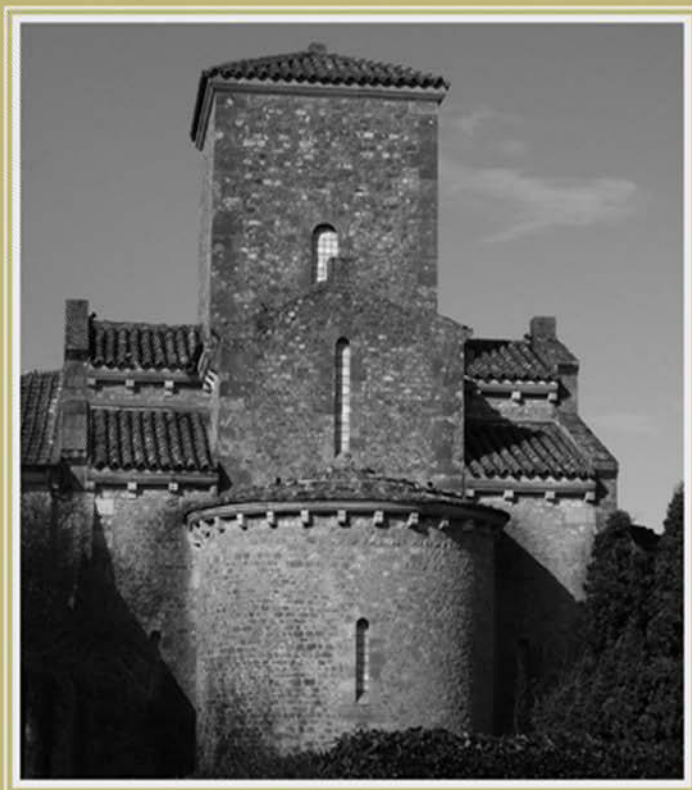# THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

The
CAROLINGIAN DEBATE
over SACRED SPACE

Samuel W. Collins

THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

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THE CAROLINGIAN DEBATE OVER SACRED SPACE

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INTRODUCTION

An Asylum Seeker at the Shrine
of St. Martin

At the end of the eighth century Charlemagne granted the venerable monastery of St. Martin at Tours to Alcuin of York, trusted advisor and exegete whose reputation in the Frankish kingdoms was then at its well-deserved height.[1] The monastery at Tours was not, however, an obvious prize. The community of St. Martin, "neither monks nor canons," to paraphrase the dismissive phrasing of an imperial letter, enjoyed a shabby reputation in the Carolingian world, a reputation based, or so it was said, on a taste for disorder and a deep-set resistance to authority.[2] The hope was that Alcuin, with his widely acknowledged skills as a teacher and reformer, could improve the life and behavior of the community.

As it turned out, Alcuin did not have to wait long for the monks of St. Martin to prove themselves worthy of their reputation. The trouble began in 801 or 802 with the arrival in Tours of an asylum seeker from Orléans, a fugitive cleric, fleeing the wrath (and the judgment) of his bishop, the formidable Theodulf. Theodulf, of course, was another scholar and advisor to Charlemagne, no less well-known, revered, and powerful in the Carolingian world than was Alcuin.

Both the identity of the asylum seeker and his crime remain unknown, but whatever his misdeed there is every indication that it was serious. Prior to his arrival in Tours we know that the fugitive had been tried and convicted by a tribunal presided over by Theodulf.[3] His jailers, however, were apparently careless and the cleric escaped from their custody and fled to Tours where, a late entry in a long tradition, he claimed asylum at St. Martin's tomb.[4]

Once the asylum seeker had established himself at the shrine, Theodulf sought and received permission from the imperial court at Aachen to retrieve him.[5] Some days later a delegation of Theodulf's men entered the basilica, extracted their prisoner, and seemed on the verge of success, when, at the doors of the church, they stumbled into an ambush set

up by the monks of St. Martin.[6] In the ensuing standoff the men from
Orléans were forced to abandon their captive. The fugitive returned to
his refuge at the saint's tomb, and Theodulf's men had to return home
empty handed.

Some days later, Theodulf sent a second, larger delegation to retrieve
the prisoner, and this time they were armed.[7] When this group arrived at
the basilica, the monks of St. Martin were there again to meet them. The
brawl that ensued may have been trouble enough, but just as the monks
were driving Theodulf's men away from the shrine, events took a new
turn. A mob from town, "drunken rustics" (*rusticos inter pocula*), to use
Alcuin's phrase, burst in determined to defend the honor of their patron
saint with their clubs.[8] Faced with this mob, the monks switched sides
and held off the "drunken rustics" long enough for Theodulf's men to
escape to the safety of the monastery.[9]

A special investigator, an imperial *missus*, was dispatched to Tours to
investigate the circumstances that led to the riot.[10] According to Alcuin,
who was unimpressed by this judge's investigative tactics, the *missus* spent
his 19 days in Tours mainly extracting confessions under torture.[11] In his
findings, the *missus* repeated Charlemagne's command that the prisoner
be returned to Theodulf, and laid the blame for the riot squarely on the
community of St. Martin, and by extension on Alcuin himself.[12] From
there we know nothing more; the consequences for Alcuin and his com-
munity and the ultimate fate of the asylum seeker all remain as mysteri-
ous as his original crime.

This narrative of events must be teased out of a dossier of problematic
and fragmentary sources. The materials of this history are a series of five
letters preserved among the correspondence of Alcuin, all written in the
months following the riot. The letters refer in turn to other documents
concerning the case, which are now lost. These letters are remarkable as
a record of an unfolding and developing argument between Theodulf
and Charlemagne on one side, and Alcuin on the other over the fate of
this asylum seeker and the causes of the riot. The argument preserved in
the letters reveals a fundamental gap between how Alcuin and Theodulf
understood what had happened at the shrine. Although it began with the
fugitive's claim to sanctuary, their disagreement ranged well beyond the
practice of Christian asylum into issues much more fundamental to both
sides. In fact, although the disturbances began with the fugitive's claim
to sanctuary in Tours, sanctuary was one of the few points on which the
antagonists agreed.

The argument instead as it unfolds in the letters turns on a series of
technical details about the case of this one sanctuary seeker. Theodulf and
Charlemagne held that this cleric was a terrible sinner, the crime of

which he was convicted only the first and greatest of a long list. His many sins and their severity required penance, but until this penance had been completed his sins gave him such a moral stain that he had no right to enter the sacred precincts of the church building. His impurity, according to Theodulf citing the example of the Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple, denied him access to the holy place within the doors of the basilica.

This argument exasperated Alcuin and he took great pains to refute it. Alcuin maintained that of course a sinner should have been allowed into the basilica—all Christians are sinners, and how else should the church be expected to give them the mercy and access to forgiveness? Alcuin categorically denied Theodulf's claims that penance and the supposed impurity of the sinner were somehow linked to entrance into the basilica. Theodulf saw sin as a pollutant that stained the sacred precincts of the basilica; by contrast, Alcuin rejected this model of externalized sin, contagious and malignant in the material world, as ill-tempered dereliction of Christian duty. This sharp disagreement between the two parties thus strays from the right of sanctuary into the purity of churches and why and under what circumstances that purity ought to be maintained or compromised. Alcuin and Theodulf were separated by competing understandings of what it meant for church buildings to be holy places and how that understanding ought to govern conduct within these places.

The goal of this study is the contested imagination of the meaning of sacred places in Western Europe during those dynamic and uncertain years of the so-called Carolingian renaissance, that is, from the latter part of Charlemagne's reign to the death of Charles the Bald at the end of the ninth century. My subject is the lively textual counterpart that accompanied Carolingian architectural activity in this period. Ninth-century theologians and reformers show a lively interest in the new architecture of the realm, but this literature rarely rests for long on visible buildings. Rather, other places and other times routinely intrude themselves into these Carolingian discussions of sacred places, and of what activity is appropriate in those places. Instead of describing the churches and monasteries in which they worshiped and worked, the writers who make up the subject of this study regularly make an imaginative leap and describe instead the ties that bound the places they knew to those of the biblical past and those in the New Jerusalem yet to come. It must be underscored that this lively and allusive architectural imagination was deeply controversial. In the chapters of this book I reconstruct the fragments of the contentious and acrimonious debate that swirled around rival definitions of the meaning of the sacred buildings in the new Christian empire. I show how this debate, often overlooked by historians, caught up some

of the major figures of the era, and at its core questioned what it meant for any given place, any given building to be thought of as specially holy.

As the case of Alcuin and Theodulf suggests, the precise function and meaning of sacred buildings was a contentious topic among the Carolingians, and it is one of my goals to pick up the different threads of this debate and explore their implications. These were the ambitious years for the Carolingians, when Charlemagne, his successors, and advisors sought to take the post-Roman west and reshape it into something new, better, more pure: a fully Christian empire, a New Israel, a kingdom fully shaped by Christian precepts. The lofty ambitions of this project color the Carolingian debate about the meaning of sacred places. There is a remarkable intellectual consistency to Carolingian discussions of sacred places across a wide range of texts and genres. From the rarefied world of biblical exegesis and speculative theology at the high end, all the way down to the grittier reality of day-to-day provisions for the structure of Christian life out in the parishes, Carolingian investigations into, and conflicts about, the meaning of place return again and again to a stable set of themes. Alcuin and Theodulf fought bitterly over this territory, but they were by no means alone in their conflict over the meaning of sacred places. The ways in which Carolingian theologians imagined the structure of the universe had a real and tangible impact on even the most mundane details of the use of sacred buildings, however humble.

In the first chapter I explore two important insular sources for how different Carolingian authors thought and wrote about sacred architecture: Bede's *De templo* and the influential Irish canonical collection, the *Collectio Hibernensis*. *De templo* and the *Hibernensis*, while they share much, represent opposite poles for early medieval thinking about sacred places. Bede showed how the layout of the Temple of Solomon as described in the Old Testament and elsewhere reveals both the topography of heaven and the architectural arrangement of Christian salvation after the Second Coming. For all his interest in the sacred buildings of the Old Testament, however, Bede went out of his way to insist that the churches of this world in no way participate in the holy nature of this divine architecture. In Bede's reading, mundane buildings must remain just that, mundane and fully cut off from the divine architecture that both preceded them and that will follow them at the end of time. The *Hibernensis*, by contrast, shows a lively interest in the intersection of the holy places of the divine and material worlds. In the *Hibenensis*, rules for conduct in churches derive directly from conduct in the sacred buildings of Moses and Solomon because, in a fundamental way, the churches of this world are tied by unbreakable chains of meaning to the sacred architecture of the Old Testament past and the coming eschatological future. In the remaining

chapters I show how the legacies of both these texts and their contrasting presentations of the meaning of churches came to be played out among their Carolingian readers.

Chapter 2 explores how the liturgical exegete Amalarius of Metz conflated the meanings of these two texts much to his peril. Amalarius, an assiduous reader of Bede, used *De templo* to make claims about the nature of contemporary churches with which Bede never would have agreed. Amalarius had a rich and confident imagination about how the mundane material of Carolingian churches and the liturgical activity within them could be just as or more revealing of the divine plan as any passage of scripture. His political enemies did not hesitate to exploit the boldness of his claim and used Bede against Amalarius to undermine his claims that any given places in the material world could be holier than others, and to turn this polemic about sacred places into the central weapon in their attempts to ensure Amalarius's undoing.

In chapter 3 I turn to the lively literature produced during the Carolingian movement for monastic reform. There in three influential texts, the Plan of St. Gall and the two commentaries on the *Benedictine Rule* of Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel and Hildemar of Corbie, I show how ambivalence about sacred places colored ninth-century attempts to reorder and explain the life of Carolingian monasteries. The contrasting poles of Bede and the *Hibernensis* and of Amalarius and his persecutors are recapitulated in this learned literature of monastic practice.

I return to Alcuin and Theodulf in chapter 4 to reconsider the conflict over the fugitive in Tours in light of these other iterations of the early medieval debate about the nature of holy places. This chapter explores both Alcuin's and Theodulf's theoretical understanding of sacred architecture and traces how their competing positions shaped the reactions of each to the riot at the shrine. Hence we find the debate that waged between these two antagonists reached back well beyond Bede and the *Collectio Hibernensis* to the patristic age and the debate that flourished in the first centuries of Christianity over the meaning of sacred places on earth.

Christianity and Sacred Places in Antiquity

The traditional religions of the Mediterranean had a rich sense of place and the sacrality of place.[13] An especially vivid example from the Augustan age comes as the culmination to Livy's narration of the sack of Rome by the Gauls in c. 386 BC. For this scene Livy placed an elaborate and patriotic speech into the mouth of the victorious Roman consul, Marcus Furius Camillus, a speech designed to be full of meaning for Livy's readership.

Amid the destroyed buildings, Camillus rails against the desire voiced by prominent citizens to abandon Rome and relocate the whole population north to the Etruscan city of Veii, which the Roman army has just captured. Camillus argues that it was only the piety of the Romans toward their gods that has provided them with a narrow victory over the Gauls. Piety, however, in Camillus' speech is inseparable from those places in which the piety is expressed. For Camillus, piety is necessarily both the correct rites of the gods and the places in which those rites are performed. Camillus argues that the site of religious devotion is just as essential as correct observance to ensuring the lasting favor of the gods.

> Seeing such telling evidence of what happens when the power of heaven is honored and when it is slighted, do you realize, citizens, how great a crime we are about to commit now, having barely survived the shipwreck of our former calamity? Our city owed its foundation to augury and to the auspices taken then. There is no place in it that is not filled with religious associations and divine power. There are as many days fixed for religious ceremonies as there are places in which they are performed … Possibly someone might say that either we will perform these ceremonies at Veii or we will send our priests here to perform them. But neither can be done while maintaining their sacral integrity. I need not enumerate all the holy rites by type and all the gods. The feast of Jupiter will have to suffice. His couch [*puluinar*] cannot be set up in any other place than the Capitol, can it? And I do not need to mention the everlasting flame of Vesta and the image which is housed in her temple as guarantor of Rome's empire. What of your shields, Mars Gradivus, and you, father Quirinus? Citizens, do you intend to abandon and profane all these holy things that are coeval with the city, some even antedating its founding?[14]

Roman religion is what has made the city great and saved it in its time of need. Rome is where Roman religion happens, and maintaining cultic practice in the appropriate places of the city is an integral part of the religious contract between Romans and their gods. Place is nonnegotiable in this contract: the *puluinar* of Jupiter shows the presence of the divine fixed in one terrestrial place. The human part of the bargain with the gods requires correct rites performed in the correct places. In this way, the fate of the city of Rome depends on the very fabric of the city itself for the favor of the gods and the successes they bring. It is, after all, as Camillus reminds his audience, the gods themselves who have chosen where they wish to be worshipped:

> You see the Capitol before you, where once the unearthing of a human head was taken as a sign that this spot marked what would be the center of empire and head of the world. Here, when the Capitol was cleared of

buildings, the gods of Youth and Boundaries, Iuventus and Terminus, would not allow themselves to be moved, to the great joy of your ancestors [1.55]. Here is Vesta's fire, here the shields of Mars fell from the sky, here, if you remain, all the gods in heaven will shower their blessings upon you.[15]

Here Livy gives us not only places on earth chosen by gods, but places chosen at specific moments in historical time. The religious life of the city, its ability to enlist the aid of the gods, and its religious past, meet at precisely defined terrestrial locations. This spatial theology of Livy can be multiplied over and over from the corpus of ancient literature.

It may be only marginally unfair to say that Christianity's opening salvo against the religions of the Roman world was an attack on this ancient idea of the holiness of place.[16] In the very first layer of Christian texts we find Paul setting true believers apart from the common crowd based on their understanding of the meaning of the material world.

Do not unite yourselves with unbelievers; they are not fit mates for you. What has righteousness to do with wickedness? Can light consort with darkness? Can Christ agree with Belial, or a believer join hands with an unbeliever? Can there be a compact between the temple of God and the idols of the heathen? And the temple of the living God is what we are.... Let us therefore cleanse ourselves from all that can defile flesh or spirit, and in the fear of God complete our consecration.[17]

Paul sets Christians, temples to the living God, in direct contrast to the temples that filled the Roman world, and which (in the example of Camillus' speech) exemplified the close proximity of man and gods. Here Paul casts physical temples as the visible sign of false belief. At the same time, he applies the language of purity and consecration, language famil-iar to both Jews and gentiles as vocabulary appropriate to temples, to the souls of faithful Christians.[18] In this way Paul challenged fundamental assumptions of the ancient world about the locus of the divine; his was an argument designed to provoke.

Only slightly later the author of Acts amplified the theme in his narra-tion of Paul's preaching in Athens. Here, in Acts 17, the Athenian authorities arrest Paul after he has been disputing in the synagogue "with Jews and gen-tile worshippers" and in the agora with "Epicurean and Stoic philosophers." The author of Acts sets Paul in the court of the Areopagus, in the shadow of all the monuments to Athenian religion and to the favor the gods have shown the city, and places in his mouth a speech denouncing it all:

Then Paul stood up before the Court of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens, I see that in everything that concerns religion you are uncom-monly scrupulous. For as I was going round looking at the objects of your

worship, I noticed among other things an altar bearing the inscription 'To an Unknown god.' What you worship but do not know—this is what I now proclaim. The God who created the world and everything in it, and who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by men.... As God's offspring, then, we ought not to suppose that the deity is like an image in gold or silver or stone, shaped by human craftsmanship and design. As for the times of ignorance, God has overlooked them; but now he commands all mankind, all men everywhere, to repent, because he has fixed the day on which he will have the world judged"[19]

The scene could not have a more meaningful setting. The foundation legend of the Court of the Aeropagus, known best through Aeschylus, claims that the court was founded on its traditional site in the heart of Athens precisely because that is where gods live.[20] The authority of the court was thus underwritten by the presence of these gods. In this speech the author of Acts has Paul sweep away all the accumulated centuries of gods inhabiting the earth as simply "times of ignorance." The new Christian world would have no room for any set of stones especially set aside as habitation for the divine.

Paul, however, did not have the last word on the subject of holy places. There was instead widespread ambivalence among the fathers of the first four centuries over whether or not holiness could adhere to any specific place here on earth.[21] Some of the leading figures of fourth-century ecclesiastical politics weighed in on the subject. Athanasius, for example, was openly hostile to the idea of holy places.[22] Eusebius, on the other hand, took a more pragmatic approach and let his initial hostility to holy places turn into enthusiasm after he had secured Constantine's.[23] The growing influence of the cult of the martyrs helped to tip the scales in favor of a Christian doctrine of holy places. The spread of the cult, with its devotional emphasis on the date of martyrdom, the martyr's relics, and the location of the martyr's grave, certainly helped to bring the notion into Christian thought that sacred history and sacred geography were inseparable from their profane counterparts. It was, however, only with Constantine's ambitious architectural campaign in Jerusalem, in an attempt to create a Christian sacral center to rival the old pagan sacral center of Rome, that the idea of Christian holy places was assured staying power.[24]

Still, for all his influence, Constantine's adoption of a Christian cult of holy places did not provide a lasting solution to the problem. The early medieval west inherited these lingering late antique uncertainties. The disagreement between Alcuin and Theodulf grew directly out of this older rift, a rift, as we shall see, which took on new life and new variation in a Carolingian world well-versed in the patristic past.

The Study of Place in
Modern Historiography

A key plank of enlightenment thought was a confidence about the fixity of place. Descartes, Newton, and Kant all imagined places as single points, real, permanent, and ready for observation and definition.[25] Under this scheme all human activity took place against the backdrop of politically and ideologically neutral absolute space. There is of course a certain scientific comfort to this idea. With places fixed and neutral, historians may catalog the locations of historical action in a mode no different than an astronomer cataloging the locations and properties of the moons of Jupiter. These places become real and hard points of absolute surety in the otherwise fragmentary and confused record of the past. Places in this way satisfy nicely the goals of scientific history: "wie es eigentlich gewesen" required a full dose of absolute space.[26] This regime of absolute space long dominated discussion of place across disciplines in the humanities, and it has been a fruitful reign. The work of Ferdinand Braudel, Eileen Power, and Chris Wickham, to name only three prominent examples in medieval scholarship, each show the explanatory power of the history of place written with a firm grasp of the necessities of the natural sciences.[27]

Change, however, has come to the historical study of place. The new approaches historians are using to investigate the meaning of space are many, but derive by and large from two different approaches to the problem of space and meaning pioneered by three of the most important intellectual figures of the last century. The studies first of Émile Durkheim, and then those of Mircea Eliade, set the pattern for much of the historical scholarship that later drew on their work. Both Durkheim and Eliade privileged an approach to sacred space that turned on the delineation between sacred and profane, between space that was understood and desired, and space that was mysterious, disordered, and dangerous.[28] This model proved fertile material for medievalists interested in the subject of sacred space, not least because Durkeheim and Eliasde set out their dichotomy in a vocabulary derived from Latin words, *sacer* and *profanus*, which by origin were used to talk about the relationship between Roman temples and the cultic acts performed there.[29] Durkheim and Eliade, in this way, gave scholars of sacred space in ancient and medieval Europe a set of interpretive tools whose terms derived from the object of study, a potentially circular trap.

Scholarship on sacred space has thus shifted away from this dichotomous model toward a more fluid set of questions that turn on identifying and interrogating competing perspectives in the definition and production of space, and this newer line of approach owes most to Martin Heidegger.

The later essays of Heidegger's career linger over the subject of space.[30] The thrust of Heidegger's analysis differentiated between space as an abstract, experiential concept and spaces as scientifically defined. This tension between the abstract and the absolute, between the imagined and the real, stood as one of the fundamental elements of human understanding of place. For Heidegger, "horizontal" places are those shaped by science or the state, and these run up against "vertical" places that are shaped by each subject's individual existential reality. There is no place without vertical and horizontal being in conflict; in defining places expectation and imagination weigh equally heavily as any scientific reality.[31]

When Michel de Certeau wrote about buildings and cities he did so with Heidegger's categories in mind.[32] De Certeau focused on the ways in which people interacted with architecture by overturning and rewriting its meaning. His study of the "practice of everyday life" watched how people took the physical layout of the city and changed the intended meaning

> not by rejection or alteration [of its physical fabric], but by using what is given with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept.[33]

The act of walking in the city exemplifies this process. Walkers in the city transform the urban fabric to fit their own needs as they become "silent discoverers of their own paths in the jungle of functionalist rationality."[34] An architect or planning official understands the city in terms of "the 'geometrical' or 'geographical' space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions."[35] Walkers in the city, however, constantly undo the architect's work. City walkers, reacting to their own needs, desires, and imaginations, create a "metaphorical city," or rather a multitude of metaphorical cities, which come to occupy the same space as the more rigid, more scientific city of blueprint and concrete.[36] De Certeau, in this way, privileges imagination and experience in his definition of place. The real, the tangible matter, but only so far. Places are as much creations of mind as they are of stone. De Certeau grounded this understanding of place with an elaborate exposition of space as a rhetorical act, produced like and malleable as the act of speech. While the rules of speech and architecture are of course different, De Certeau asserted that we must see them as strikingly parallel. A cultural production, architecture must be no more neutral in its meaning than speech. Both are charged with meaning, and both fundamentally argumentative in nature. It may be too much to call a building an essay in stone, but within De Certeau's explanatory framework, it is equally too little to think of a building merely as a collection of inert stones.[37]

Michel Foucault too saw the regime of absolute space as a likely target for refutation. Although Foucault never devoted a significant amount of his own work to spatial analysis, he did note on a number of occasions the value and potential of the study of place.[38] In his "Questions of Geography" from 1986, Foucault sounded the familiar call against the enlightenment's confidence about the nature of place, "the devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations."[39] In a gentle critique of his own work he noted that

> Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undiacritical, the immobile. Time on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.[40]

This call to arms, together with his assertion that "the present epoch will perhaps above all be the epoch of space," has served as the launching point for much of the new literature on the meaning of place.

The tension between tangible, real places and how those places are imagined is a tension familiar to medievalists, and medievalists have, in a variety of different ways, taken up the challenge of spatial analysis. In this, historians of high and later medieval cities led the way, where these cities, and the rich surviving documentation for them, have provided the basis for several important studies of the idea of place. Maureen Miller presented her revised account of the Gregorian Reform and the rise of the Italian communes through the lens of episcopal architecture.[41] Her study treated the houses of bishops, both those still extant and those known only though excavation, with a methodological approach often advertised elsewhere but equally often unrealized: treating the physical evidence of the past not as supportive of (and thus subordinate to) narrative and documentary evidence, but as a full evidential category in its own right. Daniel Smail emphasized the flexibility and the fluidly shifting categories of the "mental maps" made by the citizens of thirteenth-century Marseille as they moved through and thought about their city.[42] Richard Texler's influential study of ritual in Renaissance Florence was equally attentive to the importance of the physical city for the meaning of Florentine politics and political display.[43] In all three examples, the historians in question made their cases through careful examination of the interplay between geography, archaeology, and text, and this approach has, more recently, borne considerable fruit for historians of the early Middle Ages.[44]

More closely aligned with the goals of my work, albeit with significant differences of approach, have been those studies that seek to clarify the relationship between architectural changes and the developing shape of the early medieval liturgy. The work of Carol Heitz is the necessary starting

point for the Carolingian world. Heitz's best-known studies demonstrated the liturgical role of the distinctly Frankish elaborate western termination of monastic churches, the Carolingian *Westwerk*.[45] Heitz worked from the archaeological evidence for the *Westwerk* at Saint-Riquier (799–800), a unique situation in that there is also surviving liturgical evidence for the use of this abbey church in Angilbert's *Institutio de diversitate officiorum*. Heitz demonstrated both a solid liturgical function for the *Westwerk* as part of the Paschal liturgy, but also argued that this architectural feature was designed symbolically to imitate essential features of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.[46] Heitz's arguments for this kind of architectural imitation in the Carolingian Westwerk churches have not proven lastingly persuasive; as Charles McClendon underscored, this feature of Carolingian church building is too heterogeneous in form to allow for a single explanation of its origin or intended meaning to fit all cases.[47] However problematic his conclusions, Heitz's method, that is, his willingness to seek textual and liturgical explanations for the features of Carolingian built architecture, has gone on to have a productive future. Susan Rabe worked from Heitz's exposition of the church at Saint-Riquier but pushed the symbolic read-ing even further.[48] She demonstrated how Angilbert, caught for most of his career in the middle of trinitarian controversies, brought the essential tenets of his theological work into the fabric of his monastic church. In Rabe's reading building, liturgy, and text functioned together and equally as a single expression of Carolingian orthodoxy. Sible de Blaauw argued a similarly ambitious set of liturgical and scriptural references for the early medieval churches of Rome.[49]

Where this study differs most from the studies of architecture and liturgy is in the matter of actual built architecture. In every case in the chapters that follow there is at best precious little surviving architectural or archaeological evidence for the places in question. The Carolingian authors under discussion of course knew real buildings, and in some cases even let their experience of those buildings color their work. But it is one of my central contentions that when Carolingian authors discussed archi-tecture and the meaning of architecture they did so nearly free of refer-ence to actual construction in stone. As we shall see, other places, other buildings, known only through scripture and the work of the fathers dominated the terms in which they debated how and by whom their own holy places ought best be used.[50] When Carolingian authors came to lay down rules for action and conduct in the churches of the realm, they did so with reference to the sacred architecture of scripture. In what follows my attention will linger of necessity most on how these early medieval authors imagined the structure of sacred buildings, the literary sources of that imagination, and its implications.

The beginnings of this line of inquiry represented in the works of Heitz and those who flowed him have come to monumental fruition in Dominique Iogna-Prat's *La maison dieu*.[51] Iogna-Prat took as his subject the process by which the Middle Ages came to think of *ecclesia* not in its late ancient mode as the community of believers, but as the church building in which that community performed its worship. Iogna-Prat, following Sabine MacCormack and Robert Markus, identified the architectural enthusiasms of the age of Constantine as the essential first steps in this process. But for him the first real flowering of the idea of *ecclesia* as architecture belonged to the new Roman empire of the Carolingians. In Iogna-Prat's analysis the later eighth and ninth centuries saw Christian liturgical activities increasingly loose their old scatter of topographical settings, and instead came to be concentrated in the new, grand churches built by Carolingian kings. For Iogna-Prat, the key consequence of this newly unified site of worship was how Carolingian theologians began to speak of the church as both the container of liturgical activity and of equal status to that activity. This confusion of container and content had, of course, a long and fruitful medieval career ahead of it, much of which occupies *La Maison Dieu*. Where my study most departs from Iogna-Prat's important work is to bring into relief just how uncomfortable this Carolingian embrace of increasingly sanctified Christian architecture really was. Far from the kind of consensus over the meaning of architecture laid out in *La maison dieu*, as the following pages will show, this ninth-century fervor for sacred architecture was bitterly contested. While the Carolingian period may well represent a significant landmark in the "monumentalization" of the church, the defenders of the old ambivalences about the sacred power of the built environment ceded the field anything but quietly.