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BEFORE THE GREGORIAN REFORM

THE LATIN CHURCH AT THE TURN OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

2016

"ENTER CONFIDENTLY INTO THE WAR OF THE LORD GOD"

> Enter confidently into the war of the Lord God. And when you enter
> into the war of God, everyone call out in a loud voice "Christus vincit,
> Christus regnat, Christus imperat!" At that instant the devil, the prince
> of the pagans, will flee when he has heard the terrifying shout of the
> Christians. And then the pagans will flee after their devil prince. And
> so you who will have God for your king and prince will receive the
> victory.
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> —Abbo of Saint-Germain, *Sermo adversus Raptores*

Western morale did improve, in tandem with the success of Western arms.[1] At the end of the eleventh century, descendants of the demoralized Latin Christians who in the tenth century were being mugged by Vikings, Muslims, and Magyars would fight their way through Greek, Turkish, and Arab empires to raise the Latin cross over Jerusalem. What changed!? The success of the Crusaders caused the Byzantine princess Anna Comnena (d. ca. 1153) to conclude that "a Frank on horseback is invincible, and would even make a hole in the walls of Babylon."[2] But the achievement was more than military. No Frankish knights would have been in Babylon's vicinity had there not been resources to train, equip, and supply them. And the decision to invest great wealth in such an improbable cause presupposed

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1. For the introductory quotation, see Abbo, *Sermo adversus Raptores Bonorum Alienorum* ix, ed. Ute Onnerfors, *Abbo von Saint-Germain-des-Prés: 22 Predigten* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1985), 98–99. On the chanting of "Christus vincit" before battles, see David Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War*, 34.

2. Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* XIII viii, trans. Elizabeth A. S. Dawes (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 342.

an extraordinary faith that "God wills it!" and a shared commitment to do God's will. A quick survey of the military, political, and ecclesiastical history of the tenth-century Latin West will reveal that the rise of the West and the revival and reform of the Latin Church are actually interrelated aspects of the same story.

INTERNAL FORTIFICATIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Recovery required military security, and this was achieved through "encastellation," the development of extensive internal fortifications.[3] Early medieval Western Europe had a heritage of strongholds, including hilltop ringforts left over from the Iron Age, abandoned Roman military camps, and some turreted city walls from Late Antiquity. Although this internal military infrastructure was of little consequence so long as the Carolingian kings could provide peace and security, it suddenly became important when Vikings, Muslims, Magyars, and *mali Christiani* began sacking undefended villas, churches, and monasteries, and even attacking cities. More defenses were needed. The invaders with their island bases, pirate nests, and ad hoc camp defenses unintentionally offered tutorials to the Latin West on how to construct them cheaply.

One expedient was to "harden" manor houses. Fortified villas in Late Antiquity are known from mosaic images, but although villa archaeology has made great strides, the surviving foundations and ground plans do not reveal much about possible window protections, towers, crenulations, and other military features. As the Carolingian Empire disintegrated, lower-story windows and doors were sealed and hardened on some manor houses and other modifications added to make them more defensible.[4]

3. General studies include *L'Incastellamento: Actas de las reuniones de Girona, 26–27 noviembre 1992, y de Roma, 5–7 mayo 1994/L'Incastellamento: Actes des rencontres de Gérone, 26–27 novembre 1992, et de Rome, 5–7 mai 1994*, ed. Miquel Barceló and Pierre Toubert (Rome: ÉFR & Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología en Roma, 1998); Riccardo Francovich, "Changing Structures of Settlements," in *Italy in the Early Middle Ages, 476–1000*, ed. Cristina La Rocca (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 144–67, esp. 158–67; Francovich and Hodges, *Villa to Village: The Transformation of the Roman Countryside in Italy, c 400–1000* (London: Duckworth, 2003), 75–105.

4. Michel de Booüard, "De l'aula au *donjon*: Les fouilles de la motte et de La Chapelle à Doué-la-Fontaine (Xᵉ–XIᵉ siècle)," *Archéologie médiévale* 3–4 (1973–74): 5–110, esp. 37 and 58–79; Ross Samson, "The Residences of *Potentiores* in Gaul and Germania in the Fifth to Mid-Ninth Centuries" (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 1991), 120–40, 172–73, 183–84. On the fortification of palaces during the ninth and tenth centuries, see Annie Renoux, "*Palatium* et *castrum* en France du Nord (fin IXᵉ–début XIIIᵉ siècle)," in *The Seigneurial Residence in Western Europe, AD c 800–1600*, ed. Gwyn Meirion-Jones, Edward Impey, and Michael Jones (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2002), 15–26.
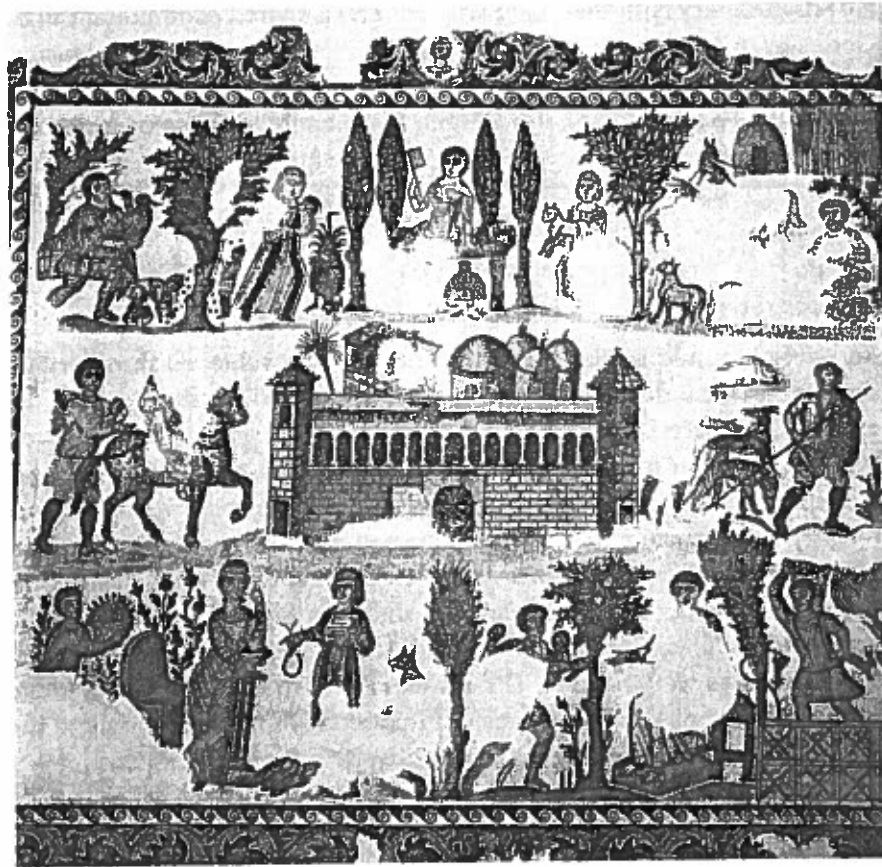
FIGURE 4. Fortified villa of Junius of Carthage, fifth-century mosaic. Musée du Bardo, Tunis. Photo credit: HIP/Art Resource, NY.
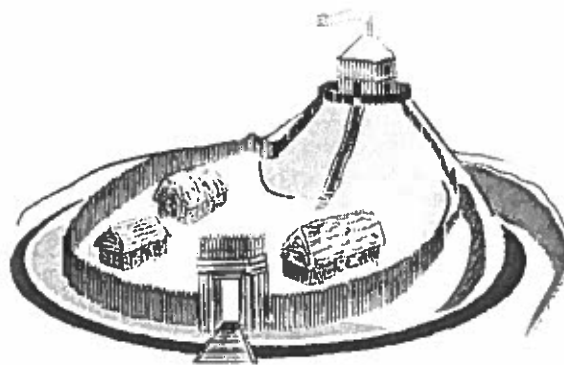

FIGURE 5. Digital rendering of a motte-and-bailey castle.
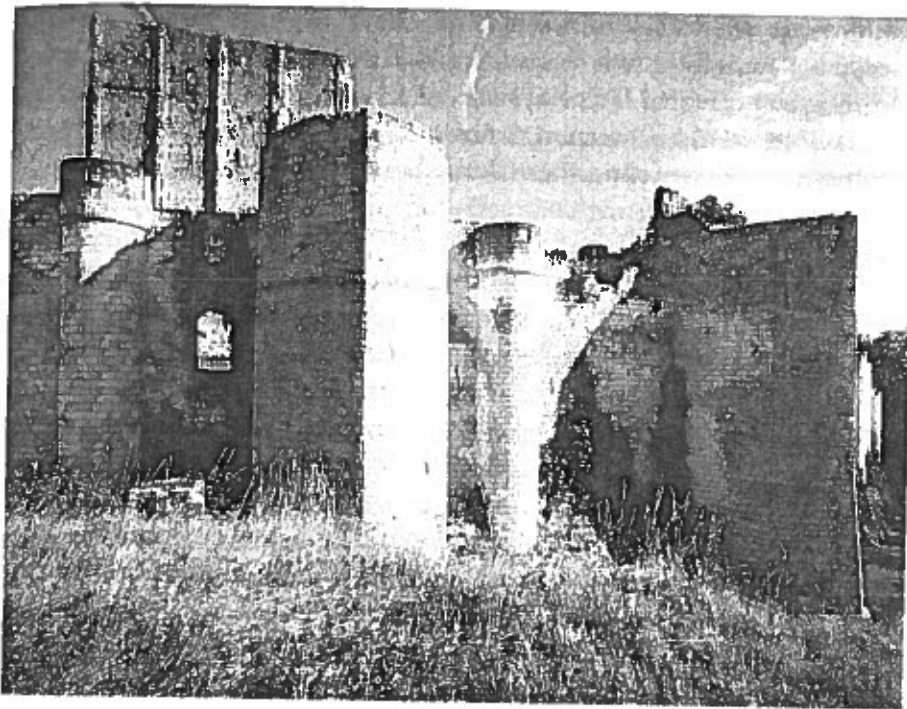Illustration by Holt Haley-Walker. Reproduced by permission.

FIGURE 6. Stone tower, Donjon of Loches (the surrounding curtain walls represent a later phase), one of the many castles of Count Fulk Nerra of Anjou (987–1040). Photo credit: Gianni Dagli Orti/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY.

Transalpine fortifications were usually constructed using earth and timber. Simple ditch and wall enclosures sited on hills, harking back to centuries of pre-Roman fortifications, are called ringworks by English scholars, *castella* in some Continental Latin sources.[5] The more innovative solution, adopted when resources and topography permitted, was the motte-and-bailey castle, a *castrum* in some Continental sources. The motte was a fortified mound that anchored and dominated the bailey, an enclosed fortified courtyard below it, both of which were surrounded by an artificial ditch (whose former fill contributed to the motte). Palisades and a platform or tower on top protected archers and offered them good fields of fire.

5. D. J. C. King and Leslie Alcott, "Ringworks of England and Wales," in *Chateau Gaillard 3. Conference at Battle, Sussex, 19–24 September 1966*, ed. A. J. P. Taylor (London: Phillimore, 1969), 90–127; Bernard Bachrach, "Early Medieval Fortifications in the 'West' of France: A Revised Technical Vocabulary," *Technology and Culture* 16 (1975): 531–69, esp. 562–65; John R. Kenyon, *Medieval Fortifications* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), 2–7 and 23–28.

More expensive stone towers appear early in some parts of northern Europe, especially in the ambient of Fulk Nerra (987–1040), a count of Anjou who presented himself as a "consul" and seems to have been ideologically attracted to Roman-style fortifications.[6] Yet up until the thirteenth century the majority of northern European castles remained timber-built.[7] The timber palisades surrounding their upper and lower levels made them appear more like the frontier forts of the Wild West than the fantastic stone castles imagined by Disney. Motte-and-bailey castles appeared in northern France in the tenth century and spread widely; rare in pre-Conquest England, after 1066 they would anchor the new Norman elite.[8]

In eastern Francia, a system of defense in depth, originally developed on the Carolingian frontiers, secured local defenses with strategically placed modular earth and wood structures that guarded transportation routes and complicated the lives of mobile raiders. This world is known mostly through its remains: for example, of the more than 250 fortifications from ca. 700–ca. 1000 now known archaeologically in northern Bavaria, only about 30 appear in the surviving written records. These defensive systems expanded as the German kings extended their influence farther east.[9] Private fortifications for individual lords began to develop away from the frontiers.[10]

Towns improved their fortifications. Whereas Henri Pirenne saw Charlemagne ruling an empire of great rural estates, today's scholars identify market centers already developing in Carolingian times, places that, when

6. Bernard Bachrach, "Fortifications and Military Tactics: Fulk Nerra's Strongholds circa 1000," *Technology and Culture* 20 (1979): 531–49; Bernard Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra, the Neo-Roman Consul 987–1040: A Political Biography of the Angevin Count* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 49–50, 95–97, and 255.

7. Robert Higham and Philip Parker, *Timber Castles* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1992), esp. 17 and 30–31.

8. Kenyon, *Medieval Fortifications*, 1–38; C. J. Spurgeon, "Mottes and Castle-Ringworks in Wales," in *Castles in Wales and in the Marches: Essays in Honour of D. J. Cathcart King*, ed. John R. Kenyon and Richard Avent (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1987), 23–49; Bernard Bachrach and David Bachrach, "Saxon Military Revolution, 912–973? Myth and Reality," *Early Medieval Europe* 15 (2007): 186–222, esp. 216–19; Kelly DeVries and Robert Douglas Smith, *Medieval Military Technology*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 199–233.

9. Bowlus, *Battle of Lechfeld*, 138–62; Hans-Wilhelm Heine, "Der 'Heidenwall' in Oldenburg (Oldb.): Eine Holz-Erde-Burg, Datiert auf 1032/33 bzw. 1042," in *Château et représentations: Actes du Colloque international de Stirling (Écosse), 30 août–5 septembre 2008*, ed. Peter Ettel, A.-M. Flambard-Héricher, and T. E. McNeill (Caen: CRAHAM, 2010), 115–21; David Bachrach, "Exercise of Royal Power in Early Medieval Europe: The Case of Otto the Great," *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009): 389–419, esp. 382n–393n; David Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth Century Germany* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2012), xiii, 24–32, 56–57, 71–77, and 220–25.

10. Jean-Michel Rudrauf, "L'apparition des premiers châteaux en Alsace entre le début du Xe et le milieu du XIe siècle," in *Léon IX et son temps*, ed. Georges Bischoff and Benoît-Michel Tock (Turnhout, Belg.: Brepols, 2006), 543–66.

challenged, took steps to better fortify themselves.[11] Some former Roman cities retained potentially useful elements of their old walls,[12] and, as noted earlier in the discussion of barbarian attacks, might actually gain population when refugees sought shelter from disorder in the countryside.

In the Mediterranean world, encastellation was more a question of walled hilltop villages than of fortified lordly residences or military redoubts. Italian settlement patterns were easy to turn to military advantage because farmers preferred elevated sites, above the flood-prone malarial river valleys, where they could practice terraced mixed-crop agriculture and access higher-altitude forests and pastures. In this milieu it was easy to site concentrated settlements on defensible outcroppings, and these could be fortified using Italy's abundant workable limestone or the cut stone left by earlier civilizations. Yet even in Italy strongholds could be made of wood.[13] The fortified villages that the Italians call *castelli* were promoted by great landowners, especially by property-rich ecclesiastical corporations that were attempting to repopulate their lands by granting leases to noble developers and privileges to new settlers. Tighter fortified communities replaced dispersed farmsteads in a land that, formerly the center of a world empire, had now become a frontier.[14]

Hastily built internal fortifications were still vulnerable to determined assaults, but at what cost? Attackers, perhaps burdened by ladders as well as armor, had to cross well-designed killing fields, clamber down and up the sides of ditches and up hills while dodging missile fire from enemies occupying higher ground, and, once they did reach the walls, survive everything that creative defenders could drop on them. A versified account of the defense of Paris in 885–86 describes a tower protected not only by the spears and arrows of its defenders but also by "rocks thudding on painted shields," a "huge wheel thrown down from the top of the tower," and "oil, wax, and pitch, which was all mixed up together and made into a hot liquid on a furnace."[15] The longer raiders were delayed by sieges, the

11. Rouche, "Vikings versus the Towns of Northern Gaul," 41–56; Verhulst, *Rise of Cities in Northwest Europe*, 44–67.

12. Jean Hubert, "Evolution de la topographie et de l'aspect des villes de Gaule du V* au X* siècle," in *La città nell'alto Medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del CISAM 6 (Spoleto: CISAM, 1959), 529–58, esp. 533.

13. For a dramatic mid-eleventh-century story about the burning of the castle of Belvedere, see Amatus of Montecassino, *Ystoire de li Normant* II xxxjx, ed. Michèle Guéret-LaFerté, *Aimé du Mont-Cassin: Ystoire de li Norman: Édition du manuscrit BnF fr. 688* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2011), 302–3, trans. Prescott N. Dunbar and Graham A. Loud, *Amatus of Montecassino: The History of the Normans* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), 82 (where the division is II xxxx).

14. Howe, *Church Reform*, 10–17.

15. Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Bella Parisiacae Urbis* I, lines 78–171, ed. and trans. Nirmal Dass, *Viking Attacks on Paris: The "Bella Parisiacae Urbis" of Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations 7 (Paris: Peeters, 2007), 32–37.

more exposed they were to potential counterattacks from relieving armies. Successful besiegers could hope to capture livestock, enslave survivors, and celebrate the destruction of annoying adversaries, but would those rewards be worth the casualties? As Europe became better fortified, raiding became less profitable.

It has been claimed that "more surplus resources were devoted to the preparation for war, the conduct of war, and war's aftermath than to any other activity during the tenth century."[16] Scholars who doubt that the post-Carolingian invasions had any decisive impact would need to explain such expenditures. One might argue that the Carolingians had already directed great resources toward military expansion and frontier fortifications, but this fails to explain the new shift toward internal fortifications. It has been objected that most castles were built only after the major raids had ceased, but this is exactly what one would expect inasmuch as war leaders in all eras prepare to fight their previous wars. Pierre Toubert once famously attempted to argue that encastellation originated as a new system of seigniorial exploitation unrelated to military considerations, but he ultimately retreated from that position and admitted that the new fortifications originally responded to military necessities.[17] In support of his reconsideration it might be observed that in Greek southern Italy, which still possessed a more centralized Late Roman governmental system, Islamic raids resulted in the same shift toward fortified hilltop villages that occurred just to the north in Latin Italy. If a different political system faced with the same military challenges develops in a similar way, then the similarity probably ought to be explained in military rather than political terms.[18] Yet even if encastellation originated as a response to external military attacks, it soon achieved its own momentum when lords found themselves erecting castles and countercastles across disputed borders. The late ninth- and early tenth-century attacks ultimately led to a restructured Europe, to tighter, more intensely exploited military districts, a change that would have great demographic, social, and political consequences, not least for the rebuilding and reformation of the Latin Church.

The new fortifications were most effective when manned by or at least supervised by military professionals. The old Germanic ideal of a nation

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16 David Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 102, 170.

17 Howe, *Church Reform*, 10–12.

18 Jean-Marie Martin and Ghislaine Noyé, "Guerre, fortifications et habitats en Italie méridionale du Ve au Xe siècle," in *Castrum 3: Guerre, fortification et habitat dans le monde méditerranéen au moyen âge*, ed. André Bazzana (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez / ÉFR, 1988), 225–36; Loud, *Age of Robert Guiscard*, 21 and 55–56. In Byzantine provinces outside southern Italy, fortification was normally a large-scale imperial endeavor: see Leonora Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950–1100* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 42–44.

in arms, defended by all its free men, was increasingly obsolete. Regino of Prüm (d. 915) tells that when a Viking raiding party arrived at the monastery of Prüm on the feast of the Epiphany, a holiday time when the men from the farms and villages could be easily assembled into one host, the invaders were quick to recognize that "this crowd of common people [*ignobile vulgus*] was not so much unarmed as bereft of military training [*disciplina militare nudatum*], . . . [and they] rushed on them with a shout and cut them down in such a bloodbath that they seemed to be butchering dumb animals rather than men [*ut bruta animalia*]."[19] Tenth-century warfare required not an "ignoble crowd" but a more noble one, professional well-equipped men-at-arms who were trained to fight together. Despite the famous dictum of Lynn White Jr. that "Antiquity imagined the Centaur; the early Middle Ages made him the master of Europe," the supremacy of the heavily armored knight on the tenth- and early eleventh-century battlefield was by no means clear.[20] In any case, such battlefields were relatively rare because prudent commanders preferred to avoid unpredictable field battles in favor of the more pedestrian work of building, besieging, and relieving castles, operations in which mounted shock combat had little to contribute. However, the most common use of military force was to harass the countryside, and here the new castles provided perfect havens for heavily armored soldiers who could ride out to trample crops, burn thatched huts, and confiscate livestock until peace and tribute could be reestablished on a more satisfactory basis.[21]

A NEW EUROPE

Encastellation reshaped the political order, but it was a difficult tool to wield, especially by Charlemagne's hapless descendants. The later Carolingians, according to Edward Gibbon "no longer exhibited any symptoms of virtue or power, and the ridiculous epithets of the *bald*, the *stammerer*,

19. Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon* 882, ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH *SS Rer Germ* 50 (Hannover: Hahn, 1890), 118, trans. Simon MacLean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The "Chronicle" of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2009), 61–283, esp. 185.

20. Lynn White Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 38. On the subsequent debate, see Alex Roland, "Once More into the Stirrups: Lynn White Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change*," *Technology and Culture* 44 (2003): 574–85, esp. 577–78; Bachrach and Bachrach, "Saxon Military Revolution," 188–89.

21. Michael Mitterauer, *Why Europe? The Medieval Origins of Its Special Path*, trans. Gerald Chapler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 115–16, claims that the connection between heavy cavalry and encastellation and this system's coexistence with other types of fortification were Western developments unprecedented and unmatched in other civilizations

the *fat*, and the *simple* distinguished the tame and uniform features of a crowd of kings alike deserving of oblivion."[22] Some of these rulers look less inept when their careers are examined seriously, and some did grasp the importance of new internal fortifications. The *Annales of Saint-Bertin* describe Charles the Bald building forts, ordering towns to fortify, and legislating garrison duties.[23] His fortified bridges proved effective against the "cruelest enemies of God."[24] But even Charles had to order the dismantling of "castles and strong points [*castella et firmitates*]" that were popping up throughout his realm without royal authorization.[25]

Internal political disintegration was what really handicapped the later Carolingians. In 884 Charlemagne's great-grandson Charles the Fat temporarily inherited nominal lordship over almost the whole empire, but things fell apart when he was deposed in parts of his realm in 887 and died in January of 888. Regino of Prüm saw this as a turning point: "After his [Charles the Fat's] death, the kingdoms which had obeyed his authority, just as though a legitimate heir were lacking, dissolved into separate parts and, without waiting for their natural lord, each decided to create a king from its own guts. This was the cause of great wars. . . . None so outshone the others that the rest deigned to submit to his rule."[26] At various times royal status was claimed by rulers in France (West Francia), Brittany, Lotharingia (the Lorraine), Provence, Aquitaine, Burgundy, Upper Burgundy, Italy, and Germany (East Francia). This forced international aristocratic lineages to choose sides, thus putting at risk all the properties they owned outside the realms of the lords they chose.[27]

Who would control the castles? In England, Germany, and Spain, which were still fighting wars against non-Christians, there remained a need for strong kings who could oversee the process of fortification. The border kingdoms were a special case, however, and elsewhere initiative tended to

22. Edward Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury, 3 vols. (New York: Heritage, 1946), 3:1704.

23. *Annales Bertiniani* (868, 869), Grat, 150, 152, 166, Nelson, 151, 153, 164.

24. Carroll Gillmor, "The Logistics of Fortified Bridge Building on the Seine under Charles the Bald," and Brian Dearden, "Charles the Bald's Fortified Bridge at Pitres (Seine): Recent Archaeological Investigations," *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* 11 (1989): 87–107 and 107–32. The phrase *inimices Dei cruentissimi* is from Charles the Bald, *Carta* cclxxxvii (16 January 866), ed. Arthur Giry, Maurice Prou, and Georges Tessier, *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve, roi de France*, 3 vols. Chartes et diplômes relatifs à l'histoire de France 8 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1943–1955), 2:132–36, esp. 135.

25. Charles the Bald, *Capitula Pistensia* (864), ed. Alfred Boretius and Victor Krause, MGH *Legum Sectio II: Capitularia Regum Francorum*, 2 vols. (Hannover: Hahn, 1883–90), 2:310–28, esp. 328 (no. 273). For the context of this assembly, see Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 207–9.

26. Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon* 888, Kurze, 129, MacLean, 199.

27. Simon Maclean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 1–11.

pass to those dukes, marcher lords, and counts who still remained powerful after central authority had collapsed. For example, the counts of Flanders, descended from the Carolingians through the female line, dominated the castles in their territories while reigning out of their own fortified, almost-royal palace at Bruges.[28] Such lords acquired the public lands, judicial powers, and ecclesiastical patronage that had formerly belonged to kings and emperors. In places where invaders and usurpers had smashed even the comital level of administration, power devolved to lesser nobles or independent castellans. The result was *encellulement des hommes*, the fragmentation of Europe into small tight sections like the enamel-filled cells in cloisonné jewelry.[29] The much-debated model of a "feudal revolution" around the year 1000, when disorderly knights everywhere allegedly usurped the powers of the old nobility and made knightly violence the order of the day, now seems at best to describe only certain local situations.[30] Yet the very fact that scholars could have a lively debate over whether or not Europe experienced a feudal revolution demonstrates how great and confusing were the regional differences, not only between eastern and western Francia but also among kingdoms, provinces, and even microregions. "