The Medieval Cathedral: From Spiritual Site to National Super-Signifier

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> The Cathedral of Cologne ranks among the most magnificent churches of Christianity. As the seat of one of the most important Roman Catholic archbishops, it is the spiritual center of the religious life of German Catholics. Its enormous size and the purity of its High Gothic method of construction make it famous around the world. Thus, it is not surprising that two to three million people visit it each year. They look up in amazement at the impressive, vertical architecture without realizing that the history of this powerful cathedral can be traced to earliest Christian times. Therefore, let us begin at the beginning.[1]

This short passage ushers in Anglophone visitors to Cologne cathedral via a booklet of fifty-odd pages providing concise but fairly comprehensive information on the history, artistry, and architecture of one of Europe's best-known Gothic churches. In addition to its predictable praise of the historical and art historical attractions, the passage stresses the importance of Cologne cathedral as the see of an archbishop as well as the "center" of contemporary German Catholicism, and it sketches the apparently unbroken chain of spiritual significance of the church site since early Christian times.

While the word "German" does make a short adjectival appearance in the passage, there is no further reference to the prominence of the cathedral for the history of Germany as a nation state. Because today cathedrals in most parts of Europe are mostly serving as spiritual sites and thus, as most observers believe, serve the same function as they did in their medieval past, the complex negotiations of the cathedral's symbolism and signification between church and state authorities in former centuries are largely overlooked.

Like the author of the Cologne cathedral guide, this essay should begin at the beginning, i.e., with the origins of the cathedral in Late Antiquity. During this period, when Christianity is succeeding in converting the majority of the population in western Europe to join its cause, the formerly open Roman villages, secure because of the *Pax Romana*, surround themselves with walls to be protected against invaders. It is inside these walled *castra* that the cathedral church and its numerous adjacent administrative buildings implant themselves. Consequently, when the Germanic tribes overrun the Roman *Limes*, the Christian administrative centers are in place and functioning, and for the triumphant invaders there seemed to be an intimate connection between the urban

centers and the organized Christian faith. Bishops had made a point of imitating with their episcopal churches the civic buildings of the Roman era, particularly the basilicas. Quite often, they even installed themselves and their episcopal throne, the *cathedra*, in the former *Praetorium* of the Roman emperor's local or regional representative. Those buildings were adapted to the necessities of liturgical celebrations, but retained in their architectural design the signature of authority, a semicircular apsis in the back of which the episcopal throne replaced the chair of the governor or procurator.[2] Thus, even at the inception of the cathedral idea, the building was conceived to play, especially after the disappearance of the imperial Roman authority, a political and social role in addition to its spiritual function as the site where the Eucharist would be celebrated by the bishop and his priests. In the absence of the Roman administrators and their soldiers, the bishop even became the essential authority and protector of the often diminished, but not completely destroyed, urban centers. And early on, the cathedral was seen as a place which could provide a ceremonial setting for secular as well as religious events: on the one hand, the episcopal elections and the regional synods were held in the cathedral, and the building thus underlined its status as the mother church of all churches in the diocese; on the other hand, Hugues Capet, founder of the Capetian dynasty, was elected king in the cathedral of Senlis in 987, by his powerful nobles, both secular and ecclesiastic. Even the construction of municipal palaces and other secular administrative edifices did not necessarily bring an end to the cathedral's public functions: in the thirteenth century, for example, the Marseille city council took it for granted to hold its meetings within the cathedral. And when, in 1302, Philip the Handsome intended to rally support from all three estates of France for his confrontation against Pope Boniface VIII, he gathered their representatives in Notre-Dame de Paris, an act which is usually interpreted as the first public affirmation of the Gallican national church. The uses that the secular powers make of the cathedral demonstrate that it is the symbolic power of these diocesan churches which suggests a symbiosis between church and state.[3] However, it is as late as in the thirteenth century that this symbiosis reaches its most impressive proportions: Clovis did enter the cathedral of Reims, but it was only to receive baptism at the hands of the powerful bishop St. Remi. In 862, the Carolingian kings came to Reims to be anointed with the oil from the "holy ampoule" and to be crowned. Generally, however, the early medieval kings preferred the abbeys and monastery churches for representational purposes: it is at St. Denis that the French kings want to be buried, and the Plantagenets in England preferred first Fontevraud (Pays de la Loire and then Westminster. Even during the high medieval period, kings contribute relatively little to the construction of cathedrals.

From the thirteenth century on, the French monarchy recognizes the symbolic and strategic value of the cathedrals and seeks to control them so as to convert them into places of what Colette Beaune, in her 1985 monograph on the birth of the French nation, has rightly termed a "royal religion."[4] The Gothic cathedrals, which used to display with their record-seeking high vaults and spires the ambitions of the urban and regional centers they represented, cease to serve as parish churches and gradually take on national importance as sites reinforcing a growing collective national memory. The royal gifts to the cathedrals increase; monarchs have themselves depicted on the walls of the buildings. Saint Louis and his wife, Marguerite de Provence, have themselves represented at the feet of the Virgin at Notre-Dame de Paris; and Charles V bequeathes his heart to the cathedral of Rouen and has his effigy sculpted on one of the supporting columns of the Northern tower at Amiens. This perfect union between the throne and the altar, one in which the rituals of liturgy exalted the sacred function of the Christian Kings of France, led to a parallel development, in which the kings take more and more responsibility over the cathedral, which used to be controlled entirely by the cathedral chapter and their bishop. From the fourteenth century on, all French cathedrals find themselves under the king's direct protection and patronage, and the king often holds spiritual power during the times when the episcopal throne happens to be vacant.

By the seventeenth century, the maintenance of the cathedrals has been taken over by the royal administration. It is, for example, out of King Louis XV's budget that the new cathedral of La Rochelle is financed. During this period, the balance of control over the cathedral tips more and more toward the state, and the state obliges the church to provide the great religious pomp and circumstance it sees fit for its self-glorification and public affirmation. Louis XIV not only fills the walls of Notre-Dame de Paris with the flags and standards taken from enemy armies, he makes use of the cathedral for numerous family celebrations, such as baptisms and weddings, and to receive foreign ambassadors. On November 16, 1663, he presides under a high dais in the center of the choir, covered by red velours adorned with the *fleur de lis*, in a ceremony during which the 15 ambassadors representing the Swiss cantons renew their oath of allegiance which had united them with France since the battle of Marignan (1515 . After a "messe basse," the celebrating bishop intoned the "Te Deum" and continued with the song, "Domine, salvum fac regem." Afterwards, all participants were invited to dinner at the Archbishop's.[5]

In the eighteenth century, the state shows no qualms about breaking a larger entrance into Notre-Dame de Paris so as to facilitate the entry of the royal dais. And the process of secularization of the cathedrals reaches its zenith in Paris, when Napoleon I is crowned emperor in 1804, and in

Reims, in 1825, when Charles X is anointed, even if the latter ceremony, which was followed by the traditional act of the scrofula-healing "royal touch," seemed to revive medieval customs. In both cases, however, the cathedral was little more than a prestigious, symbolic site which served to enhance and sacralize the by now completely political design of such events.[6]

If the transformation of the cathedrals into sites in which the monarchy orchestrates large-scale celebrations of its own glory results in a loss of spiritual significance, cathedrals profit from such gradually won national symbolic power during the revolutionary periods of 1789 and 1830. The bishops and canons of the eighteenth century already had damaged the churches by covering them with a layer of plaster and powdered freestone, by replacing stained-glass windows with simple, polished white glass panels, and by suppressing gargoyles, chimeras, and pinnacles whose anarchic profusion had offended the neo-Classical tastes. The revolutionaries of 1789, however, committed actual acts of violent destruction: the sans-culottes, for example, chiseled and hacked off the statues of the kings of Judea and Israel on the façades of Amiens, Chartres, Paris, and Reims because they saw in them the predecessors of the very Capetian monarch whose latest representative the Convention had just sentenced to be decapitated. In Laon, the revolutionaries planned to undo all effigies of Christ, the Angels, and the saints and to cut off both spires because they seemed to invoke the idea of feudalism. At Chartres, the lead covering of the roof was removed and the metal used for other purposes.[7]

Although the cathedrals were often mutilated, emptied of their relics, treasures, and clergy, their close association with national glory and the sense of fascination that association had brought about kept them from being closed or destroyed entirely. Even during the Revolution, the changing leadership groups and their public acts received a certain kind of legitimacy from the cathedral. During the first phase of the revolution, a whole number of "Te Deums" celebrates the storming of the Bastille, the abolishment of feudal laws, and the various agreements between king and nation; after 1793 the abolishment of the Catholic faith and the new signification of Notre-Dame de Paris as a temple of Reason keeps the building from being closed. Cleansed of its religious implications by the removal of hundreds of statues representing monarchy and religion, the building remained a site conjuring up a common cultural memory: the declaration of human rights is publicly read in it, and the abolition of slavery is celebrated. After May, 1794, French cathedrals once again become Catholic churches.

However, the Napoleonic era clearly demonstrates that the cathedrals now have become national supersignifiers embracing the entirety of

otherwise diametrically opposed causes: in 1801, under the auspices of seeing Notre-Dame de Paris as a primary symbol of national unity, it has become possible to celebrate one and the same "Te Deum" to express gratitude for God's benevolence toward the French people during the revolution, to thank God for the continental peace, and to commemorate Bastille day. On Easter Sunday, 1802, the day of the Concordate signature, consuls, senators, judges, tribunes, and generals participate in a mass celebrating the reintroduction of the Catholic faith in Notre-Dame de Paris. Napoleon Bonaparte had himself taken pains to orchestrate the occasion so that it might closely resemble still remembered similar monarchic celebrations of the kings of France. On August 14, 1802, he had a star of nine meter's diameter put on top of one of the cathedral towers to announce his birthday. With these actions and numerous similar ones, he linked his own fate with that of his capital's most powerfully symbolic building. The cathedral reminded everyone simultaneously of the glory of the old monarchy and of the revolution, of recent and ancient traditions. In the semantics of his crowning ceremony, Notre-Dame then became the most obvious synthesis of the new ruler: as the ceremony had to pay homage to both significations, he had the anointing and crowning take place in the sanctuary, the site of the mystery of transubstantiation, while the constitutional sermon, essentially a lay procedure, was done on the other side of the separation jubé, in the Eastern part of the nave. For the first part of the ceremony, the emperor used the regalia of the French medieval kings, which he had restored for the occasion. For the second part, he was seated on top of a carpeted platform which faced the site of his crowning.

The regalia, preserved by the *Ancien Régime* among the treasures of the abbey of Saint-Denis, were not given back to it after the crowning ceremony but remained, according to Napoleon's own decision, in his cathedral, signifying a clear preference of the cathedral over the abbey church. In addition, in 1805, the relics of the "Saint Couronne," bought by Saint Louis and kept in the Sainte Chapelle (which was expressly built to house them , were also returned to the cathedral. These actions and the crowning ceremony meant that now all the functions of the former holy sites of the French medieval monarchy, Reims, St. Denis, and the Sainte Chapelle, were united in Notre-Dame de Paris.[8]

After Napoleon's defeat and the revolution of 1830, the French cathedrals were once again subject to a wave of vandalism because they remained linked to the hateful *Ancien Régime*. However, this period is of short duration, and the parallel movements of Romantic Nationalism and Restoration bring about an unexpected general change of opinion toward the cathedral from the early nineteenth century on. Thus, at the exact moment when, with few exceptions, the cathedral's very existence

is threatened by ideological animosity and almost irremediable material damage, it comes back center stage, in both France and Germany, and the tension between their destitute exteriors and the grand cultural and national aspirations of the nineteenth-century nation states will lead to a veritable Renaissance of the medieval structures.

In Germany, Cologne cathedral is advanced by Emst Moritz Arndt as early as after the battle of Leipzig as a "strong and mighty" monument that could serve to unite all Germans ("ein starkes und mächtiges Bindungsglied aller Teutschen" .[9] The conservative Catholic Johann Joseph Görres immediately joins the chorus of those who see in the dilapidated and unfinished state of Cologne cathedral a symbol of the ever-unfinished German nation, an emblem of "Germany in its confusion of spirit and languages, its inner strife and disunity" ("Teutschland in seiner Sprach- und Gedankenverwirrung, seinem inneren Hader [...] und seiner Zerrissenheit" .[10] He proposes to finish construction of the cathedral as a sacrifice signifying the liberation from French despotism, as the "one true national monument" ("das wahre Nationaldenkmal" powerful enough to symbolize the "new empire" ("des neuen Reiches" which he wants to come into existence. By adding an overarching national signification to the budding aesthetic-historical and preservational ideas to save the cathedral, Görres brought about enthusiastic reactions from a large number of thinkers, artists and politicians such as Stein, Arndt, Humboldt, Runge, and Goethe, and even the rulers of Bavaria, Württemberg, and Prussia. However, due to the political situation in Germany, it took more than twenty-five years until the "Cathedral Construction Festival" ("Dombaufest" of 1842 was able to unite an amazing variety of ideologies and opinions such as regional patriotism, Romanticism, Catholic religiosity, the desire for peaceful reconciliation between church and state, plans to integrate the Rhineland into Prussia, Bourgeois enthusiasm for the arts and Romantic enthusiasm for history, and the yearning for national unity. The recurring ideas of God, Culture/Art, and the Fatherland are all seen to have their most masterly exemplification in Cologne cathedral because it offered outstanding testimony of German medieval greatness and therefore of the German national character, and because the supra-regional effort to repair and finalize its construction was supposed to equal the enormous supra-regional efforts necessary to forge and bring to perfection the new German nation. Thus, the cathedral now carries the semiotics of a premier memorial site of the glorified past as well as that of a willed and deliberately signifying monument for the future. This ability, to combine and transport religious as well as national mythographies, which the German historian Thomas Nipperdey has called the cathedral's "Omnibusfunktion," is based on the nineteenth century's tendency to sacralize all matters national.[11]

Political beliefs have been transmuted into a new form of secular salvific faith in the nation which allows the old religious beliefs to coexist as long as they can be subordinated to the all-encompassing national cause.[12]

In France, despite quite different national conditions, romantic nationalism, which Leslie Workman has shown to be synonymous with modern medievalism,[13] helps establish a similarly powerful national mythography for the medieval cathedral: Chateaubriand, in his widely received *Genie du christianisme* (1802 produces a veritable defense of medieval art, especially of Gothic art which, to him, was inspired directly by the natural order. However, it is clearly Victor Hugo who managed best to captivate and redirect the profoundly felt aspirations of the *Zeitgeist* when he metamorphoses cathedrals into a genuine literary myth, a medievalist entelechy, a story in which the idea of the cathedral is brought to life as a mysterious medieval organism on its way toward fulfillment in its nineteenth-century present. While his "Odes and Ballads" had already chastised the revolution for the ignoble work of destruction it committed, it is his novel, *Notre Dame de Paris,* which imagined the Middle Ages in a mixture of historically factual intimations and invented ideas. And so immensely successful was his actualization of the cathedral's character and its role in the development of western civilization that it allowed those who were indifferent or even hostile to the Catholic church to find themselves represented by cathedrals which the French historian Michelet regarded as "houses of the people."[14] The architects Ludovic Vitet and Eugene Viollet-le-Duc added other politically acceptable readings of the cathedral. Intent on demonstrating the relevance of the cathedrals and the necessity of completion and restoration, they claimed that the cathedrals' construction had actually been an open form of protest against the medieval feudal system. Moreover, aware of the signs of the time, Viollet-le-Duc, in an influential article for the *Dictionnaire raisonnée de l'architecture française*, demonstrated the rootedness of the French cathedrals in his country's historical path:

> The monarchic and religious unity, the alliance of the two powers to constitute one nationality caused the growth of the great cathedrals in Northern France. While cathedrals certainly are also religious monuments, they are most of all national edifices of the French nationality, the first and most powerful attempt towards unity.[15]

These and similar arguments made it possible to endow the medieval cathedral with all those values, freedom of thought, secular spirit, and nationality, which the liberal bourgeoisie as well as the anti-clerical intellectuals were able to accept. Thus, in the second half of the nineteenth century, not only could most French cathedrals undergo restoration (as in Nantes, Limoges, Moulins , but new ones could be built as in Gap,

Digne, and Marseille, often in Neo-Gothic styles which passed as the most sublime expression of Christian faith. Dozens of artists and critics, Verlaine, Ruskin, Huysmans, Monet, Debussy, Péguy, Aubonnet, Rodin, and Claudel, to name only a few, celebrated and memorialized the cathedral. And Marcel Proust claimed that "our cathedrals are not only the most beautiful artistic expressions but they are also the only ones which have retained the connection with their original purpose."[16]

While it is true that most cathedrals in modern times serve once again as parish churches and centers of their dioceses and archdioceses, it is their function as national symbolic monuments which had become their prime signification by the end of the nineteenth century. Between 1870 and 1918, the cathedrals of Metz and Strasbourg, part of the annexed territories of Alsace-Lorraine, become omnipresent symbols of the lost provinces. The entire French nation shook with anger when Wilhelm II, who had initiated important repair work for Metz cathedral, had himself represented under the facial traits of Daniel on a statue at the main entrance. As soon as the war was over, Wilhelm II was taken off again and substantial loans were voted in place for the damage done during the war to the cathedrals of Reims and Rouen. During World War II, it was once again the cathedral of Strasbourg which became one of the major references for the Free France movement. In 1941, general Leclerc and his men, in the famous oath of Koufra, swore not to lay down their weapons until the French flag would be hoisted on the Strasbourg cathedral spire. On May 21, 1944, the victory "Te Deum" is sung and cardinal Suhard, the bishop of Paris, consecrates the city to the Virgin Mary. On August 26, 1946, General DeGaulle replaced the "Te Deum" with a "Magnificat," in the absence of the bishop of Paris who was accused of collaborating with Pétain, and with this ceremony DeGaulle sacralized a power which had been preliminarily legitimized by the ovations of the Parisians on the Champs d'Elysees. Twenty-six years later, the victory "Te Deum" is sung for the funeral of DeGaulle in the presence of guests from all over the world. In 1987, the cathedral of Amiens unites the Count of Paris and President Mitterand to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the Capetian Dynasty. Finally, in 1996, the French nation celebrated, with a visit of Pope John Paul II in the cathedral in Reims, an even earlier foundational moment, the conversion and baptism of the Merovingian king Clovis in the fifth century.[17]

More than any other medieval building, even more than the medieval castle, the cathedral has inscribed itself into the manifold practices through which western societies remember and reinvent the Middle Ages. Beginning with its inception as the episcopal church in Late Antiquity, it profited for its survival and glory from its existence in the borderland of symbolic functionality between spiritual and state authority. This early,

potent, and symbiotic cooperation and competition, which was clearly decided in favor of the secular side in the age of romantic nationalism, might even be powerful enough to encompass the now more closely knit Europe. And strangely enough, it might again be Strasbourg cathedral, conveniently situated on the border between the two most populous countries of the European Union, that can be seen as a perfect site to break with a highly conflictual and nationalistic past. It appears the cathedral mythography may be able to bring about what proponents of scientistic medieval studies in France and Germany have striven to exclude, mostly due to their nation-driven scholarly paradigms.[18]

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NOTES

1. Arnold Wolf, *Cologne Cathedral. Its History - Its Works of Art* (Koln: Greven Verlag, 1995 , p. 2. An earlier version of this essay was presented at a session on "Medieval Myths: Castles, Places, Landscapes," (organized by Werner Wunderlich [University of St. Gall, Switzerland] and Ulrich Müiller [University of Salzburg, Austria] at the 35th International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, in May 1999.
2. For thorough, basic histories of the terms 'cathedra' and 'cathedral,' see the respective entries by Leslie Brubaker and Carl F. Barnes, Jr., in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph Strayer (New York: Scribner's, 1938 , vol. III, pp. 191-92.
3. On this symbiotic relationship between the secular and the ecclesiastic levels, see the section "Un lieu de rencontre du spirituel et du temporel" (pp. 3122-24 , in André Vauchez's essay "La cathédrale," *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1997 , vol. III, pp. 3122-24. Similarly, Christopher Brooks, "Die Kathedrale in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft," (*Die großen Kathedralen*, ed. Wm. Swaan [Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1969], p. 15 , stresses the universal functionality of the cathedral as a "house with many rooms," usually dozens of smaller chapels, in which lay individuals as well as organizations (e.g., the guilds sought to link themselves to the spiritual power and prestige of the cathedral church. In the late medieval period, for example, the cathedral of Laon had more than 50 priests whose charge it was to cater to these various groups, and St. Paul's cathedral in London boasted 74 different smaller spaces in which mass could be read.
4. See the chapter, "La France et Dieu," in Colette Beaune's excellent study, *Naissance de la nation France* (1985; Paris: Gallimard, 1993 , pp.103-313.
5. See Vauchez, "La cathédrale," pp. 3125-26.
6. On this event, see René Limouzon-Lamothe, "La dévastation de Notre-Dame et de l'archevêché en février 1831," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 50 (1964 , pp. 125-34.
7. Vauchez, "La cathédrale," p. 3126.
8. See the section, "Notre-Dame dans la tourmente" (pp. 4196-200 , in Alain Erlande-Brandenburg's essay, "Notre Dame de Paris," *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1997 , vol. III, pp. 4177-213.
9. Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Ein Wort über die Feier der Leipziger Schlacht* (Frankfurt a.M.: P. W. Eichenberg, 1814 , pp. 20, imagines his ideal national memorial as "groß und herrlich [...] wie ein Koloß, eine Pyramide, ein Dom zu Köln."
10. Joseph Görres, *Rheinischer Merkur*, 20 November 1814, quoted in Thomas Nipperdey, "Kirchen als Nationaldenkmal. Die Pläne von 1815," *Festschrift für Otto von Simson*,

ed. Lucius Grisebach and Konrad Renger (Berlin and Wien: Propyläen, 1977 , pp. 412-32, here p. 414, fn. 12 (the English translation is mine . Görres repeated this statement almost word for word in his book, *Der Dom von Köln und das Münster von Strassburg* (Regensburg: G. J. Manz, 1842 , p. 3.

11. Thomas Nipperdey, "Der Kölner Dom als Nationaldenkmal," Thomas Nipperdey, *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte*. Essays (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991 , pp. 189-207 (here p. 192 ; an earlier version of this essay was published in *Historische Zeitschrift* 206 (1968 , 529-85. A wealth of information on the German interest in adapting medieval history and mythography for the construction of national monuments (Wartburg, Herrmannsdenkmal, Kyffhäuserdenkmal, Gosslarer Pfalz, Walhalla is provided by Ludger Kerssen, *Das Interesse am Mittelalter im deutschen Nationaldenkmal* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1975 ; pp. 16-48 of his study, "Der Kölner Dom als Zeichen der Sehnsucht nach nationaler Größe," deal specifically with Cologne cathedral. On the role of medievalism in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British and North American architecture, see the essays in *Medievalism in Architecture and Design*, ed. John R. Zukowsky (=*Studies in Medievalism* III/2 [Fall 1990] .
12. On this mentality in pre- and post-1871 Germany, see Francis G. Gentry, "The Politicization of the Middle Ages: Nationalism and Festivals in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *German Medievalism*, ed. Francis G. Gentry (=*Studies in Medievalism* III/4 [Spring 1991] , 467-88.
13. Leslie J. Workman, "Medievalism and Romanticism," *Medievalism and Romanticism, 1750-1850*, ed. Leslie J. Workman, *Poetica* 39/40 (Special Issue for 1993 , 1-41, and "Medievalism," *The Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1985 , 29-33.
14. See Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France,* vol. 4 (in Jules Michelet, *Oeuvres completes*, ed. Paul Viallaneix, Jacques Le Goff, and Robert Casanova [Paris: Flammarion, 1974], vol. 4, pp. 600ff .
15. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, "Cathédrale," *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture, française du XIe au XVIe siècle* (Paris: B. Bance, 1966 , vol. 4, p. 281.
16. Marcel Proust, "La mort des cathédrales," *Chroniques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1927 , p. 159.
17. On these historical events from World War I to the 1990s, see the section, "Une mémoire mythologique," in Vauchez, La cathédrale," pp. 3136-38; on Clovis and French national mythography, see Beaune, *Naissance*, pp. 75-100.
18. The scientistic study of the "real" Middle Ages among Merovingian specialists may serve as an example here: until the 1980s, this area has been dominated by an understanding of the period influenced by the Franco-German hostilities dating back to 1870-71, 1914-18, and 1933-45. To French historians, the period has been seen as the first time (of many when the barbarian Germanic hordes would invade and occupy the civilized Gaul; to German historians, the Merovingian tribes represented the victory of new and vigorous peoples over the decadent successors of the Roman Empire. It took an "outsider," the American scholar Patrick J. Geary, to usher in the beginning of the end of this dated paradigm. See his study, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988 .