

***Bonds of Wool: The Pallium & Papal Power in the Middle Ages.***  
By **Steven A. Schoenig, SJ.** Studies in Medieval and Early Modern  
Canon Law 15. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America  
Press, 2016. xiii + 545 pp. \$75.00 hardback.

If you think you couldn't possibly need to read this book because your research concerns neither liturgical vestments nor canon law, please think again. Steven A. Schoenig, SJ's *Bonds of Wool* is worthy of attention for productively engaging three broadly significant issues in ecclesiastical history. First, it shows how important the late Carolingian age was to the massive changes that transformed the Latin church in the late eleventh- and early twelfth-century era of reform. Second, it is an outstanding analysis of how and why law bested custom over the central Middle Ages. Finally, it is an exemplary exploration of how artifacts gain elements of agency through their cultural construction and therefore a model study in religious material culture.

Schoenig persuasively demonstrates that from the sixth to the twelfth centuries the woolen liturgical band called the pallium changed radically: "the vestment had gone from afterthought to crux, from gift to requirement, from honorary adornment to official badge, from sign of friendship to means of control" (2), becoming in the process "a prerogative through which the papacy shared authority with other prelates—and simultaneously wielded authority over them" (3). The author makes this argument over three chronologically framed sections, the first dedicated to the Carolingian age (741-882), the second to the "intermediary period" of 882-1046, the third to the reform era (1046-1119), with a substantial epilogue on the pallium in classical medieval jurisprudence (1140-1271). Drawing on a wide range of textual sources—letters, chronicles, hagiography, law—as well as visual evidence, Schoenig establishes how the pallium "became a regular systematized feature of ecclesiastical relationships" (17) by 822 and then how ambiguities as well as innovations were introduced in this usage from the late ninth to the mid-eleventh centuries. The approach in evaluating this intermediary period will be particularly useful to ecclesiastical historians: Schoenig acknowledges papal "carelessness" in managing this vestimentary tool, but also shows other some pontiffs' "creative" uses established important precedents that empowered later reformers. This section should cheer any good administrator who inherits a mess and fears their legacy after years of toilsome service amounts to just a few clear memos: clarity achieved can be the basis for laws that endure! But it also epitomizes the author's even-handed approach throughout: for those suspicious of any Jesuit writing about the Holy See, Schoenig is interested in papal power, but he gives the failings of individual popes and institutional tendencies as much weight as successes, and acknowledges the

influence of other actors and of serendipity. The final section on the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries demonstrates how the pallium was used for a range of reform-oriented purposes, particularly to tighten both papal control of subordinates and allegiance to the Holy See. The epilogue details how Gratian's *Decretum* and subsequent decretal collections distilled the ideas and traditions that had developed around the pallium and consolidated them.

In addition to providing an outstanding case study in how the Carolingian era laid the groundwork for eleventh-century reforms, *Bonds of Wool* underscores the role of peripheries in empowering the center. Schoenig rightly highlights how some of the anomalous aspects of pallium usage in Britain came to influence ideas and practices in the regions of northern Europe missionized by Anglo-Saxon clerics such as Saint Boniface and, ultimately, served to bind them more closely to the papacy. This theme is just one example of the strength of the author's choice to assess complex historical changes across a broad chronology through a single, well-chosen issue—in this case a humble object that came to be invested with multiple complex meanings and messages. Schoenig's sensible deployment of theoretical work on gifts and gift-giving is also a useful methodological model for those working in material culture who balk at the sometimes too casual attributions of agency to objects in recent scholarship (particularly on clothing and worn accoutrements).

The weakness for the general reader of the author's fascination with the pallium and several themes related to it is a good amount of repetition: a few key examples are returned to several times over the course of this large volume and inspected from different angles. This tactic does deepen the analysis but sometimes tests readerly patience. Compensating for this, however, is Schoenig's crystalline analytical clarity and generous expository prose. Those revising dissertations into books should avail themselves of the author's model introduction, and any chapter could be offered as an aid to students struggling to learn the art of historical argumentation.

In sum, this is an outstanding and stimulating monograph. The small size and humble material of the object that is its focus belies the historical significance the author reveals through his erudite analysis and exposition of the development of papal power across the early and central Middle Ages.

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