

The *De privilegio chorepiscoporum* (J³ †1118) and Pseudo-Isidore's Attack on the Chorepiscopate*

By

ERIC KNIBBS

Among the voluminous decretal forgeries traditionally ascribed to the Carolingian-era forger known as Pseudo-Isidore is a little-studied item in the name of a Pope Leo; it is registered in the third edition of Jaffé as J³ †1118, and it bears the rubric *De privilegio chorepiscoporum*. The Ps.-Leo of this obvious forgery purports to address the bishops of Gaul and Germany, insisting that only bishops are competent to erect altars and consecrate churches. Priests and the episcopal deputies known as chorbishops may do neither. Moses alone built the tabernacle, and he alone could anoint; he and Aaron typify bishops, whereas Aaron's sons signify priests. Thus, chorbishops and priests may not consecrate virgins, impart confirmation, or consecrate or anoint with chrism. Nor may they reconcile the penitent at Mass or send *epistolae formatae*. All of these are forbidden to chorbishops, because their office has been established after the example of the seventy disciples from Luke 10, 1–10. In this they are the same as priests. Furthermore, when the bishop is present, priests – or, in some manuscripts, priests and chorbishops – may not enter the baptistery, anoint or sign infants, reconcile the penitent, consecrate the Eucharist or minister to the laity. Here Ps.-Leo's remarks end, in one branch of the tradition, with an abrupt *et reliqua*. Other codices, however, preserve a brief appendix of

* I am very grateful to my colleague Veronika Lukas, whose careful and critical reading of a draft have spared me many errors and infelicities.