

In such circumstances the Roman bishop necessarily became more than a spiritual leader to the church. In the absence of physical and constitutional order, he had to take an initiative in other areas of life lest there should come a total collapse. A community role was thrust upon him whether he wished it or not. Even though there was the potential of help from the Eastern rulers, the forces of the east were a long ways off and the Roman bishop knew that if he were to be totally ingratiated to Constantinople he could not hold his independence of the Patriarch of the eastern church. Therefore the role of the Roman bishop as a civic leader grew rapidly. He was not only head of the church but also head of the Roman society. You can see how the church-state union forged ahead on this premise and how the leader of the church of Rome began to think of himself as a presiding legal officer as well as a bishop.

In many ways Rome was all that survived of the western empire but this general definition would also include what survived in the monasteries and the culture of the church. This continuous link with the past is no small part of the claim of Rome in later years and it continues to dominate the thinking of some. In some ways it was a sort of "social miracle" and the implications of this will be discussed later in our thinking of this period.

#### The Frankish Kingdom

Perhaps the most notable missionary accomplishment of this period was the conversion of the barbarian Franks. A Teutonic clan group, the Franks had lived north of the Rhine but had been slowly and forcefully working south of it and had actually occupied most of the old Roman west before the collapse of 476. The Frankish conversion was a mass affair following the personal conversion of the Frankish king, Clovis. The overall status of Clovis and his conversion experience is reminiscent of that of Constantine and tradition tells us he had a Christian wife and some counsellors in places of power who were Christians. We are certain that he decided to give his allegiance to Christ and the church and he was received into the church on Christmas Day, 496. With the conversion of the Franks a new Christian power was rising in the west but it would take some time to put it into place.