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middle ages. It was the act of writing the *Liber pontificalis* that was the invention of the papacy, with a construction of the papal and apostolic past in early Christian Rome that was of seminal importance in the history of Latin Christendom. The *Liber pontificalis* articulates papal ideology and the Petrine succession. This book, therefore, is about the power of a text that shaped perceptions and the memory of Rome, the popes, and the many-layered past of both city and papacy within western Europe in the early middle ages. I offer a new analysis of the content, context, and transmission of this text, its remarkable combination of historical reconstruction, deliberate selection and political use of fiction, and of the complex relationship between the reality, representation, and reception of authority. I examine the text's construction of the Christian past of Rome as a holy city of Christian saints and martyrs, its representation of the way the bishops of Rome established their visible power within the city with the construction and embellishment of many churches and holy places, endeavoured in many respects to emulate the Roman emperors as rulers of the city, and defined their spiritual and ministerial role.

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