

# YOU ONLY DIE TWICE? ABBOTS BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND EMPIRE. THE CASES OF MARTIN OF TOURS AND BENEDICT OF ANIANE

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*This article<sup>1</sup> compares the deaths of two abbots as told by contemporary observers, and shows how the relationship between these saints and their ascetic communities on the one hand and secular imperial authorities on the other hand would be consolidated in the way people were shown to react to their demise. First, the life and death Saint Martin of Tours (c. 316-397) are analysed through the Vita Martini and the letters by Sulpicius Severus. Against the backdrop of a strenuous relation between Roman imperial interests and a burgeoning Christendom, the author uses Martin's post-mortem reputation to appropriate the authority of his erstwhile rival, the emperor Maximus. In doing so, an attempt is made to resolve the conundrum of how to be Christian under Roman authority. Then, two different descriptions of the death of Benedict of Aniane (c. 750-821) are presented, one by his hagiographer Ardo, the other a supposed eye-witness account by the monks of Inda. By contrasting these two accounts, it will be shown how different observers dealt with the tensions between personal salvation, imperial reform efforts and monastic idealism that emerged when secular and religious authority converged in the Carolingian era. The juxtaposition of the fifth-century situation with the ninth-century accounts, finally, will highlight how understanding of authority has evolved in the wake of the spread of Christianity – both in the eyes of those in power, and according to those dealing with them in word and deed.*

*Keywords: monasticism, Roman Empire, Carolingian Empire, late antiquity, early middle ages, Martin of Tours, Sulpicius Severus, Benedict of Aniane, hagiography*

The death of an abbot, especially a founding abbot, would often propel monastic communities into a veritable existential challenge<sup>2</sup>. Having lost their charismatic father figure, the monks had to find a way not only to continue the spiritual legacy of their founder but also to safeguard the material well-being of their monastery<sup>3</sup>. As monasteries were usually embedded within the social fabric of their region, they also had to deal with the many competing external interests that would descend upon them such as rival institutions claiming religious supremacy or political turmoil that threatened the very fabric of their communal existence<sup>4</sup>.

The monasteries that did prevail often did so because they managed to consolidate their community both in word and in deed. Texts were produced which effectively embedded authors, audiences and their actions in a «discourse community» centred on the monastery, using its past and present to safeguard the future of the community<sup>5</sup>. One

possibility for laying a firm foundation for future growth was to turn the death of the abbot into religious and political capital. Although such moments could lead to crises and vulnerability for the community, they could also be instrumentalised as starting points for future developments and changes<sup>6</sup>. More often than not, an attempt would be made to elevate the founding abbot to sainthood, creating a cult site that would hopefully attract status as well as pilgrims and the donations they brought with them<sup>7</sup>. Sometimes, an author would seize the opportunity to turn the death into a statement on the world around him, using the reputation of the recently deceased to rally others to his own point of view, which might also benefit the community by attracting new sponsors. Similarly, if the abbot had taken care of the material well-being of his community, for example by founding the monastery on his ancestral lands and transferring these to a patron saint, his disappearance from the scene

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<sup>2</sup> A. DIEM, *Das monastische Experiment: die Rolle der Keuschheit bei der Entstehung des westlichen Klosterwesens*, Münster, 2005, p. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> For a general overview of monastic commemorative practices, see J. WOLLASCH, *Formen und Inhalte mittelalterlicher "memoria"*, in D. Geuenich, U. Ludwig (eds.), *Libri Vitae: Gebetsgedenken in der Gesellschaft des frühen Mittelalters*, Köln, 2015, p. 33-55, as well as the other contributions to that volume. Additionally, for a more detailed description of the way memory would affect processes of communal identity-formation, see J. RAAIJMAKERS, *Memory and identity: the Annales necrologici of Fulda*, in R. Corradini, R. Meens, C. Pössel et al. (eds.), *Text and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, Wien, 2006, p. 303-322.

<sup>4</sup> For an example of the complex nexus of religious and political ideologies and interests that occurred in such cases, see J.M.H. SMITH, *Confronting identities: the rhetoric and reality of a Carolingian frontier*, in W. Pohl, M. Diesenberger (eds.), *Integration und Herrschaft: ethnische Identitäten und soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter*, Wien, 2002, p. 169-182.

<sup>5</sup> K. EVANS, *Audience and discourse community theory*, in M. Lynch Kennedy (ed.), *Theorizing Composition: A Critical Sourcebook of Theory and Scholarship in Contemporary Composition Studies*, Westport, 1998, p. 1-5.

<sup>6</sup> See for the case of Montecassino: W. POHL, *History in fragments: Montecassino's politics of memory*, in *Early Medieval Europe*, 10, 3, 2001, p. 343-374, esp. p. 353.

<sup>7</sup> A. THACKER, *The making of a local saint*, in Id. (ed.), *Local saints and local churches in the early medieval West*, Oxford, 2002, 45-74; J.M.H. SMITH, *Aedificatio sancti loci: the making of a ninth-century holy place*, in M. De Jong, F. Theuws, C. Van Rhijn (eds.), *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, Leiden, 2001, p. 361-396; R. VAN DAM, *Leadership & Community in Late Antique Gaul*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1985, p. 177-255.

made monastic possessions more vulnerable in the short term, but could also be a first step towards more securely inalienable lands by gradually cutting ties with the abbot's family<sup>8</sup>. Whatever the case, the importance of such founding figures meant that their death usually caused a flurry of activities around the monastery, ranging from negotiations about land possessions to the composition of *vitae*, and from a reorganisation of the political status quo in the region to the discovery of new horizons for the community<sup>9</sup>.

This article will present a historical or temporal comparison of the way two communities in Gaul each dealt with this particular challenge<sup>10</sup>. The first revolves around the late-fourth century bishop and monk, Martin of Tours, one of the founding fathers of Western monasticism, and his hagiographer, the Gallo-Roman aristocrat Sulpicius Severus, as well as the treatment of Martin's legacy by the sixth-century bishop Gregory of Tours. The second case is Ardo's *vita* of Benedict of Aniane, who in the late eighth and early ninth centuries was a close advisor to Louis the Pious and became one of the main architects of the monastic reforms undertaken in the Carolingian Empire. In both cases, the people to whom we owe the most widely known reports of their exploits used not only their lives, but also their deaths to make a point about the state of the world around them and the legacy of their protagonists, Ardo at the culmination of his hagiography, and Sulpicius in a separate series of letters.

Both authors had known their subjects personally, and were well-acquainted with the social, political and religious context within which they had operated. They also had a stake in preserving the memory of these saints-to-be, both for the sake of the monasteries they founded and to reinforce their vision of the larger social whole within which these continued to exist. As such, contrasting these cases allows us to compare the various ways in which religious communities were seen to be a function of the Church and the Empire around them in their respective contexts. Whereas Sulpicius wrote at a time when Christianity was still establishing a foothold in the West and monastic life still represented a radical social counter-movement, Ardo and Benedict lived in a world where monasticism was firmly embedded in the

Empire, and Christian thinking was one of the main sources of the social power of the Carolingians<sup>11</sup>. The life of Martin and the writings of Sulpicius Severus would nonetheless prove to cast a long and wide shadow, and also influenced the way Ardo framed his own composition<sup>12</sup>. Putting the texts Sulpicius Severus next to the *vita* of Benedict of Aniane will thus shed light on how tensions between the Church and the Empire helped to shape political, religious and social thinking in both Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. This becomes especially clear from the way the authors allow the deaths of their protagonists to impact upon their vision of the empire and the place of monasteries within it. What starts as a story of the interaction between a bishop and a ruler or an abbot and an emperor thus rapidly transforms into a reflection on the interdependence (real or imagined) between court and community.

#### THE LIFE OF A SAINT AND THE DEATH OF AN EMPEROR: SULPICIOUS SEVERUS AND SAINT MARTIN

When Martin, bishop of Tours and abbot of Marmoutier, died in the middle of the night of November 11 397, he was away from his see and his monastery<sup>13</sup>. Together with some disciples, he had travelled to the nearby village of Candes to settle a conflict between members of the local clergy<sup>14</sup>. As his biographer, the Aquitanian scholar Sulpicius Severus tells us in a letter, Martin successfully brokered a peace, which had been prefigured by a miracle that happened on the way: Martin's exorcism of a flock of demonic birds from a nearby river had proved his saintly powers and could be interpreted as a good omen for his intervention<sup>15</sup>. Soon after these events, feeling his strength fading, Martin summoned his disciples and informed them of his impending death. After several days and nights of fever, which he spent in constant prayer and vigils, he passed away. Eyewitnesses to his death claimed that he looked like an angel and that his body showed none of the ravages of his zealous ascetic lifestyle. On the contrary, his impeccable corpse seemed already prepared for his resurrection<sup>16</sup>. It is a death scene that bears strong resemblances to those of the renowned desert fathers Anthony and

<sup>8</sup> Generally, see seminal works on the property management of Cluny B. ROSENWEIN, *Rhinoceros Bound: Cluny in the 10th Century*, Philadelphia, 1982, and *To Be the Neighbor of St. Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909-1049*, Ithaca, NY, 1989. See also M. INNES, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley 400-1000*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 13-50.

<sup>9</sup> R. SAVIGNI, *L'immagine del santo fondatore nelle Vitae di Benedetto di Aniane e di Adalardo di Corbie (secolo IX)*, in R. Fangarezzi, P. Golinelli, A.M. Orselli (eds.), *Sant'Anselmo di Nonantola e i santi fondatori nella tradizione monastica tra Oriente e Occidente*, Atti della giornata di studio (Nonantola, 12 aprile 2003), Roma, 2006, p. 109-180.

<sup>10</sup> M. PALMBERGER, A. GINGRICH, *Qualitative comparative practices: dimensions, cases and strategies*, in U. Flick (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, London, 2014, p. 94-108.

<sup>11</sup> M. DUNN, *Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages*, Oxford, 2000, p. 1-41; M. DE JONG, *Charlemagne's church*, in J. Story (ed.), *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, Manchester, 2005, p. 103-136.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, B. WARD, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000-1215*, Aldershot, 1982, p. 168-169.

<sup>13</sup> In the late sixth century Gregory, bishop of Tours from 573 to 594, dated Martin's death in the night of November 11. See the final chapter of the tenth book of his *Decem libri historiarum*, in which Gregory presents a chronological list of his predecessors: GREGORY OF TOURS, *Histories X*, 31, III, in R. Bucher (ed.), *Zehn Bücher Geschichten*, 2, Darmstadt, 1970, p. 402. For more information on the date of Martin's death see *Ibidem*, I, 48, p. 50 and *Ibidem*, II, 14, p. 96, 98. Cf. also C. STANCLIFFE, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer. History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus*, Oxford, 1983, p. 71 with n. 1, 114-119 with discussions.

<sup>14</sup> GREGORY OF TOURS, *Histories*, I, 48, p. 50 and SULPICIOUS SEVERUS, *Epistula 3*, in K. Smolak (ed.), *Leben des heiligen Martin. Vita sancti Martini*, Eisenstadt, 1997, p. 144-163 or: J. Fontaine (ed.), *Sulpice Sévère: Vie de Martin*, 1, Paris 1967, p. 334-345 (the following quotes from the letters always refer to the German edition).

<sup>15</sup> The mentioned river is most likely the Loire, cf. SULPICIOUS SEVERUS, *Epistula 3, op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 149, 151 with fn. 217.

<sup>16</sup> SULPICIOUS SEVERUS, *Epistula 3, op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 158: «Cum hac ergo voce spiritum caelo reddidit, testatique nobis sunt, qui ibidem fuerunt, vidisse se vultum eius tamquam vultum angeli, membra autem eius candida tamquam nix videbantur, ita ut dicerent: 'Quis istum umquam cilicio tectum, quis in cineribus crederet involutum?' Iam enim sic videbatur, quasi in futurae resurrectionis gloria et natura demutatae carnis ostensus est».

Hilarion, and this is no coincidence. Their stories were not only a source of great inspiration and direction for ascetics in the West but had also been important literary templates for Sulpicius Severus as he composed the *Vita sancti Martini*<sup>17</sup>. Thus, it stands to reason that their model was also echoed in the description of Martin's death<sup>18</sup>.

This episode forms the centrepiece of two of the three extant missives about Martin in Sulpicius Severus' letter collection, which were addressed to the deacon Aurelius and to his own mother-in-law Bassula, respectively<sup>19</sup>. Both these recipients were closely connected with the author's ascetic circle of Primuliacum and shared a devotion for and interest in the bishop<sup>20</sup>. The letters, one providing a detailed account of Martin's death and the other one dealing primarily with his funeral, offer valuable and complementing perspectives on the event. The surviving third letter, written to the priest Eusebius, does not narrate the saint's actual death and was written shortly before the event but after the publication of the *Vita*<sup>21</sup>. It does, however, contain a description of a near-death experience, an accident that could have ended fatally for Martin. It tells the story of a fire which broke out in a small house while Martin was visiting one of the villages of his see. Sulpicius Severus used the life-threatening scenario

to showcase and discuss the bishop's saintly virtues and the power of his miracles in a fictional conversation with members of his ascetic circle in Primuliacum<sup>22</sup>. This letter is quite apologetic in tone, as it was directed against those who had previously criticized the bishop and had doubted his holiness. Sulpicius Severus used this anecdote of Martin's brush with death to hint at even more stories to prove Martin's saintly deeds, which had not been mentioned in the *vita*. Additionally, he also included guidelines how to read and interpret saints' lives correctly so as to avoid future misgivings<sup>23</sup>. Although these three letters were written at different stages after the publication of the *Vita Martini* itself in the autumn of 396<sup>24</sup>, Sulpicius Severus engaged with the topic of Martin's death in all of them. He presented different elements and perspectives on the authority of the bishop and his role and patronage for Christian communities both before and after his funeral, on the meaning of holiness in Late Antiquity, and the rise of asceticism in the Western Empire in general<sup>25</sup>.

The first encounter with Martin's actual death is narrated in the letter to the deacon Aurelius. Instead of telling his reader or readers<sup>26</sup> the whole story, Sulpicius Severus concentrates on how he received and processed the news of

<sup>17</sup> ATHANASIUS, *Vita Antonii*, 89-92 (Latin translation was provided by Evagrius of Antiochia), in *Patrologia latina*, 73, 125-170; English translation: D. BRAKKE, in T. Head (ed.), *Medieval Hagiography. An Anthology*, New York, 2001, p. 1(6)-30. Cf. R. BARTLETT, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation*, Princeton, Oxford, 2013, p. 3-26; C. RAPP, *The origins of hagiography and the literature of early monasticism: purpose and genre between tradition and innovation*, in C. Kelly, R. Flower, M.S. Williams (eds.), *Unclassical Traditions*, 1. *Alternatives to the Classical Past in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, 2010, p. 119-130; B. PASCAL, *Shaping authority and identity: Saint Antony and his followers in early monastic texts*, in R. Corradini, R. Meens, C. Pössel et al. (eds.), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, Vienna, 2006, p. 179-189; J. FONTAINE, *L'Ascétisme chrétien dans la littérature gallo-romaine d'Hilaire à Cassien*, in *La Gallia romana*, Rome, 1973, p. 87-115. For the influence on Sulpicius Severus' works see C. STANCLIFFE, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 86-107; M. PROULX, *In the Shadow of Anthony: History and Hagiography in Works of Sulpicius Severus and Paulinus of Milan*, in F. Young, M. Edwards, P. Parvis (eds.), *Studia patristica XXXIX. Papers presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2003*, Leuven, 2006, p. 423-428.

<sup>18</sup> C. STANCLIFFE, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 61-70; J. FONTAINE, *Vie de Saint Martin*, I, Paris, 1967, p. 59-96.

<sup>19</sup> In chapter 19 of his *De viris illustribus* Gennadius of Marseille mentions "many" letters which Sulpicius Severus had written to his "sister" (to probably his mother-in-law and "sister in Christ" Bassula, see PAULINUS OF NOLA, *Ep.*, 31, 1, ed. M. Skeb, *Epistulae*, vol. 3, Freiburg et al. 1998, p. 728) as well as 2 of the 13 letters he had written to his long-term friend and fellow-ascetic Paulinus, the later bishop of Nola. None of Sulpicius Severus' regularly written letters to Paulinus has survived but however, the thirteen (*Epp.*, 1, 5, 11, 17, 22-24, 27-32) extant answers of his spiritual brother allow us to gain valuable insight in their mutual ascetic vocation, in Sulpicius Severus' life at Primuliacum, his literary works and their progress and his ties to the communities of Tours. For more information see S. MRATSCHEK, *Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola. Kommunikation und soziale Kontakte zwischen christlichen Intellektuellen*, Göttingen, 2002, p. 19-48, 80-81, 106, 457-463; D. TROUT, *Paulinus of Nola. Life, Letters, and Poems*, Berkeley, 1999, p. 198-216; M. SKEB, *Einleitung*, in Id. (ed.), *Paulinus von Nola. Epistulae*, I, Freiburg et al., 1998, p. 9-113, esp. p. 73-76. Cf. for a recent analysis of Sulpicius Severus' extant letters see Z. YUZWA, *Reading Genre in Sulpicius Severus' Letters*, in *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7, 2014, 2, p. 329-350; also C. SCHUBERT, *Sulpicius Severus als Satiriker? Text, Übersetzung und Interpretationsversuch zu (Ps.-) Sulp. Sev., Ep. 3*, in H. BRENNECKE, V. DRECOLL, U. HEIL et al., *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*, 7, 2006, 1, p. 113-139; C. STANCLIFFE, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 102-107 and N. CHADWICK, *Poetry and Letters in Early Christian Gaul*, London, 1955, p. 103-105.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on Aurelius and Bassula see PAULINUS OF NOLA, *Ep.*, 5, *op. cit.* (n. 19) and N. CHADWICK, *op. cit.* (n. 19), p. 89-121; C. STANCLIFFE, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 17, 30-31; V. BURRUS, *The Making of a Heretic. Gender, Authority, and the Priscillianist Controversy*, Berkeley, 1995, p. 61-70 and also V. WIESER, *Like a Safe Tower on a Steady Rock. Wives and Mothers in the Ascetic Elites of Late Antiquity*, in *Tabula*, in print. On Aurelius see SULPICIOUS SEVERUS, *Dialogi*, 3, 1, in C. Halm (ed.), *Sulpicii Severi: Libri Qui Supersunt*, Vienna, 1866, p. 199; C. STANCLIFFE, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 167 with n. 18.

<sup>21</sup> On the priest Eusebius, who later became bishop, see SULPICIOUS SEVERUS, *Dialogi*, 2, 9, *op. cit.* (n. 20), p. 191; Z. YUZWA, *op. cit.* (n. 19), esp. p. 335-340. On the publication date of the *Vita* in autumn 396, see C. STANCLIFFE, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 72 with discussion. On its dissemination in 397 in Rome through Paulinus of Nola see S. MRATSCHEK, *op. cit.* (n. 19), p. 457-464; J. FONTAINE, *op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on the ascetic community of Primuliacum and its location between Toulouse and Narbonne see P. BROWN, *Through the Eye of a Needle. Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*, Oxford, 2012, p. 420, 521; R. ALCIATI, *And the Villa Became a Monastery: Sulpicius Severus' Community of Primuliacum*, in H. Dey, E. Fentress (eds.), *Western Monasticism "ante litteram". The Spaces of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Turnhout, 2011, p. 85-98; V. BURRUS, *op. cit.* (n. 20), p. 141-145, 158-159; C. STANCLIFFE, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 3, 30-38; J. FONTAINE, *Vie de Saint Martin*, I, *op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 30-49 and also V. WIESER, *op. cit.* (n. 20).

<sup>23</sup> Z. YUZWA, *op. cit.* (n. 19), p. 336; C. STANCLIFFE, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 102-107.

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of various possibilities to date the letters and their implied audience see recently Z. YUZWA, *op. cit.* (n. 19).

<sup>25</sup> See M. DUNN, *Asceticism and monasticism*, 2. *Western*, in A. Casiday, F. W. Norris (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, 2. *Constantine to c. 600*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 669-690; C. RAPP, *Saints and holy men*, in *Ibid.*, p. 548-566; EAD., *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in a Time of Transition*, Berkeley, 2005; C. LEYSER, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*, Oxford, 2000; P. BROWN, *Authority and the Sacred. Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World*, Princeton, 1997.

<sup>26</sup> In Late Antiquity private letters usually had a public aspect and purpose as well. As important means of self-representation they were shared, distributed and read aloud, cf. S. MRATSCHEK, *Zirkulierende Bibliotheken. Medien der Wissensvermittlung und christliche Netzwerke bei Paulinus von Nola*, in J. Desmulliez, C. Hoët Van Cauwenberghe, J. Jolivet (eds.), *L'étude des correspondances dans le monde romain. De l'antiquité classique à l'antiquité tardive: permanences et mutations*, Lille, 2011, p. 325-350.

Martin's passing. He describes the delivery of the message by two monks from Tours, expresses his own, great sorrow and offers consolation to his friend Aurelius<sup>27</sup>. The letter starts with a vision in a dream where Martin smilingly gives his approval for the composition of the *vita* and its author. The bishop's appearance also insinuates his death. Dressed in a garb of brilliant white, with bright eyes, luminous hair and face, Martin already seems to be from a different world<sup>28</sup>. After blessing the author, the saint is abruptly taken to Heaven. Sulpicius Severus' vision is intended to foreshadow the arrival of the monks carrying the message of Martin's death, which in turn confirms the truth of his dream. After the description of the author's emotional reaction and grief, he gives a lengthy and passionate argument in favour of Martin's status as saint and martyr. In it, Sulpicius Severus continues to give examples of Martin's holiness, a recurring theme in his other works and letters. Most graphically, he gives several short descriptions of various spectacularly cruel deaths from Hebrew and Christian martyr stories, such as the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace from the Book of Daniel, and presents these as scenarios Martin could have endured had he lived in the times of the emperors Decius or Nero<sup>29</sup>. After these vignettes, the letter to Aurelius ends with words of consolation to the recipient. It is the third letter in the collection, addressed to Bassula, that finally offers a full version of events complete with a lengthy description of the funeral<sup>30</sup>.

Comparing the information in the letters to the narrative of the *vita*, it becomes apparent that the goal of the biography was to transform the bishop and monk into a saint, while the letters to Aurelius and Bassula clarified how Martin had died as a saint and martyr<sup>31</sup>. At the same time, the letters also placed Sulpicius himself in the limelight. In the wake of Martin's death, it was imperative for him to make sure that he would be the one providing its official narrative. Having already successfully established himself as the saint's

biographer in life, he wanted to become the authoritative voice on his death as well. The letter to Aurelius focuses on the news of Martin's death for two reasons. Firstly, as Sulpicius Severus had probably yet to inquire further about the circumstances, he could not offer any more detailed information at that time. Despite this, however, he managed to use the message itself and turned it into symbolic capital in favour of the saint and himself. Moreover, the two letters provided an opportunity to bring the biography of Martin to a close<sup>32</sup>. As the *Vita sancti Martini* had been finished before the bishop's death and was already circulating in Rome, Italy and North Africa, the letters serve as complementary sources. They echo previous topics and disputes while at the same time envisaging possible future conflicts.

Martin's death was the starting point for struggles over his legacy in more than just one community. It raised not only the question of succession at the See of Tours, but also had a profound effect on his monastery in Marmoutier, founded only a few years after his episcopal consecration on the banks of the Loire<sup>33</sup>. As an ascetic alternative to his pastoral duties in Tours, the monastery was shaped after the ideals of the desert fathers, and was meant to provide a place of seclusion and contemplation in the wilderness<sup>34</sup>. According to Sulpicius Severus's letter, the monks of Marmoutier, who usually accompanied Martin on his pastoral and missionary journeys, had already expressed their fears about their community's future at his deathbed. Having been informed about their abbot's prediction of his impending death, they begged the ageing bishop to postpone his death and the rewards he was sure to obtain in Heaven. He should stay with them a little longer to provide guidance in tumultuous times and to protect them from «the ravenous wolves» and false prophets who were already waiting to descend on his flock: «There was a great grief and lament: wailing the brothers cried out unanimously: 'Why do you abandon us, father? Unguided as we are, whom should we turn to?'»<sup>35</sup>. The concerns of the

<sup>27</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.*, 2, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 140: «En rursus lacrimae fluunt, imoque de pectore gemitus erumpit... Me miserum, me infelicem! Poterone umquam, si dutius vixero, non dolere, quod Martino superstes sum?... Ecce nunc consolatum esse te cupio, qui me solari ispe non possum».

<sup>28</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.*, 2, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 128: «Cum repente sanctum Martinum episcopum videre mihi videor, praetextum toga candida, vultu igneo, stellantibus oculis, crine purpureo; atque ita mihi in ea habitudine corporis formaque, qua noveram, videbatur, ut, quod eloqui nobis paene difficile est, non possit aspici, cum possit agnosci».

<sup>29</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.*, 2, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 144: «Nam licet ei ration temporis non potuerit praestare martyrium, Gloria tamen martyris non carebit, quia voto atque virtute et potuit esse martyr et voluit. Quodsi Neronianis Decianisque temporibus in illa, quae tunc extitit, dimicare congressione licuisset». On Sulpicius Severus' presentation of Martin as martyr in the *Vita* and in his letters see C. Stancliffe, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 86-102 (*Vita*), 102-133 (letters), 141-148, 150-182; R. Bartlett, *op. cit.* (n. 17), p. 3-26; J. Fontaine, *op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 97-134, esp. p. 118-127; W.H.C. Friend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, Oxford, 1965.

<sup>30</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.*, 3, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 144-163 and Stancliffe, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 80, 86.

<sup>31</sup> On the intentions and strategies of the *Vita* see R. Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in late Antique Gaul*, Princeton, 1993, p. 13-28; C. Stancliffe, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 315-362; J. Fontaine, *op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 135-170; N. Chadwick, *op. cit.* (n. 19), p. 103-105.

<sup>32</sup> See n. 30 and also Y. Zuzwa, *op. cit.* (n. 19).

<sup>33</sup> After having visited the bishop there sometime in the early 390ies, Sulpicius Severus included a lengthy account on the monastery in the *Vita*, cf. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, 10, in J. Fontaine (ed.), Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Martin*, I, Paris, 1967, p. 247-316, at 272, 274. Cf. also A. Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge/MA, 2004, p. 185; R. Van Dam, *op. cit.* (n. 30), p. 15-16; C. Stancliffe, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 300, 319, 344, 351; N. Chadwick, *op. cit.* (n. 19), p. 99, 115, 121. For the question of succession and in general on the city and see of Tours cf. U. Nonn, *Tours und Poitiers*, in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 2. Auflage. Bd. 31, Berlin, New York 2006, p. 106-108; A. S. Mckinley, *The First Two Centuries of Saint Martin of Tours*, in *Early Medieval Europe* 14, 2006, p. 173-200; N. Gauthier, *From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages*, in K. Mitchell, I. Wood (eds.), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2002, p. 47-66; L. Pietri, *La ville de Tours du IVe au VIe siècle: naissance d'une cité chrétienne*, Rome, 1983, p. 89-157 (on the history of Tours after Martin's death) and 247-334 (on Tours in the times' of Gregory).

<sup>34</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini* 10, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 274: «Qui locus tam secretus et remotus erat, ut eremi solitudinem non desideraret. Ex uno enim latere praecisa montis excelsi rupe ambiebatur, reliquam planitiem Liger fluvius reducto paululum sinu clauserat; una tantum eademque arda admodum uia adiri poterat».

<sup>35</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.*, 3, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 152: «Tum vero maeror et luctus omnium et vox una plagentium: 'Cur nos, pater, deseris aut cui nos desolatos relinquish? Invadent enim gregem tuum lupi rapaces. Quis nos a morsibus eorum percusso pastore prohibebit?'».

monks were not unfounded. Marmoutier, as described in the *Vita sancti Martini*, had been a thriving community which hosted over eighty monks, mostly from aristocratic families<sup>36</sup>, but in the wake of Martin's death, it lost its wider influence in Gaul<sup>37</sup>. This explains the material expression of the community's loss in a verse inscription near the saint's cell, reading «The warrior sleeps, a man who must be missed»<sup>38</sup>.

These concerns about the loss of their founder and its consequences for the future of the community actually mirror Sulpicius Severus' personal grief and his own worries about the absence of his spiritual patron. He had already articulated these concerns in his letter to Aurelius, but they come more clearly to the fore in the letter to his mother-in-law, who was staying away at Trier at that time. As his «spiritual parent and co-heiress in Christ»<sup>39</sup>, Bassula played an important role in Sulpicius' own conversion and in the foundation and sustenance of his ascetic community in Primuliacum<sup>40</sup>. Sulpicius Severus used his letter to Bassula as a platform to present an account and interpretation of the funeral. He did so by invoking the image of a triumphal procession<sup>41</sup>. In his reconstruction of the event, the multitude of monks and nuns present resembled legions dressed in cowls and the singing of psalms and hymns sounded like the «thundering applause of roaring crowds»<sup>42</sup>. This powerful image serves two distinct argumentative purposes. First, Sulpicius Severus wanted to convey to his audience that the saint had been a true soldier of Christ as well as a Christian leader. He had indeed triumphed over the world, and would ascend to heaven whereas those of less faith would go to hell<sup>43</sup>. Second, it was supposed to emphasise the approval of the people for their bishop.

Embedding this description in the contemporary political context, which would have been well-known to the readers of the letter, the idea of a triumphal procession also showed how Martin, in death, had finally triumphed over Magnus Maximus, who at that time was ruling as an usurper over the western provinces of the Roman Empire Britain, Gaul and Spain<sup>44</sup>. Since his proclamation as *augustus* by his troops in 383 and the assassination of the young emperor Gratian, Magnus Maximus' power had risen further. This had also been achieved by exerting influence on religious matters, which to him represented a means to consolidate his social power within the aristocratic and episcopal networks in Gaul. In true Constantinian fashion, he intervened in ongoing conflicts between rival bishops<sup>45</sup>.

In the *Vita sancti Martini*, Sulpicius Severus had already showcased a confrontation between Magnus Maximus and Martin at a royal banquet held at the palace in Trier<sup>46</sup>. Whereas this occasion seems to have presented a welcome opportunity for many bishops and members of the clergy to meet and probably flatter the new emperor, according to Sulpicius Severus only Martin's demeanour spoke of true «apostolic authority and dignity»<sup>47</sup>. During the feast, Martin, who was sitting close to the emperor, famously passed the goblet offered by Magnus Maximus to one of his priests instead of returning it. This episode, which was later retold and embellished by Paulinus of Périgueux and Venantius Fortunatus, and which has been the subject of numerous studies in modern scholarship as well, was meant to strengthen Martin's reputation and to demonstrate the superiority of the religious leader over the political one<sup>48</sup>. Martin's disdain for the emperor's position did not end there: it was further articulated in his prophecy of Magnus Maximus' defeat and execution following his challenge to Valentinian I in Italy<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, 10, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 272-274.

<sup>37</sup> R. Van Dam, *op. cit.* (n. 30), p. 15-16.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in R. Van Dam, *op. cit.* (n. 30), 15, fn. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.*, 5, 19, *op. cit.* (n. 19), p. 196, 198: «sanctam parentem nostram, matrem in Christo coheredem».

<sup>40</sup> It is likely that after Sulpicius Severus had renounced his career and his properties, it was partly his own wealth and partly Bassula's that sustained his ascetic community in Primuliacum as well as his ambitious building projects at his estate: see Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.* 3, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 144, 146 and C. Stancliffe, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 15-19 (on Bassula paying his stenographers and secretaries), p. 30-38 (on his building projects); J. Fontaine, *Vie de Saint Martin*, I, *op. cit.* (n. 18), 26-28; N. Chadwick, *op. cit.* (n. 19), p. 89-121 and V. Wieser, *op. cit.* (n. 20).

<sup>41</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.*, 3, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 162: «Conparetur, si placet, saecularis illa pompa, non dicam funeris, sed triumphii: quid simile Martini exequiis aestimabitur?».

<sup>42</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.*, 3, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 159, 160: «In obsequium vero funeris, credi non potest, quanta hominum multitudo convenerit: tota obviam corpori civitas ruit, cuncti ex agris atque vicis multique de vicinis etiam urbibus adfuerunt. (...) Qui eo die fere ad duo milia convenisse dicuntur. (...) Agebat nimirum ante se pastor greges suos, sanctae illius multitudinis pallidas turbas, agmina palliata, aut emeritorum laborum senes aut iuratos Christi in sacramenta tirones».

<sup>43</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.*, 3, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 162: «Ducant illi prae curribus suis vinctos post terga captivos: Martini corpus hi, qui mundum ductu illius vicerant, prosequuntur; illos confusus plausibus populorum honore insaniam: Martino divinis plauditur psalmis. Martinus hymnis caelestibus honoratur: illi post triumphos suos in tartara saeva trudentur».

<sup>44</sup> Magnus Maximus ruled until his defeat and execution in 388, see W. Kuhoff, *Die Versuchung der Macht. Spätromische Heermeister und ihr potentieller Griff nach dem Kaisertum*, in S. Tschopp (ed.), *Macht und Kommunikation. Augsburger Studien zur europäischen Kulturgeschichte*, Berlin, 2012, p. 39-80; J. Matthews, *Maximian, Maximus, Constantine*, in ID., *Roman Perspectives. Studies in the Social, Political and Cultural History from the First to the Fifth Centuries*, Swansea, Oxford, 2010, p. 361-378; ID., *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court A.D. 364-425*, Oxford, 1995, p. 95-96, 165-167, 175-179, 223-225; G. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 186-188; P. MacGeorge, *Late Roman Warlords*, Oxford, 2003.

<sup>45</sup> D. Natal, J. Wood, *Playing with fire: Conflicting Bishops in Late Roman Spain and Gaul*, in K. Cooper, K. Leyser (eds.), *Making Early Medieval Societies: Conflict and Belonging in the Latin West, 300-1200*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, p. 33-57.

<sup>46</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, 20, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 295-296; M. SÁGHY, *Veste Regia Indutus: Representations of the Emperor in the Vita Martini*, in IKON, 5, 2012, p. 47-57; M. Roberts, *Martin meets Maximus: The Meaning of a Late Roman Banquet*, in *Revue des études augustiennes*, 41, 1995, p. 91-111.

<sup>47</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, 20, *op. cit.* (n. 32).

<sup>48</sup> M. Roberts, *op. cit.* (n. 45); I. Van Renswoude, *Licence to Speak. The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Utrecht, 2011, p. 201-258; J. Fontaine, *Hagiographie et politique, de Sulpice Sévère à Venantius Fortunat*, in *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, 62, 1976, p. 113-140.

<sup>49</sup> Sulpicius Severus had of course known the outcome of this conflict, when he wrote down Martin's prophecy, *Vita sancti Martini*, 20, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 298: «Eidemque Maximo longe ante praedixit futurum ut, si ad Italiam pergeret quo ire cupiebat bellum Valentiniano imperatori inferens, sciret se primo quidem impetu futurum esse uictorem, sed paruo post tempore esse periturum. Quod quidem ita uidimus».

Whereas Sulpicius Severus could highlight Martin's role as holy man in these episodes, and argue his religiously founded supremacy over the emperor without being held back by further religious concerns, the bishop's involvement in the Priscillian controversy was a topic that had to be treated more carefully. Priscillian was a Spanish landowner and intellectual, who had converted to an ascetic life. He soon became the leader of a large ascetic movement and was consecrated bishop of Avila around 380<sup>50</sup>. Priscillian's consecration was controversial, however, and he and his followers were attacked by regional authorities, primarily by the bishops of Córdoba and Mérida. In the end, the ensuing conflicts were played out on an imperial scale, after Priscillian had failed to win prominent allies such as the bishops of Rome and Milan for his cause. In a civil process he was condemned by the government of Magnus Maximus as a sorcerer and Manichaean<sup>51</sup>. His execution along with six of his followers in Trier in 385 set precedent<sup>52</sup>. While his case does show that Martin's rise to prominence did not occur in isolation, it stands as a good example for the scepticism that ascetic leaders – and the rapidly spreading ascetic movement in general – could face from local ecclesiastical authorities, and the rivalries that sometimes popped up between them and the secular rulers with whom they had to deal. Consequently, their success often depended on the establishment of a solid network of ecclesiastical support against the background of unpredictable political developments in the Western Roman Empire<sup>53</sup>. Priscillian's movement had attracted many supporters in Spain and Gaul, among them members of the wealthy Roman elite like the widow of the famous rhetorician Attius Tiro Delphidius and their daughter, and Martin himself had tried to intervene on his behalf<sup>54</sup>. To him, the interference by the Roman emperor had little to do with the purity of the Christian faith, and more with the bishops and Maximus' own secular and personal interests<sup>55</sup>. Regardless of Priscillian's transgressions, his case should remain in the hands of bishops, well clear of the Constantinian power play attempted by the emperor. This

controversy, which caused the clergy to fall into disarray and deepened already existing rivalries between bishops, still echoed through Gaul more than a decade after the conflict.

Given the support provided by Martin to the Spanish bishop, and given the similarities between the communities founded by Sulpicius and Priscillian, it was imperative for Sulpicius to defend the bishop as well as his own foundation, which had been modelled after Marmoutier, and maintained close relations to its monks<sup>56</sup>. All this comes together in his description of Martin's funeral procession, where Sulpicius allowed Martin to take on imperial qualities. In doing so, he gave Martin his final victory in the conflict, to the general acclaim of the populace. In Sulpicius' version of the saint's funeral procession, Martin's seemingly humble religious authority is shown to triumph over the secular authority of the emperor, and divine judgment to definitively supersede any punishment meted out by imperial decree.

The Priscillian affair was not the only thing jeopardising Martin's posthumous position in the ecclesiastical community of Gaul. In his works, especially in the *vita*, Sulpicius had to constantly defend and idealise Martin, as he was undeniably a controversial figure in the already highly diversified religious landscape of Gaul<sup>57</sup>. Many distinguished bishops who could boast a Roman senatorial background resented Martin, who seemed to them to be an uneducated and provocative upstart. This had already started at his consecration in 371<sup>58</sup>. Sulpicius Severus, however, used the image of the uncouth ascetic to further cement Martin's status as a saint. In this respect, it might not be surprising that he does not mention if any fellow bishops or clerics had been present at the funeral. Sulpicius only stresses that Martin had first and foremost been a bishop for his people – a shepherd for his flock. The exuberant attendance and approval of the people at Martin's funeral can be read in parallel with the account of his consecration<sup>59</sup>. Sulpicius' mastery of the situation allows him to wield Martin's death as a double-edged sword: when dealing with Maximus, the funeral conferred spiritual power to the saint and confirmed the relations between Church and

<sup>50</sup> Sulpicius Severus' *Chronicle* provides important information on the conflict, its development and its outcome: see D. NATAL, J. WOOD, *op. cit.* (n. 45); V. BURRUS, *op. cit.* (n. 20), esp. p. 1-24, 25-46, 126-140, 141-148; ID., *op. cit.* (n. 7), p. 88-114.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicle*, II, 46-51, in G. Senneville-Grave (ed. and trans.), *Sulpice Sévère. Chroniques: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire*, Paris, 1999, p. 332-346 and D. LIEBS, *Das Recht der Römer und die Christen. Gesammelte Aufsätze in überarbeiteter Fassung*, Tübingen, 2015, pp. 186-200; C. PIETRI, *Häresie und staatliche Macht: die Affäre um Priscillian von Avila*, in *Die Geschichte des Christentums II*, Freiburg i. Br., 1996, pp. 478-506; H. CHADWICK, *Priscillian of Avila – The occult and the charismatic in the early Church*, Oxford, 1976.

<sup>52</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *op. cit.* (n. 51), 51, p. 344: Along with Priscillian Felicissimus, Armenius, Latronianus and Euchrotia were beheaded, Asarivus and Aurelius were condemned to be beheaded, Instantius and Tiberianus were sent into exile and Tertullus, Potamius and Iohannes were sentenced to a temporary banishment.

<sup>53</sup> D. NATAL, J. WOOD, *op. cit.* (n. 45); V. BURRUS, *op. cit.* (n. 20), p. 26-30, 42-46, 79-101.

<sup>54</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicle*, II, 50, 2, *op. cit.* (n. 51), p. 342; V. BURRUS, *op. cit.* (n. 20), p. 95-96, 100-137. Prosper's *Chronicle* also mentions Urbica, a resident at Bourdeaux, who became a supporter of Priscillian and was killed by a mob, Prosper, *Chronicle* c. 433, in T. MOMMSEN (ed.), *MGH AA Chronica Minora Saec. IV, V, VI, VII*, vol. 9 of *Monumenta Germaniae*, Berlin, 1892, pp. 342-487, at 345.

<sup>55</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicle*, II, 50, 2, *op. cit.* (n. 51), p. 340, 342: «Secuti etiam accusatores Ydacius et Ithacius episcopi, quorum studium super expugnandis haereticis non reprehenderem, si non studio uincendi plus quam oportuit certassent. Ac mea quidem sententia est, mihi tam reos quam accusatores displicere, certe Ithacium nihil pensi, nihil sancti habuisse definitio: fuit enim audax, loquax, impudens, sumptuosus, uentri et gulae plurimum impertiens.»

<sup>56</sup> Cf. n. 32 and Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi*, *op. cit.* (n. 20).

<sup>57</sup> C. RAPP, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, *op. cit.* (n. 24), esp. p. 181; C. STANCLIFFE, *op. cit.* (n. 6), p. 292-312, 350; ID., *op. cit.* (n. 7), p. 119-140.

<sup>58</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, 9, 3, *op. cit.* (n. 35), p. 270, 272: «Pauci tamen, et nonnulli ex episcopis, qui ad constituendum antistitem fuerant evocati, impie repugnabant, dicentes scilicet contemptibilem esse personam, indignum esse episcopatus, hominem vultu despicabilem, veste sordidum, crine deformem!». Some bishops and clerics later refused to honour Martin as a saint, as his biographer repeatedly lamented, fearing that his merits would highlight their own inadequacies: cf. *Dialogi*, I, 26, 4-6, *op. cit.* (n. 20), p. 178.

<sup>59</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini*, 9, 2, *op. cit.* (n. 35), p. 270: «Mirum in modum incredibilis multitudo non solum ex illo oppido, sed etiam ex vicinis urbibus ad suffragia ferenda convenerat» and ID., *Ep.*, 3, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 158, 160: «In obsequium vero funeris, credi non potest, quanta hominum multitudo convenerit: tota obviam corpori civitatis ruit, cuncti ex agris atque vicis multique de vicinis etiam urbibus adfuerunt».

Empire set out in the famous dinner scene; when dealing with the bishops, it consolidated Martin's pastoral authority over his flock, showed that he was every bit the equal of his senatorial rivals – and *mutatis mutandis*, that his legacy should be allowed to persist as well.

The works of Sulpicius Severus were crucial in the making of Martin's sainthood, but it was the promotion of the succeeding bishops of Tours, Perpetuus and most notably Gregory, writing nearly two centuries later, who claimed the saint and his miracles as the centrepiece of the episcopal see of Tours<sup>60</sup>. Gregory, in his *Histories* and in his books *On the Virtues of Saint Martin*, linked the saint, the basilica and the see closely together and anchored the saint among the most important cult sites and pilgrimage centres in the thriving religious landscape of the Merovingian kingdoms<sup>61</sup>. After Martin's death, Marmoutier may have lost its relevance as a monastery, but over time it gained importance as a pilgrimage site and as a shrine to Martin<sup>62</sup>. Pilgrims and monks visited the saint's cell and commemorated the stations of Martin's monastic life. Although the monastery and the See of Tours were intended to be two worlds apart during Martin's lifetime, their connection grew ever stronger in the decades following the bishop and abbot's death. By the middle of the sixth century, an integral part of the liturgical celebrations of Lent in Tours was a visit to Marmoutier, as Gregory stated in *On the Virtues of Saint Martin*<sup>63</sup>. During this visit, people «licked and kissed and moistened with their tears each spot where the blessed man had sat or prayed or where he had eaten food or laid his body to rest after his many tasks», Gregory's words invoking the continuing devotion to Martin among the people he held so dearly<sup>64</sup>.

Gregory also recounted Martin's death, and even proudly added an anecdote not found in the works by Sulpicius Severus. It concerns the *furta sacra* of Martin's body by the clergy of Tours following an argument over the dead bishop's body with the city of Poitiers. When the news of the bishop's illness had reached them, both cities sent delegations to Candes, where he was staying, and tried to claim Martin's patronage for them<sup>65</sup>. The people of Tours claimed that Martin had been their bishop and therefore should continue

working miracles for the city after his death. The citizens of Poitiers on the other hand argued that Martin had founded his first monastery close to their city, in Ligugé, and that it was their turn to enjoy the holy man's blessings as Tours had enjoyed them during his episcopacy. The group from Tours settled the argument by simply stealing the body and carrying it to their city. The theft was justified, Gregory implies, as the saint would have surely stopped them otherwise<sup>66</sup>. Interestingly, in Gregory's account, Martin's tenure as bishop of Tours was given more importance than his monastic activities. As Raymond van Dam already stated, it took a historian like Sulpicius Severus to turn Martin into a saint worthy of admiration and emulation<sup>67</sup>. However, it was due to Gregory's rhetorical skills and authority that the controversial bishop would be successfully reconciled with the ecclesiastical and worldly realities of the times. Gregory turned the saint into a model bishop, making him an object of veneration for Merovingian kings and aristocrats as well as the common people. Martin's lingering presence and legacy, filtered through Gregory's commentaries, conferred authority upon the city of Tours – and ended up giving Marmoutier a solid foundation upon which to build its continued existence.

In the world of Saint Martin and (to a lesser extent) that of Gregory of Tours, the Christianised portrayal of life and death, of sanctity and community-building, were part of a movement that could be deliberately subversive, at least according to its own rhetoric<sup>68</sup>. For contemporary observers like Sulpicius Severus, Martin provided an alternative to the prevailing Roman imperial discourse, and opened up possibilities for criticism of secular power that went beyond a strict Christian/pagan dichotomy. Paradoxically, it was Martin's devout demeanour and humility that conferred a kind of imperial dignity upon him after his death, and which made him a model for episcopal authority in the centuries that followed. He represented more than a new way of life. He represented a new way of leadership.<sup>69</sup>

Another two centuries later, the empire was no longer such a potential hindrance to Christianity. The early ninth

<sup>60</sup> On Tours, Perpetuus and Gregory see n. 32, and VAN DAM, *op. cit.* (n. 30), p. 13-28, 50-81; ID., *op. cit.* (n. 7), p. 177-201, 230-255; A. S. MCKINLEY, *The first two centuries of Saint Martin of Tours*, in *Early Medieval Europe* 14/2, 2006, pp. 173-200; I. WOOD, *Constructing cults in early medieval France: local saints and churches in Burgundy and the Auvergne*, in R. Sharpe, A. Thacker (eds.), *Local saints and local churches in the early medieval West*, Oxford, 2002, p. 155-188; L. PIETRI, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 247-338.

<sup>61</sup> See n. 60 and J. KREINER, *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom*, Cambridge, 2014, p. 167, 216-217, 254-259; P. FOURACRE, *Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography*, in *Past & Present* 127, 1990, p. 3-38; J. FONTAINE, *Preface*, in L. PIETRI, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. V-IX; Y. FOX, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: Columbanian Monasticism*, Cambridge, 2014, p. 6-8, 116 and C. HAHN, *Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early Medieval Saints' Shrines*, in *Speculum*, 72, 1997, p. 1079-1106.

<sup>62</sup> VAN DAM, *op. cit.* (n. 30), p. 13-28, 50-81; L. PIETRI, *op. cit.* (n. 32), p. 247-338, 521-600.

<sup>63</sup> GREGORII EPISCOPI TURONENSIS *Libri IV. De virtutibus Sancti Martini episcopi*, in B. Krusch (ed.), in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (= MGH), Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum (= SS rer. Merov.)*, 1.2, Hannover, 1885, p. 134-210.

<sup>64</sup> GREGORII EPISCOPI TURONENSIS, *op. cit.* (n. 63), p. 138: «Magnifica vero atque desiderabili paschali festivitate adveniente, populus ad beati cellulam, in qua commoratus saepe cum angelis frequentaverat, devotus advenit. Et singulari loca adlambens oculis vel inrigans lacrimis, in qua vir beatus ante sederat aut oraverat, sive ubi cibum sumpserat vel corpori quietem post multis labores indulserat, classe navium praeparata, amnem transire parat, ut beatum sepulchrum adeat et se, cum fletu veniam deprecans, coram confessore prosternat». Translation quoted in VAN DAM, *op. cit.* (n. 30), p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> VAN DAM, *op. cit.* (n. 30), 13-14.

<sup>66</sup> GREGORII EPISCOPI TURONENSIS, *Libri historiarum X*, I, 48, in B. Krusch, W. Levison (eds.), *MGH, SS rer. Merov.*, 1.1, Hannover, 1951, p. 50-52. On the significance of relics and the competition between different monastic communities see P. GEARY, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, Princeton, 1990, p. 3-27, 56-86.

<sup>67</sup> VAN DAM, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 13.

<sup>68</sup> But cf. S. RUBENSON, *Monasticism and the philosophical heritage*, in S. Johnson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, Oxford, 2012, p. 487-512.

<sup>69</sup> C. RAPP, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, *op. cit.* (n. 24), esp. pp. 3-22;

century and the heyday of Carolingian rule present a world that was deceptively similar but altogether different from that of Martin, Sulpicius or even Gregory. Christendom had all but taken over the socio-political discourse in the West, and bishops as well as monasteries have become pillars upon which rested the foundations of a reinstated *imperium Christianum*<sup>70</sup>. In the aftermath of the turbulent years when the post-Roman kingdoms established themselves in the West, the combined ambitions of the papacy and the Carolingian rulers ensured that the political framework upon which the Frankish Empire was built was complementary to the spread of Christianity rather than providing a hindrance to it<sup>71</sup>. *Imperium* and the *ecclesia* overlapped to a large extent, and the Carolingians expended a tremendous amount of energy and resources towards reforming and correcting their religion, ensuring that everybody in their realm would be given means to achieve salvation. Religious responsibility had, in short, become a matter of the state<sup>72</sup>.

#### DYING BETWEEN CLOISTER AND COURT: BENEDICT OF ANIANE

In this world, in the year 821, the abbot Benedict of Aniane breathed his last, surrounded by the monks of his community of Inda (now known as Kornelimünster), in the shadow of the palace in Aachen<sup>73</sup>. Most of what we know about Benedict's life and death comes from his *vita*, composed in 822 by Ardo, a *magister* of Benedict's first foundation of Aniane, close to present-day Montpellier<sup>74</sup>. Born in Septimania, in the South of the realm, Benedict started his life as a pupil at the court of Bertrada and Pippin III. He rose through the ranks as one of Charlemagne's courtiers before becoming disillusioned with earthly life and turning to asceticism. Taking a «hero's journey» through all monastic options and rules available to those wishing to relinquish the world, he settled upon the *Regula Benedicti* as the perfect way of life<sup>75</sup>. Once settled, he was gradually drawn back into courtly circles, eventually becoming one of the leading authorities on monastic life in the empire, one of the key advisors to

Louis the Pious, and one of the driving forces behind the monastic reform movement that characterised Carolingian rule in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Indeed, his place of death testifies to his influence while alive: Inda was founded in 816 by Louis the Pious, then newly crowned emperor, with the express purpose of keeping Benedict close at hand to help him run the empire, while also using the peace and quiet of the monastery to rest<sup>76</sup>. As told in the panegyric that Ermoldus Nigellus dedicated to Louis the Pious in the 820s, Benedict was a «father to everyone» while residing at Inda, and Louis would be «emperor and abbot at the same time» (*caesar et abba simul*)<sup>77</sup>. While still a far cry from a complete amalgamation of cloister and court, this description, which was written at the culmination of Louis the Pious' reform activities in the wake of his succession to the Frankish throne, demonstrates to what extent monastic elites and the empire could play mutually supportive roles, even though this in no way meant that those residing behind monastery walls were ready to concede the moral high ground they had acquired over the centuries. Nevertheless, as we shall see by taking a closer look at the death scene of Benedict, they were fully aware that their continued existence depended on the benevolence of the empire as much as the court relied on the monastic «power of prayer» to provide the «sacred foundations» of the empire<sup>78</sup>.

It is to Ardo that we owe the image of Benedict's life as a local saint who grew to become a prime mover in the Carolingian reforms. It is also to him that we owe the description of Benedict's death - a good death by early medieval standards, befitting an abbot who, in spite of his political career, managed to live a perfect monastic life<sup>79</sup>. At first glance, the story is quite topical indeed. As Benedict would «take up the courtly life he once gave up to the advantage of many», he also began to «increasingly be weakened by various ailments», a condition which, like any good saint, he bore patiently<sup>80</sup>. Benedict continued to bear the burden of public life until his disease got so bad that he, «after a friendly conversation with the emperor was allowed to be borne back

<sup>70</sup> On the inception of this term, see M. ALBERI, *The evolution of Alcuin's concept of the Imperium christianum*, in J. Hill (ed.), *The Community, the Family and the Saint: Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe*, Turnhout, 1998, p. 3-17. See also D. VAN ESPELO, *A testimony of Carolingian rule? The Codex epistolaris carolinus, its historical context, and the meaning of imperium*, in *Early Medieval Europe*, 21, 2013, 3, p. 254-282.

<sup>71</sup> J. NELSON, *Kingship and empire*, in R. McKitterick (ed.), *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 52-87, at p. 69-73.

<sup>72</sup> M. DE JONG, *Ecclesia and the early medieval polity*, in S. Airlie, W. Pohl, H. Reimitz (eds.), *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, Vienna, 2006, p. 113-132; EAD., *The state of the church: ecclesia and early medieval state formation*, in W. Pohl, V. Wieser (eds.), *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat: europäische Perspektiven*, Wien, 2009, p. 241-254.

<sup>73</sup> On the history of the monastery (and the reason for giving it a new name), see N. KÜHN, *Die Reichsabtei Kornelimünster im Mittelalter: Geschichtliche Entwicklung, Verfassung, Konvent, Besitz*, Aachen, 1982.

<sup>74</sup> ARDO, *Vita Sancti Benedicti Abbatis Anianensis*, in W. KETTEMANN (ed. and trans.), *Subsidia Anianensia: Überlieferungs- und textgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Witiza-Benedikts, seines Klosters Aniane und zur sogenannten "anianischen Reform"*, Duisburg, 2001, p. 139-223. An online edition and translation was prepared under the supervision of G. SCHMITZ, and may be accessed at <http://www.rotula.de/aniane/index.htm>. The most widely used translation in English was made by A. CABANISS, *The Emperor's Monk: Contemporary Life of Benedict of Aniane*, Elms Court, 1979; repr. Kalamazoo, 2008. For this article, I will be referencing the edition made by Kettemann.

<sup>75</sup> A. DIEM, *Inventing the Holy Rule: some observations on the history of monastic normative observance in the Early Medieval West*, in H. Dey, E. Fentress (eds.), *op. cit.* (n. 22), p. 53-84, at p. 83-84.

<sup>76</sup> R. KRAMER, *Teaching emperors: transcending the boundaries of Carolingian monastic communities*, in E. Hovden, C. Lutter, W. Pohl (eds.), *Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia: Comparative Approaches*, Leiden, 2016, p. 309-338, at p. 314-318.

<sup>77</sup> ERMOLDUS NIGELLUS, *Carmen in Honorem Hludovici Augusti*, lib. 2, l. 1249, in E. FARAL (ed. and trans.), *Ermold le Noir: Poème sur Louis le Pieux et Épitres au Roi Pépin*, Paris, 1932; repr. 1964, 2-200, at p. 96-97.

<sup>78</sup> M. DE JONG, *Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer*, in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History II: c. 700 - c. 900*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 622-653.

<sup>79</sup> But see J. STRANGE, *Death*, in M. Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Medicine*, Oxford, 2011, p. 355-372, at p. 356-359.

<sup>80</sup> *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, c. 41, *op. cit.* (n. 75), p. 211.



to his monastery» at Inda<sup>81</sup>. There, having composed one final letter to his pupils at Aniane, he died, singing psalms and surrounded by the brethren of his second foundation. His death was then revealed in a vision to bishop Stabilis (or Stabellus) of Maguelonne, ensuring that his native region also quickly learnt of it<sup>82</sup>.

Benedict had died in his own community, which nonetheless was far away from the place where he had started. He did not neglect to impart some final words of wisdom onto his students in Aniane, however, as he also composed a letter to them<sup>83</sup>. This letter of advice was about more than merely providing his community and their new abbot, Georgius, with some last-minute pastoral advice. Benedict gave the monks of Aniane valuable insights on how to retain their place in the world and maintain their monastery's link to the palace. Among several important people with whom they should keep in touch, Benedict first of all singles out their brethren in Inda, but also emphasises the importance of his friend, the arch-chancellor Helisachar, «who has been my most loyal friend from among the canons». He writes that the monks of Aniane should regard Helisachar as being his replacement at court, the intercessor between their needs and the emperor's ear and their *refugium* in times of need<sup>84</sup>. This short reference to courtly hierarchy encapsulates the love/hate relationship Benedict had with the imperial system. The palace was of course a place of corruption, where worldly interests interfered with his spiritual ideals. But it was also the place where things got done, where good people worked for the betterment of Christendom, and (thus) a potential source of protection for monasteries against the dangers of the world<sup>85</sup>. Hence his insistence on Helisachar: the way to an emperor's heart is through his courtiers, after all. Ardo took this advice seriously. When he sent a copy of the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* to the palace, he addressed it to Helisachar, so that the chancellor might check its veracity<sup>86</sup>. After all, he flatters his audience in the prologue, it was close to the «gates of the palace» that one could «drink from the unfailing watercourse of the fountain of wisdom»,

rather than the «boisterous streams» that he, in the deep South of Septimania, had to rely on<sup>87</sup>.

In this sense, it is striking that Ardo describes a dialogue with the emperor as part of Benedict's final moments. It is set inside the palace, where Benedict is lying ill, and as he feels his end approaching he has a «friendly conversation» with Louis, presumably to indicate that Benedict addressed his ruler first before being allowed to move back behind monastery walls. In Ardo's version, Benedict stands on equal terms with Louis the Pious, as he takes his leave from courtly life and goes back to the source of his spirituality: he spends the night chanting «prayers and psalms», until he reaches the fateful Psalm 118/9, quoting – according to Ardo – verses 137: «Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right» and 124: «Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy»<sup>88</sup>. The first of these is explained in patristic and early medieval exegesis as signifying the virtue of coming to terms with one's sinfulness in moments of desperation or just before death<sup>89</sup>. The second may be read in a context of complete surrender to the will of God – and, according to Cassiodorus in his *Expositio Psalmorum*, for example, also stands as a reminder that obedience is in the end owed to God alone, as He is an unfailing source of justice, mercy and generosity<sup>90</sup>. Then, uttering his first and only word in direct speech in the scene (a simple *Deficio* – «I am dying»), Benedict passes, leaving only the letter to Aniane «which he had dictated with his own speech», and which, according to Ardo, «is more beautiful than all other treasures» his community had accrued during his lifetime<sup>91</sup>.

This scene appears to be a relatively straightforward affair, and is a fitting end for a saint who divided his life between cloister and court. We see the author's hand in this description, however, when we juxtapose the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* with the representation of Benedict's death in another source, a letter sent by the monks of Inda to the monastery of Aniane. In this letter, essentially a *vita brevis* of Benedict, an eyewitness account of Benedict's final moments is provided for Ardo to use in his *vita*<sup>92</sup>. Although

<sup>81</sup> *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, c. 41, *op. cit.* (n. 75), p. 212: «Invalenscente autem aegritudine, imperatorem familiariter adloquutus, monasterio deducitur, fratribusque valefaciens, totam noctem orationibus psalmodiisque pernoctans, ipsius diei regularem officium peregit».

<sup>82</sup> This appears to be the only mention of this bishop in the historical record: C. DEVIC, J. VAISSETE, *Histoire générale de Languedoc. Avec des Notes et les Pièces Justificatives*, IV, Toulouse, 1872, p. 313.

<sup>83</sup> ARDO, *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, c. 43, *op. cit.* (n. 75), p. 219-221.

<sup>84</sup> ARDO, *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, c. 43, *op. cit.* (n. 75), p. 221: «Elisachar quoque, qui pre omnibus super terram omni tempore nobis extitit amicus fidelissimus canonicorum, et fratres ipsos in meo habetote semper loco, et ad eum semper sit refugium vestrum».

<sup>85</sup> S. AIRLIE, *The palace complex*, in J. Hudson, A.M. López Rodríguez (eds.), *Diverging paths? The Shapes of Power and Institutions in Medieval Christendom and Islam*, Leiden, 2014, p. 255-289.

<sup>86</sup> ARDO, *Vita Benedicti Anianensi*, Praefatio, *op. cit.* (n. 75), p. 140-143, at p. 142.

<sup>87</sup> ARDO, *Vita Benedicti Anianensi*, Praefatio, *op. cit.* (n. 75), p. 141: «presertim cum noverim, vos sacrae aulae palatii adsistere foribus, nec turbulentis rivulis sitire potum, quin pocius ab indeficienti vena purissimi fontis sedulo sapientiae aurire fluenta».

<sup>88</sup> ARDO, *Vita Benedicti Anianensi*, c. 41, *op. cit.* (n. 75), p. 212: «At cum alterius diei regularem explesset officium et cursum persolvere vellet, ventum est ad clausulam: *Iustus es, Domine*. Quem versiculum decantans, ait: 'Deficio'; et adiecit: 'Fac cum servo tuo, Domine, secundum misericordiam tuam'». Given a regular Benedictine liturgy, as set out in the *Regula Benedicti*, c. 18, this would place Benedict's death on a Monday during Sext, apparently a significant time, although more research into Ardo's understanding of liturgy will be needed to figure this out. Generally, see J. BILLETT, *The Divine Office in Anglo-Saxon England, 597-c.1000*, Cambridge, 2014, p. 13-77.

<sup>89</sup> See for example POSSIDIUS, *Vita Augustini*, c. 28, in H.T. Weiskotten (ed. and trans.), *Sancti Augustini Vita scripta a Possidio Episcopo*, Princeton, 1919, p. 177, or AMBROSE OF MILAN, *Expositio Psalmi CXVIII*, Lit. Sade, c. 8, in M. Petschenig (ed.), Vienna, 1913, p. 401: «haec iustorum est consolatio, hoc est domini iudicium».

<sup>90</sup> CASSIODORUS, *Expositio Psalmorum*, in P.G. Walsh (trans.), *Cassiodorus, Explanation of the Psalms*, vol. 3, Mahwah, 1991, p. 232-233.

<sup>91</sup> ARDO, *Vita Benedicti Anianensi*, c. 41, *op. cit.* (n. 75), p. 213: «Adsunt autem eius omnibus divitiis dulciores epistolae, quas, pridie quam migraret a seculo, fratribus Aniano positus proprio dictavit ore, in quibus testatur faciem suam amplius non visuram». In the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, cc. 17-19, Ardo describes the church of Aniane as being richly decorated.

<sup>92</sup> *Epistola Indensium (Vita Benedicti Anianensis)*, c. 42, *op. cit.* (n. 75), p. 214-218. On this letter, see W. KETTEMANN, *Subsidia Anianensia*, *op. cit.* (n. 70), p. 78-86.

this second source is much briefer, the two stories do overlap to a large extent at the beginning. Benedict resides in the palace, falls gravely ill, and cannot receive proper care due to the many visitors he receives. At this point, however, the two narratives diverge. According to the so-called *Epistola Indensium*, it was not the abbot himself who requested to be carried to Inda, but rather it was «the emperor who sent his chamberlain, Tankulf, in the night, ordering that we bring him to the monastery that very night. We lifted him up und carried him, together with Helisachar and his people, to the monastery at the first hour of the day»<sup>93</sup>.

While this version of Benedict's death may be presumed to have been more accurate than Ardo's second-hand account, the question remains why the monks of Inda chose to include this information in their letter to Aniane. Presented like this, it was the emperor himself who took responsibility for safeguarding proper monastic conduct and ensuring that Benedict died as an abbot and not as a courtier. By taking away the abbot's agency, they all but put him at the mercy of Louis the Pious, who had to act abbatially in his stead and use the resources at his disposal at the palace to spur the community of Inda into action.

The variations between these two versions showcase the different ways the two monasteries perceived their relation with the emperor, even if they had been led by the same abbot with the same cordial relation to the court. To Ardo, it was important to emphasise the teacher-student relationship between Benedict and Louis the Pious. In the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, Ardo designates Aniane, the place where Benedict first put his teaching into practice, as the *capud* [sic] *coenobiorum* of all the monasteries in the area under the authority of Louis the Pious, first Aquitaine, then the entire empire<sup>94</sup>. For Ardo and the rest of the monks of Inda, Ermoldus' designation of Louis the Pious as a *caesar et abba simul* would have hit close to home, showing the connection that Benedict had supposedly forged between court and cloister. This would have been reiterated in the letter sent from Inda, in which the community describes how the emperor, through his connection with Benedict, had effectively become one of them and had earned the nickname *Monachus*<sup>95</sup>. From one group of monks to another, this was not a reflection of Louis' supposed ineffectiveness as a ruler, as has sometimes been claimed<sup>96</sup>. Instead, it should be understood as one of the highest compliments they could

give him. After all, to live like a monk was to live like a perfect Christian, capable of retreating into an «internal cloister» and to remain unaffected by the pomp and circumstance of the secular world<sup>97</sup>. It was up to Ardo to show how it was Benedict who had made the emperor into such an exemplary figure, with the clear implication that Benedict had, in turn, learned the ropes in Aniane.

For the community of Inda, it was equally important to show how Louis had managed to become an emperor who could be a monk, capable of living up to Benedict's teachings while also running the Carolingian *imperium*<sup>98</sup>. Indeed, it would have been vital to highlight his abbatial qualities in order to retain the status accorded to them by their illustrious pedigree. Louis was the new safeguard of their community and, as his proactive attitude during their abbot's final moment showed, clearly capable of taking on Benedict's mantle after his death. Similar to Aniane, the community of Inda was a relatively new foundation, and similar to Aniane, they laid a claim to being the first in line to implement the monastic reforms propagated under Louis the Pious<sup>99</sup>. For them, this status was a function of their proximity to the emperor and his court, and Benedict's death thus became a pretext for highlighting their position at the heart of the empire. Conversely, Ardo seized upon their narrative and turned it into a reminder that the source of their wisdom might have died in Aachen, but that he had first sprung up in Aniane. Writing for his community in Septimania as well as for the empire at large, Ardo made sure to show how his version of Benedict came to terms with God rather than with the emperor.

In both narratives, the death of Benedict is used to consolidate the status of the communities he founded, and to emphasise what the authors deemed necessary to securing their future. While the teachings and sanctity of Benedict remain the main focus of both his *vitae*, the descriptions shift the focus to the communities he founded and towards maintaining the *status quo* as he approaches his final moments. Benedict was a functioning part of the empire, and an extension of the authority of Louis the Pious. From the point of view of Aniane, the best way to show this was to highlight Benedict's role as a loyal courtier and a teacher of the emperor. For Inda, it was important to remind that same emperor that he was now responsible for the legacy of his deceased friend.

<sup>93</sup> *Epistola Indensium (Vita Benedicti Anianensis, c. 42), op. cit. (n. 75), p. 215: «Quinta siquidem feria aegrotavit, in sexta autem feria nocte misit imperator Tanculfum camerarium, iubens, ut eum ipsa nocte ad monasterium fereremus; quem levantes, ante gallorum cantu una cum Elysacar et suis ac nostris hominibus prima ora diei ad monasterium deduximus».*

<sup>94</sup> ARDO, *Vita Benedicti Anianensis, c. 17, op. cit. (n. 75), p. 168*. On this designation, see W. KETTEMANN, *Subsidia Anianensia, op. cit. (n. 70), p. 123-129*.

<sup>95</sup> *Epistola Indensium, op. cit. (n. 75), p. 215: «Curam autem maximam habuit de omni ordine aecclesiastico, videlicet monachorum, canonicorum atque laicorum, maxime autem monachorum. Imperator autem omne eius consilium libenter audivit et fecit; unde et a quisbusdam Monachus vocitatur, videlicet quia monachos sancti viri pro eius amore semper suos proprios appellavit, et post eius discessum actenus abbatem se monasterii illius palam esse profitetur».* See also n. 10 on the same page.

<sup>96</sup> See T.F.X. NOBLE, *The monastic ideal as a model for empire*, in *Revue Bénédictine*, 86, 1976, p. 235-250, at p. 237-238 and ID., *Louis the Pious and his piety re-reconsidered*, in *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 58, 1980, p. 296-316, for an overview of the start of this interpretation. Cf. also C. BOOKER, *Past Convictions: The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians*, Philadelphia, 2009, p. 225-228.

<sup>97</sup> M. DE JONG, *Internal cloisters: the case of Ekkehard's Casus sancti Galli*, in W. Pohl, H. Reimitz (eds.), *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, Vienna, 2000, p. 209-221.

<sup>98</sup> NOBLE, *op. cit. (n. 92), p. 49-50*.

<sup>99</sup> An indication of this status may be seen in a letter sent by Grimaldus and Tatto to their monastery of Reichenau: GRIMALDUS et TATTO, *Epistola cum XII Capitulis*, in E. Dümmler (ed.), *MGH, Epistolae 5, Epistolae Karolini Aevi III*, Berlin, 1899, p. 305-307. On the expedition of these two monks, see also P. MEYVAERT, *Problems concerning the "autograph" manuscript of Saint Benedict's Rule*, in *Revue Bénédictine*, 69, 1959, p. 3-21.

## CONCLUSION: MANY LIVES, MANY DEATHS

The death of the abbot in both versions of the life of Benedict betray their Carolingian credentials by emphasising how monasteries, not abbots, were the purveyors of the long-term thinking that allowed proper Christian teaching to be shaped and developed. Although the function of the holy man was still to spread wisdom and teach proper Christianity according to Ardo and the monks of Inda, the communities founded and the institutions represented by such a holy man were of equal – and possibly even greater – value. Human life is finite, and miracles – what few there are in the *VBA* – mostly serve to underline the sanctity of the individual. Benedict's enduring legacy had been to strengthen the *ecclesia* by teaching the emperor, and inspiring him (and others) to found more monastic communities to strengthen the sacred foundations of the empire. For Ardo, it was this legacy that entitled Aniane, Benedict's first foundation, to retain its place in the sun, peripheral though it might be.

This contrasts with Sulpicius Severus' portrayal of the rise of Saint Martin, whose individual sanctity and value as an exemplary Christian superseded his foundation. Sulpicius' literary works betray a combative Christianity and bleak perspective on secular power, where emperors like Magnus Maximus serve as a foil to the virtues and achievement of the ascetic leader. Sulpicius Severus created a new image of the Holy Man who had to stand up against the world, not work with it. Less than two centuries later, however, the world of Gregory of Tours already allows for a more "institutional" approach, using Martin's individual sanctity and the miracles he performed to strengthen not only the position of Tours and its see, but of bishops in general. Gradually, an overlap seems to develop between the death of a saint and the life of an institution. The models pioneered by Sulpicius Severus and Gregory remained highly influential in the Carolingian world. The primary function of the Holy Man was still to spread wisdom and teach proper Christianity to everyone. Yet, by the ninth century it was recognised that the

communities and institutions represented by saints were as important as cult sites as they were as "enclaves of learning", isolated religious communities that existed for the purpose of safeguarding and perpetuating spiritual know-how<sup>100</sup>. To Sulpicius, Martin's enduring legacy was to witness the power of God and the unstoppable rise of Christianity. To Gregory, the holy man had become a holy bishop, a reminder of the longevity of Christendom as an institution. Ardo built upon both these ideas by showing how Benedict's role had been to strengthen the *Ecclesia* by teaching the emperor, and inspiring him to strengthen the sacred foundations of the empire.

If Ardo's Benedict was a friend of the emperor by definition, and Sulpicius Severus' versions of Martin and Maximus could only ever be hostile to one another, it is important to note that the authority conferred upon the saints was a product of their interaction with those wielding secular power. It was this interaction that in turn fuelled the interests of the various communities with a stake in the saint's future. By latching on to the perceived importance of Martin or Benedict – the former as a viable alternative to the emperor, the latter through his *Königsnähe* – communities like Tours, Poitiers, Marmoutier or Aniane showed an awareness that their continued existence could only be guaranteed if they do not shut themselves out from the world completely. Regardless of an individual saint's relation to the world beyond the walls of their foundation, the communities that were the primary recipients of the texts discussed in this article did well to explicate that they would persist thanks to, not in spite of, the political structures around them. In that sense, it is clear that Ardo, Sulpicius Severus and Gregory alike saw that the reactions from the outside justified their respective communities as much as the actions of their saints (or their relics).

In either case, it the death of the abbot became a catalyst for turning their legacy into something greater than themselves. If the lives and *vitae* of these saints were intended to be exemplary, their deaths would inadvertently be turned into political capital. And it only grew stronger the more often they died.

<sup>100</sup> On this concept, see R. KRAMER, *Introduction: Spiritual communities across medieval Eurasia*, in E. Hovden, C. Lutter, W. Pohl (eds.), *op. cit.* (n. 77), p. 271-288.