

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL NORTH ATLANTIC



Rutger Kramer

# Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire

Ideals and Expectations during  
the Reign of Louis the Pious (813-828)

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

## Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire

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*Ideals and Expectations during the  
Reign of Louis the Pious (813-828)*

*Rutger Kramer*

Amsterdam University Press

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The world of Louis the Pious, 813-828: important places mentioned in this book  
 (Credit: Erik Goosmann, <http://www.mappamundi-cartography.com/>)



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For Arthur, Olaf and Amanda



When the time gets right  
I'm gonna pick you up  
And take you far way  
From trouble my love  
Under a big ol' sky  
Out in a field of green  
There's gotta be something left for us to believe  
Oh, I await the day  
Good fortune comes our way  
And we ride down the king's highway  
– Tom Petty, 'King's Highway' (*Into the Great Wide Open*, 1991)

I watch the ripples change their size  
But never leave the stream  
Of warm impermanence  
And so the days float through my eyes  
But still the days seem the same  
And these children that you spit on  
As they try to change their worlds  
Are immune to your consultations  
They're quite aware of what they're going through  
Changes  
Turn and face the strange  
Don't tell them to grow up and out of it  
Turn and face the strange  
Where's your shame?  
You've left us up to our necks in it  
Time may change me  
But you can't trace time  
– David Bowie, 'Changes' (*Hunky Dory*, 1971)



# Acknowledgements

In July of 2008, Barack Obama held a campaign speech at the Siegessäule in Berlin. ‘People of the world’, he proclaimed in his closing statement, ‘the scale of our challenge is great. The road ahead will be long. But I come before you to say that we are heirs to a struggle for freedom. We are a people of improbable hope. With an eye towards the future, with resolve in our hearts, let us remember this history, and answer our destiny, and remake the world once again’. A lofty sentiment, which nonetheless inspired me in a way that may not have been the intention behind the speech: I had moved to Berlin a couple of months earlier, and had just embarked on my own journey that would – eventually – lead to this very book. Reading back his words, I remember sitting in the blistering heat of the Brandenburg summer to ponder the ‘improbable hope’ that brought me there. Indeed, I find myself thinking about it once again. The pursuit of an academic career is made of improbabilities, after all. But, even then, I knew that there was one certainty that I could count on: this book would eventually be finished. And here we are. It would be an understatement that the world of 2018 is no longer the world that Obama so optimistically encouraged to do better, but the book is here. The culmination of ten years of reading, writing, asking, answering, bleeding, sweating and crying. In the process, everybody who asked me about my progress, and everybody who had some kind words of encouragement along the way, has found their way onto these pages. In his own small way, this includes Barack Obama, who inspired me that day and unwittingly continued to do so by showing the world that the will to reform matters. Mostly, however, it includes my friends, parents, family and colleagues who have helped me reach this point, and who are therefore partially responsible for these pages. To thank all of them would easily double the size this book, but it would feel incomplete without at least acknowledging the support, constructive criticism, and friendship I have received over the years. While some people have been more closely involved with my progress than others, in the end, every single person who ever sat through one of my rants on Carolingian politics, or who listened to me patiently explain why we could still learn a thing or two from this or that ninth-century intellectual, has helped me write this book.

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Converting a 500-page dissertation into a readable book is a team effort, as it turns out. As I was diligently cutting words, the critical reading skills of Anna Dorofeeva, Johanna Jebe, Matthieu van der Meer and Martin Claussen – as well as the helpful comments of the anonymous peer reviewers – have been essential to ensure that whatever came out of that process still made sense. The excellent proofreading and editing skills of Stephen Ling have moreover made all the difference: he has bravely worked his way through the complete early draft, and not only provided me with valuable insights about the contents of the work, but also helped me out whenever my English language skills were not able to convey what I wanted to say. This book owes him a huge debt. Similarly, the help given by Victoria Blud and the rest of the team at AUP in preparing the manuscript for publication has greatly improved the final product. Finally, the tireless efforts to weather the organizational and bureaucratic hurdles involved in publishing anything by Erin Dailey at AUP and Sophie Gruber at the Institute for Medieval Research have been vital in making sure this book ever made it to press. Both of them have been nothing but helpful and supportive throughout, which has definitely contributed to making the book the best it could be. Last but not least, the cover design by Sylvain Mazas perfectly encapsulates what I think this book is about: a sketch of a church, colourful, impressive – and, of course, completely idealized. I am very happy with the way he managed to turn my vague ideas into a beautiful image, so that this book may be judged by its cover as well as its contents.

A lot of friendship and love have been poured into this book – mostly, by my best friends and biggest loves: Amanda, who has been with me from the beginning and who never stopped believing; and Arthur and Olaf, who rule our world and who have brought so much joy into our lives. You have brought these pages together, and you will always keep me going.





## A Note on Translations, Sources and Names

The translations from the Latin source texts given throughout this book have been based on the translations listed in the bibliography; if no (English) translation has been given, the translations are my own. In many cases, footnotes will only refer to the place where the source for a given assertion may be found, without providing the (sometimes lengthy) Latin quotations. Whenever I felt it was necessary to give a sense of the vocabulary used, a Latin passage has been provided in the footnotes; in many cases, these have been translated or closely paraphrased in the text, and only if I deemed it absolutely necessary has a separate translation been provided in the footnotes as well. Throughout, I have stuck to the spelling given in the editions used, including the occasional divergence from 'Classical' Latin (which have only been marked by a [*sic*] in cases where it would otherwise become hard to follow). I have, however, regularized the *u* and *v* for vowel and consonant sound, respectively.

The footnotes and bibliography have been designed to be as user-friendly as possible. Abbreviations are only given for the works most frequently cited, and have been specified both in the text and in the first footnote where they occur. In the bibliography, the edition of the primary sources I used for this work is listed first, but other, sometimes more accessible editions and translations are usually also given, even if they are sometimes not up to modern standards.

Throughout the book, names of actors and authors have been standardized according to common English usage. Place names have been kept in their native language as much as possible, with the notable exception of Rome because Rome is always the exception to any rule.



# Prologue

## Great Expectations

In 822, in a royal residence near Attigny in the Ardennes, an assembly of bishops, abbots and other notables met to discuss how to improve the state of the Frankish Church. Their conclusions were put on record so that later generations could benefit from the know-how of those gathered there. Judging from this record, their deliberations were predominantly concerned with education and the future of the Frankish Church in general.<sup>1</sup> Schooling was to be made available to people who wished to become part of the clergy, and those so educated had a responsibility to guide and preach to their flocks. The people, in turn, had a responsibility to attend these sermons and heed the guidance provided by their pastors, so they could learn how to live better lives.<sup>2</sup> Finally, in stressing that clerical offices should not be obtained through payment or nepotism, the prelates confirmed that only those worthy of the office, those who had actually learned enough to bear the burden of responsibility for their flock, should be allowed to walk the corridors of ecclesiastical power.<sup>3</sup>

These were important matters. As if the participants were reminding themselves of their priorities, the record of these decisions provides us with a comprehensive picture of which improvements were still deemed necessary after several decades of Carolingian rule over the Frankish Church.<sup>4</sup> Although the composition of the group involved in drafting this text remains unknown, it is clear that it was made up of high-ranking members of the Carolingian imperial court, abbots of monasteries with long and venerable histories, as well as newcomers eager to make a mark.<sup>5</sup> Through it all, however, the internal hierarchy had a clear focal point, a figure who

1 For a general overview of this synod, see Hartmann, *Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, pp. 166-167; De Jong, 'Power and humility', esp. pp. 31-32; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 34-38; Depreux, 'The penance of Attigny'.

2 *Concilium Attiniacense*, c. 3, p. 471; c. 5, p. 472. On preaching and its role in strengthening a community, see Pollheimer, 'Of shepherds and sheep'; Diesenberger, 'Der Prediger'.

3 *Concilium Attiniacense*, c. 6, p. 472.

4 On the Carolingian reforms up to and beyond 822, see among many others, McKitterick, *The Frankish Church*; Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*; Brown, 'Introduction: the Carolingian Renaissance'; Moore, *Sacred Kingdom*; Gaillard, *D'Une Réforme*. Generally on the Carolingian world, see Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*.

5 For instance, Agobard of Lyon wished for the 'management of ecclesiastical possessions' to be put on the agenda: Wood, *Proprietary Church*, p. 795.

reminded the members of the clergy of their own sinfulness, and inspired the prelates to propose these improvements.<sup>6</sup> This was the emperor of the Franks, Charlemagne's heir Louis, known as 'the Pious'.<sup>7</sup>

During the same council, that same Louis the Pious entered the church, and according to the *Vita Adalhardi*, composed in the late 820s:

[He] undertook a public penance because of his many sins. He, who as it were by royal haughtiness had been his own worst tempter, was made the humblest of all, so that those whose eyes he had offended by sin would be healed by a royal satisfaction.<sup>8</sup>

The same assembly of bishops, abbots and notables stood witness to this carefully orchestrated penance, which had been staged because Louis wanted to atone for his role in the death of his nephew, King Bernard of Italy. After having incited a rebellion four years earlier in 818, Bernard had been condemned to be blinded.<sup>9</sup> The procedure was botched, however, and Bernard died of the ensuing complications, forcing Louis to take responsibility for this. His public penance was a way of silencing his accusers, and his strategy appeared successful. In one stroke Louis restored moral authority to himself, and unity and concord to the court.<sup>10</sup>

Even allowing for any events that transpired between the penance, drafting the capitulary, and composing the hagiographical narrative cited, something seems to have gone awry. How could the man who was performing penance in the presence of the ever-watchful episcopate be the same ruler who had inspired the meeting aimed at furthering the improvement of the Church under their responsibility? In a comment written two decades after the event, we gain an impression of how the event was remembered. In his biography of Louis the Pious, the anonymous author known as the Astronomer tells us how the emperor, having called the council, 'openly confessed that he himself had sinned, and, imitating the example of the emperor Theodosius, he spontaneously undertook a penance'.<sup>11</sup>

6 *Concilium Attiniacense*, c. 1, p. 471. On hierarchy, see Bougard and Le Jan, 'Hiérarchie', pp. 12-14.

7 On the changing understanding of this nickname, see Schieffer, 'Ludwig "der Fromme"; Moeglin, 'La mémoire de Louis le Pieux'.

8 Paschasius, *Vita Adalhardi*, c. 51, p. 530; trans. Cabaniss, *Charlemagne's Cousins*, pp. 56-57. See also De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 102-111.

9 Jarnut, 'Ludwig der Fromme', pp. 350-351.

10 De Jong, 'Power and humility', pp. 31-32.

11 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 35, p. 406: 'domnus imperator conventum generale coire iussit in loco cuius est vocabulum Attiniacus. [...] Post haec autem palam se errasse confessus est et,

Invoking the example of Theodosius is telling. This Roman emperor (r. 379-395) had also undergone penance and even faced excommunication for his excessive reaction to a rebellion in Thessalonica, which had ended with the massacre of 7000 inhabitants of the city. It was a decision that caused consternation among the emerging ecclesiastical elites – personified by Bishop Ambrose of Milan – who preached restraint and forgiveness instead of violent retributions.<sup>12</sup>

By using this example, the Astronomer attempted to kill two birds with one stone. Not only did he show that Louis' penance at Attigny stood in a long and venerable tradition reaching back to the age of the Church Fathers, but he also reminded his audience that penance – coming to terms with God, and in doing so voluntarily submitting to the moral superiority of the Church – did not damage the power and authority of whomever was undergoing it.<sup>13</sup> Human nature was fallible, but forgiveness was due to everyone, be they prince or pauper.<sup>14</sup> It was the right thing to do: by begging forgiveness in Attigny, the emperor had shown that he was aware of his errors, that he strove to be a better man and, by extension, a better ruler, to the benefit of the realm, his subjects, and his own soul. As far as the Astronomer was concerned, there was nothing wrong with being inspired by an emperor who was august and humble, both a penitent and a prince.<sup>15</sup> The bishops gathered at Attigny in 822 would have agreed with this assessment, even if it was written 20 years later in a vastly different context. Nevertheless, the mode of thinking that allowed the Church to reach new heights as the emperor publicly prostrated himself was not always a given. It was the product of an interdependent relation between court and cloister that had developed over the preceding years between aristocracy and episcopacy. It was part of a mind-set that had self-awareness at its very core, and which

imitatus Theodosii imperatoris exemplum, penitentium spontaneam suscepit [...] et corrigens si quid talium vel a se vel a patre suo gestum repperire alicubi potuit'; trans. Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, p. 262. On the Astronomer, see Tremp, 'Thegan und Astronomus', pp. 695-699.

12 On the exemplary conflict between Emperor Theodosius and Bishop Ambrose, see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, pp. 291-360 and pp. 368-378; Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 137-174. I would like to thank Irene van Renswoude for generously allowing me access to her dissertation, which is currently being turned into a monograph for Cambridge University Press.

13 See Schieffer, 'Von Mailand nach Canossa'; Meens, *Penance*, pp. 125-127.

14 Implied by the Astronomer in the Prologue to his *Vita Hludowici*, p. 284, when talking about Louis the Pious' excessive mercy to his enemies, or later in c. 63, p. 550, when Louis forgives his son Lothar for the grey hairs he had bestowed upon him in spite of the latter's unwillingness to seek mercy. Romig, *Be a Perfect Man*, pp. 75-97.

15 One of the main points made in De Jong, *Penitential State*.

refused to take no for an answer, but which would thereby inadvertently raise as many questions as it could ever hope to solve.

This book will shed more light on this mind-set. It was, of course, a mind-set that was the prerogative of the high elite. The world that came together in Attigny in 822 was a world where imperial authority took many forms, where a willingness to improve the Church went hand in hand with the idea that rulers should assume responsibility for their sins. It was a world where ideas of imperial authority were formulated and exported; where political idealism was put in the service of religious ideas and vice versa. Only an extremely small segment of society could afford to think about life, the Church and the empire in those terms: the aristocrats, bishops and abbots whose intellectual prowess or deep familial connections to the rulers allowed them a seat at the high table. Due to their position they felt able look beyond the local level and broaden their horizons to imagine the whole of the Christian world.<sup>16</sup> While the views they formulated thus did not necessarily represent everybody living in the Carolingian empire, it does seem as if those who have been given agency in the cases at the centre of this book were aware that tensions emerged between the ideals propagated from the court and the practical limitations imposed by everyday life, where diversity and flexibility was the norm. Ideas clashed, long-standing traditions came into conflict with new visions of community: the Carolingian empire in the early ninth century was a realm where a multitude of communities was ruled over by an emperor whose reign was characterized by continuous attempts to resolve the tensions that emerged when interests collided. Such attempts could never hope to succeed without simultaneously fostering the realization amongst these communities and those who spoke for them at court that they could in reality hardly hope to function without one another. In other words: they were aware that they might not get everybody on their side, but that should not stop them from trying – and was by trying that they also consolidated their authority.

The world of Louis the Pious and his entourage was bewilderingly complex. Yet this complexity remains hidden behind a veil of sources written with a view towards simplification, thereby making a point that went beyond describing mere facts.<sup>17</sup> As narratives offering the resolution of conflicts that are only obliquely alluded to, for instance, such sources thus sometimes leave us with an impression of unanimity at court, presenting single-minded elites burdened with glorious purpose. It is a seductive vision, but it should

16 Werner, *Missus – marchio – comes*.

17 Broadly, see Kempshall, *Rhetoric*, esp. pp. 265–427.

not be forgotten that purpose could easily be determined after the fact.<sup>18</sup> The Astronomer's explanation of the events at Attigny does not reflect the realities of 822 but rather those of the early 840s. The different descriptions of Charlemagne's coronation in 800 show the difficulties even contemporary observers had interpreting a seemingly straightforward event.<sup>19</sup> 'Church reforms' proposed at smaller synods were as much a reflection of local interests as a response to an imperial programme – and as the short description of the Council of Frankfurt of 794 in the *Annales Regni Francorum* shows, even large councils that did address a plethora of imperial concerns could be condensed into a single statement about the role of the rulers in defending the Frankish Church.<sup>20</sup>

Modern scholarship has on occasion fallen for the temptation to treat eighth- and ninth-century normative sources as reflective of programmatic reforms propagated by and disseminated from the court, or even as singular statements meant to create uniformity and quell further discussions.<sup>21</sup> For example, a conciliar statement made at the Council of Frankfurt condemning the Adoptionist heresy *una voce* actually covered an intense debate that lasted decades and involved the imperial court, the papacy, and many high-ranking bishops from all across the realm.<sup>22</sup> Those involved in this condemnation must have been aware of this, as well as the fact that a whole dossier about the late-eighth-century controversy existed in letters, conciliar acts, hagiographies, and theological treatises.<sup>23</sup> Even if the final word in such controversies may have been spoken from the top down, they were essentially responses to impulses from below. As such, the sources commonly regarded as establishing norms or reflecting a programme of reforms were also part of a debate about the burdens of authority and how this shaped

18 Foot, 'Finding the meaning'.

19 Nelson, 'Why were there'; Collins, 'Charlemagne's imperial coronation'.

20 *Annales Regni Francorum (ARF)*, a. 794, pp. 95-96. Kramer, 'Adopt, adapt and improve'; generally, see Hartmann, 'Konzilien und Geschichtsschreibung'.

21 Many key introductory texts, such as those cited above, have interpreted reforms as being programmatic in some way, shape or form. Indeed, McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 215-245, makes a convincing case for the way programmatic thinking influenced the legislation issued in the late eighth century. Nonetheless, at the level of contemporary sources and local communities, this mode of interpretation is hard to maintain, as seen, for instance, in the works of Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire*, Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform*, and the work of the international research groups 'Rethinking Reform 900-1150: Conceptualising Change in Medieval Religious Institutions' (Leverhulme International Network) and 'Rethinking Carolingian *correctio*' (co-sponsored by Utrecht University, University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, and SFB VISCOM F42).

22 *Concilium Francofurtense*, c. 1.

23 Cavadini, *Last Christology*.



the expectations about the future of the empire. Councils such as the one at Attigny, as well as the many capitularies and admonitory texts circulating among the participants in the ongoing debate about the improvement of the Church, should not be seen as attempts at having the last word.<sup>24</sup> Instead, these were highly ambitious attempts at furthering the way everyone understood what it meant to be a good Christian in a Christian empire – or at least to make the elites responsible for their subjects and aware of the stakes of their rulership. The norm was set by the willingness to engage in debates, and by the self-awareness of participants as to what the debates were about. Regardless of whether they had an aristocratic background, an episcopal rank, or a monastic tonsure, they were all part of the same discourse community – part of a debate about the evolution of a Carolingian imperial ideology in the first years of the reign of Louis the Pious, shaped by (and shaping) attempts to provide guidance to the Christian population under the responsibility of the emperor and his entourage.<sup>25</sup> These were series of never-ending conversations, pushing various developments forward in their own rhythm while remaining tied together by the assumption that things should get better all the time.<sup>26</sup>

This book will allow us to eavesdrop on this conversation. In the course of three case studies, which will be described below, ideas about imperial power will be analysed both from a courtly perspective and through reactions to initiatives taken by the court. Rather than looking at reforms as policy measures or proposals made by the court, the actual arguments supporting tradition, advocating renewal, or justifying the interference in the daily lives of monks, priests and believers will be important: it is through the rhetorical framing of the texts under scrutiny that we may be able to see how reforms were not only the product of expectations and intentions, but also of reactions and what was seen as simple necessities.

The empire shaped under Charlemagne was in a continuous state of flux, and the people maintaining the momentum were not working towards a set goal, but instead aimed to ‘correct’ the Church whenever they felt the need. In their own way, everyone was supposed to support a vision of an all-encompassing community. The challenge was to figure out what exactly constituted that vision. It will never be possible to discover what went through Louis’ head as his father named him his successor in 813, but

24 See, for example, Depreux, ‘Lieux de rencontre’.

25 Barrow, ‘Ideas and applications’; Patzold, “Ipsorum necesse est”.

26 Schieffer, ‘Der Platz Ludwigs des Frommen’, highlights three ways to look at the developments under Louis the Pious: exercise of power, empire, and cultural reforms.

it seems clear that the momentum built in the preceding decades was not expended yet. The new ruler represented a fresh start to some and the end of a career for others, but the sheer weight of the ideas developed under Charlemagne was enough to keep the court moving steadily.<sup>27</sup> However, given that Louis' succession was the first instance of a transfer of imperial power in the West since the collapse of the political framework around the Roman empire in the fifth and sixth centuries, the transfer of power presented the court with an occasion to take stock of their accomplishments and reappraise the state of their Church.

This book will focus on the period when this evaluation took place: the first decade of the reign of Louis the Pious, covering the time from his coronation in 813 to the penance of Attigny in 822. This chronological constraint serves a dual purpose. The first is mostly a practical one. The reality of Louis' succession in 813 provides a starting point for this probe into the Carolingian political mind-set, and will allow us to gauge both the persistence of ideals developed under previous generations and the way they interacted with new insights. The development of an ideology that fit with the 'Carolingian' world happened simultaneously at the centre and in the peripheries.<sup>28</sup> Initiatives would, through the very limitations of the early medieval information infrastructure, usually start small, at a local level, reflected in a single manuscript.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the openness of the intellectual world of the early ninth century, which did allow for frequent points of contact between its participants at various levels, caused anything that touched upon larger issues to eventually be appropriated by the court and absorbed into a broader debate. Looking at this as a dynamic process rather than a product of imperial policy will shed light on the idiosyncrasies of the era that are commonly identified as 'Carolingian', and how these defined the way the dynasty asserted itself.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the events of 822 could be construed as the first 'reality check' faced by Louis the Pious and his court, ushering in a new phase in his reign.

This leads to the second purpose behind the focus on this particular decade: it gives a view of the Carolingian Church still relatively unfettered

27 Wendling, 'Die Erhebung Ludwigs des Frommen'; Schieffer, 'Der Platz Ludwigs des Frommen', pp. 363-364.

28 On the question what made the Carolingian world 'Carolingian', see Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, pp. 9-16.

29 McKitterick, 'Political ideology'.

30 Something which has been done specifically for historiographical sources, for instance, by McKitterick, 'Illusion of royal power', and Hen, 'Canvassing for Charles'.

by the ‘paradox of pastoral power’.<sup>31</sup> This paradox – the observation that a pastor’s responsibilities are rooted in the fact that the bishop was also part of the flock, while at the same time ‘as much value [is granted] to a single one sheep as to the entire flock’ – is all but unavoidable when considering any ideology of rulership and Carolingian elites became increasingly aware of its existence in the second decade of the reign of Louis the Pious, especially during the so-called ‘crisis’ of 829-833. This was essentially a conflict between the sons of Louis and their supporters on the one hand, and the imperial court on the other. It famously culminated in the penance and abdication of Louis the Pious at Compiègne in 833.<sup>32</sup> Although the emperor managed to reassert his power and authority relatively soon afterwards, his reputation and legacy were irrevocably tainted, and many of those with a stake in the Carolingian reform movement scrambled to make sense of what had happened. The ensuing reassessment of the role of the Carolingian empire and its institutions in the greater scheme of things opened the door for different styles of pastoral leadership and new initiatives to be taken. More importantly, however, this event left a clear mark on subsequent appraisals of Louis’ reign as a whole. The historical inevitability of the ‘crisis’ of Louis’ reign became palpable in subsequent commentaries and in modern scholarship – starting with the emperor’s two main biographies, composed by Thegan and the Astronomer.<sup>33</sup>

Although Louis, for all intents and purposes, remains in his father’s shadow, historiographical interest in his reign has grown in recent years, particularly after the appearance in 1990 of a volume focusing on ‘Charlemagne’s heir’ exclusively.<sup>34</sup> Since then, it has become clear that Louis the Pious’ court was a ruling body worthy of careful study, even if a focus on the events of 829-833 remains the point around which appreciations of his reign seem to coalesce.<sup>35</sup> The efficacy of Louis’ reign post-833 had already been identified as a means to assess the impact of these crisis years.<sup>36</sup> A major change in the way historians think about the difficulties faced by Louis the Pious in the

31 As outlined by Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 115-134; Carrette, ‘Prologue’, pp. 40-43.

32 For an overview of these events and their consequences, see Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, pp. 213-222.

33 See also Longguo, ‘Louis the Pious and the Changes to Latin Imperial Biographies’.

34 Godman and Collins, *Charlemagne’s Heir*.

35 Staubach, “Des großen Kaisers kleiner Sohn”; Ganshof, ‘Louis the Pious reconsidered’; Depreux, ‘Louis le Pieux réconsideré?’.

36 A notable reassessment of the last years of Louis the Pious was proposed by Nelson, ‘Last years’. Cf. also the more quantitative approach proposed by Depreux, ‘La crise’.

830s came in 2009, with the appearance of Mayke de Jong's *The Penitential State*. De Jong demonstrated that these years, viewed in a contemporary context where religious and political thought were inextricably linked, need not necessarily be viewed as a 'crisis'. They were a product of the discourse about empire, religion, and the responsibilities they had come to represent over the previous decades.<sup>37</sup> De Jong argued that the way Louis the Pious, his court and his opponents handled the happenings as they unfolded shows that they were all aware of the gravity of the situation, but saw that as a reason to persist in the pursuit of a greater good. Courtney Booker's *Past Convictions* appeared almost simultaneously, and concentrated on the impact and legacy of the 'crisis' rather than its onset, showing that the traces of the affair in subsequent literary output attest to its enduring importance for the characterization of the reign of Louis the Pious.<sup>38</sup> More importantly, both these works have shown that to view these years simply as a failure on the part of the system is to apply anachronistic standards to the period.<sup>39</sup>

For this reason, this book will be avoiding rather than seeking this crisis. My aim is, after all, to show how different people saw the 'system' in action before the visibility of its flaws all but forced onlookers to adjust their views accordingly, and engage a different rhetoric altogether.<sup>40</sup> By sticking to case studies based in sources composed before the events of the early 830s, instead of using the narratives composed by Louis' biographers, the otherwise fruitful idea of 'the productivity of a crisis' may be avoided.<sup>41</sup> This means taking an almost deliberately skewed look at history, albeit one where a re-reading of the sources rather than a re-assessment of the period is key. Rather than taking a long view of the legacy of such luminaries as the monastic intellectuals Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel or Benedict of Aniane, both of whom played an essential part in the promulgation of the reforms, their own activities and the immediate response they garnered will be gauged as

37 De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 148-159.

38 Booker, *Past Convictions*.

39 Noted by Contreni in his review of the two books by De Jong and Booker in the *American Historical Review*; cf. also the review article by Gravel in the *Medieval History Journal*.

40 Cf. Cameron, *Christianity*, pp. 1-14; and the opening remarks by Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, ix-xii.

41 The term 'productivity of a crisis' hearkens back to the project within which I started writing the PhD thesis which would turn into this book: the DFG/ANR-sponsored *La productivité d'une crise. Le règne de Louis le Pieux (814-840) et la transformation de l'Empire carolingien – Die Produktivität einer Krise: Die Regierungszeit Ludwigs des Frommen (814-840) und die Transformation des karolingischen Imperium* (led by Stefan Esders and Philippe Depreux). A report of the final conference may be found here: <https://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-3680> (last accessed 30 July 2018).

part of an ongoing 'Carolingian project'.<sup>42</sup> Instead of regarding everything as either anticipating or leading up to a crisis period, the sources at the core of this book convey an image of an environment within which the authors of our sources felt that creative tensions were allowed to flourish. By focusing on the early years of Louis the Pious' reign, it becomes possible to regard the main texts from this period as reflective of a prevailing mentality, as being part of their own social logic: commentaries on current events rather than narratives prefiguring what had yet to occur.<sup>43</sup> A Christian empire had taken shape again in the last years of the reign of Charlemagne, and it had passed into the hands of a legitimate heir almost in its entirety.<sup>44</sup> Louis and everyone around him must have been impressed by the possibilities created by this fortunate turn of events, while they were also aware that these came with responsibilities. They would need to cope with these new circumstances.

Following a brief outline of the early life of Louis the Pious and some of the main methodological and thematic approaches used in this study, this book will offer three 'snapshots' of this optimistic era – three case studies that each offer a view of the empire from a distinct vantage point. The first of these gives an impression of the inner workings of the Carolingian empire through an analysis of the way reforms were envisaged in the course of a series of Church councils. Starting in 813, when five such councils were organized simultaneously throughout the realm, and finishing in 816 with the *Institutio Canoniorum*, one of the main carriers of the Carolingian reform ideology, it will be shown that these texts, while ostentatiously normative, actually reflect negotiations in action, showing us to what extent the Carolingian ideal was based on dialogues instead of decrees. The second case highlights the life and works of one single actor living through these times: Abbot Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel. The astute observations of Smaragdus, an active participant in Carolingian court politics, explore the many different paths along which the empire could progress. In doing so, he presents us with a microcosm of the empire, where the local and the individual are connected to the ideals propagated in the name of the collective. The third and final case will focus on a single community that, although seemingly peripheral, played an important part in this movement all the same. This was the community of Aniane, founded by Benedict of Aniane even before

42 Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, p. 430.

43 Cf. Burke, 'Strengths and weaknesses'; Chartier, 'Intellectual history'; Spiegel, 'History, historicism'.

44 Lauwers, 'Le glaive et la parole'.

he became one of the most active players at the Carolingian court of Louis the Pious. Instead of focusing on the role of Benedict himself, however, this last chapter will contextualise the narratives produced at his monastery, so as to show how a single community would deal with the obligations and implications of being part of a Christian empire.

Between them, these case studies show a community in action, an elite group sharing a distinct way of framing and discussing the challenges facing them. While each of the cases showcase a distinctly elite perspective, they nonetheless demonstrate how the Frankish world of the eighth and ninth centuries essentially consisted of a multitude of voices, each of which had an identity of its own, and each of which needed to harmonize with those around it. Rather than studying the empire in its entirety, the chosen structure will allow us to appreciate the many cogs and wheels that made up the machinery of Carolingian politics by studying several of them in great detail. Doing this will, in turn, contribute to the recent wave of scholarship re-appreciating the Carolingian 'reform movement' by reframing it not as a unilateral, strictly top-down process, but as a meeting of minds, an attempt to reconcile different points of view. After all, the view from the top is but one of many options at our disposal to appreciate the impact of the policies of the Frankish rulers. It is an inspiring view precisely because it provides the context from which many of the sources at our disposal have sprung. But therein also lies the importance of not taking that perspective for granted. As will be argued, those espousing the elite viewpoints scrutinized in this monograph were acutely aware of their own place in the greater scheme: the way of life they proposed depended as much on changing the mentality of their subjects as it did on the mere implementation of new policies, if not more so. It is this self-awareness, rather than the actual reforms proposed, that will form the core around which this book is structured. My aim is to show how these authors, rather than being participants of an unstoppable movement, were active observers who were aware that the way they reflected upon the changes around them might open new ways of thinking – or remind people around them how things should be done.

Before that can happen, however, the first chapter will provide some necessary reflections on the nature of 'reform' and the sources through which we attempt to understand this phenomenon. By giving a brief overview of the earliest years of the political career of Louis the Pious, it will moreover elucidate the historical backdrop to the cases presented in subsequent chapters.



# 1. Framing the Carolingian Reforms: The Early Years of Louis the Pious

The year Louis the Pious was born – 778 – was the year Charlemagne had to acknowledge that his realm had become too big for one person to handle. With the Saxons stirring up trouble in the north-east, and the Basques having destroyed a sizable Carolingian army as it crossed the Pyrenees, Charlemagne set about organizing his realm and making sure it was in order.<sup>1</sup> One of the most immediate results of this was the division of the Frankish realm among his three sons, a mere three years later in 781.<sup>2</sup> This was meant to be a precursor to Charlemagne's succession: the eldest, Charles the Younger, was taken under his father's wing and groomed to inherit the Carolingian heartlands, if not the empire itself, whereas Pippin and his brother Louis became kings of the newly created sub-kingdoms of Italy and Aquitaine, respectively.<sup>3</sup> For Aquitaine, situated in the south-west of Francia, this meant that Charlemagne appeased the locals who may have remained resentful about their conquest in 768, while he simultaneously ensured the defence of the area by having an entourage consisting of members of the Frankish elite accompany his son, aristocrats who were charged with keeping the new kingdom and its borders under control.<sup>4</sup> For Louis, it meant that he remained in the long shadow of his father, although he was hardly ever able to benefit directly from his father's tutelage. Louis, still only three years old, would have to fend for himself when it came to acquiring direct experience of the business of ruling, surrounded by his father's courtiers as he gradually came into his own.<sup>5</sup>

Although it would have been assumed that this was the end of the line for young Louis, fate decided differently.<sup>6</sup> Thirty years later, in 811, when

1 On the Saxon Wars and their impact on Carolingian discourse, see Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, pp. 89-117; Rembold, *Conquest and Christianization*, pp. 39-84. On the latter expedition into Iberia and how it is represented in contemporary sources, see Wolff, 'L'Aquitaine et ses marges', pp. 22-26; as well as, more generally, Chandler, 'Carolingian Catalonia'.

2 As told in the *ARF*, a. 781, pp. 56-57.

3 Kasten, *Königssöhne*, pp. 138-141 and p. 157; Hammer, 'Christmas Day 800'; Innes, 'Charlemagne's Will'; Jarnut, 'Chlodwig und Chlothar', pp. 646-649, suggest that Louis' name was even chosen with a view towards his rule of Aquitaine, given that it served as a reminder of Clovis, the first Frankish conqueror of the region.

4 Ewig, 'L'Aquitaine', pp. 568-569; Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme*, pp. 20-22 and pp. 28-29.

5 Noble, 'Louis the Pious and the frontiers', pp. 340-342; Hammer, 'Christmas Day 800', pp. 3-4.

6 For a more comprehensive overview of the life and times of Louis the Pious, see De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 14-58; Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire'; Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme*.



both his brothers had died, he suddenly found himself the sole heir to the Frankish crown.<sup>7</sup> 'The hope of ruling everything welled up in him', the Astronomer later described his feelings, in such a way as to underline the solemnity and uncertainty of the occasion as well as Louis' readiness to shoulder his new-found responsibilities.<sup>8</sup> After two more years, Louis was acknowledged as co-emperor by Charlemagne in 813, having grown from 'a boy who became a king' into the man who would be emperor.<sup>9</sup> Less than a year later, in February of 814, Louis departed from the royal *villa* of Doué in the kingdom of Aquitaine, to take over the palace of Aachen and the empire created by his father.<sup>10</sup> Charlemagne had died. It was now up to Louis to 'order, arm, and nourish the empire he inherited'.<sup>11</sup>

This empire was radically different from the kingdom(s) bequeathed to Charlemagne and his brother Karloman in 768 upon the death of their father, Pippin – if only because it had vastly increased in size due to the incessant military campaigns waged on all borders.<sup>12</sup> This increase in scale had prompted the ruling family to employ ever more inventive methods of asserting their authority over the realms. They made their court into a focal point for the aristocracy; they went at lengths to cement the disparate regions within the realm, both in a political sense, and in the hearts and minds of their subjects.<sup>13</sup> Apart from displays of military prowess, the ruling dynasty also sponsored missionary activities, educational improvements and ecclesiastical reforms that have been called, somewhat enthusiastically, the Carolingian Renaissance.<sup>14</sup> Even though one might question the overall success of these reforms in the first decades of their implementation, they did enhance the position of the Carolingian court, around which the Frankish kingdoms coalesced.<sup>15</sup>

Louis, secluded though he was in the south-western corner of the realm, took part in these activities right from the start. This is shown, for example,

7 McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, p. 90 and p. 102.

8 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 20, p. 342: 'spes universitatis potiundae in eum adsurgebat'; trans. Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, p. 244.

9 De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 14-16 and pp. 18-19.

10 Nelson, 'Frankish kingdoms', p. 111.

11 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, l. 847, p. 66: 'Commissum imperium ordinat, armat, alit'; trans. Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, p. 147.

12 Cf. the overview by Goetz, 'Social and military institutions'.

13 Airlie, "For it is written in the law"; Noble, 'Louis the Pious and the frontiers'.

14 Contreni, 'Carolingian Renaissance'; Brown, 'Introduction: the Carolingian Renaissance'; McKitterick, 'Carolingian Renaissance'; but see also Nelson, 'Revisiting the Carolingian Renaissance'.

15 Noble, 'Louis the Pious and the frontiers', p. 346.

in the panegyric composed in the late 820s by Ermold the Black, a cleric who had fallen out of favour and used his skills as a poet to regain his position in the entourage of Louis' son, Pippin of Aquitaine.<sup>16</sup> He did this by painting an idealized picture of the imperial court in the course of four books, in the process tracing Louis' own career from his beginnings as king of Aquitaine to his established position as emperor. Ermold shows how the young king's very first action was to establish order in his kingdom, restoring churches and 'ruling the people by law and with the wealth of his piety'.<sup>17</sup> He 'tamed the rabid Basques with the skill of a teacher', integrating these 'fierce wolves' into his flock – a feat that his father famously had been unable to accomplish.<sup>18</sup> At the instigation of his advisers he then proceeded to defend the realm by launching a pre-emptive strike against the 'Moors' or 'Spanish' on the Iberian Peninsula culminating with the conquest of Barcelona in 801.<sup>19</sup> That this defence of the realm went beyond the merely military is shown by a digression on how the king also supplied 'monks with numerous holy and worthy foundations'.<sup>20</sup> Ermold pays particular attention to the king's support for Conques, a monastery founded by a certain Datus following his decision to retire from the world after having lost his mother in a conflict with Moorish invaders. Louis hears of his plight, Ermold reports, and together they lay the foundations for a *castra* for monks.<sup>21</sup> The story ends with another vignette about how Louis had thereby 'tamed' the wildness of Aquitaine, a common motif within his work.<sup>22</sup>

What is interesting about Ermold's juxtaposition of the campaign in Spain and the foundation of Conques is that the former is described in terms frequently referring to Louis' father – and, indeed, it is a decision made at the instigation of the experienced aristocrats sent by Charlemagne to assist his son. His activities in support of Conques and other monasteries, on the other hand, are entirely due to his own piety and love of Christ. This augments the common

16 Godman, 'Louis "the Pious" and his poets', pp. 253-271; Bobrycki, 'Nigellus, Ausulus'; Depreux, 'La *pietas*', pp. 201-224.

17 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 1, ll. 85-91, pp. 10-11.

18 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 1, ll. 92-93, pp. 10-11; Bautier, 'Campagne'.

19 The decision-making process is described in Ermold, lib. I, ll. 102-224, pp. 12-23. The conquest of the city is the culmination of Book I. See also Conant, 'Louis the Pious', on the long-term development of Louis the Pious' policies vis-à-vis the Iberian Peninsula.

20 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 1, ll. 224-229, pp. 22-23.

21 Ermold here conflates Datus' activities in the late eighth century with Louis' protection charter from 819, of which only a heavily interpolated version is extant: Kölzer, *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen*, c. 155, pp. 385-386.

22 For instance, in his description of the foundation of Inda: Kramer, 'Teaching emperors', p. 317.

trope of the 'obedient son' that we see more clearly in the later narratives by his biographers, Thegan and the Astronomer, affected as they were by the filial discord of the early 830s. Thegan even related how Charlemagne had taught Louis how he should lead churches, honour priests like fathers, and 'drive haughty and wicked men onto the path of salvation'.<sup>23</sup> The Astronomer, on the other hand, grants more agency to Louis when it comes to ecclesiastical matters, but makes sure to frame it in such a way as to highlight his suitability to become the emperor. In the last chapter before Charles the Younger dies and Louis can realistically expect to be the next ruler, the Astronomer writes how his zealous activities established him as 'not only a king but also a priest'.<sup>24</sup> During his tenure as king of Aquitaine, he 'built up the study of reading and singing, and also the understanding of divine and worldly letters, more quickly than one would believe', so that the Church could function properly once more.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, he also benefited those pursuing the 'speculative life', by restoring the monasteries that had all but disappeared over the preceding decades, and sponsored many new, or renewed, foundations.<sup>26</sup> When a guest from Aachen tells Charlemagne about the well-run court he encountered, the old emperor wept tears of joy, the Astronomer writes, and henceforth allowed Louis to have 'complete authority in his household'.<sup>27</sup>

Louis' priestly behaviour prefigured what was to come after he succeeded his father, and it was in turn prefigured by a short remark earlier in the *Vita Hludowici* where Charlemagne is first seen following his son's example in instituting a rule about foraging by the army.<sup>28</sup> In these cases, however, it was still the emperor who set the tone, either himself or through his courtiers, dictating Louis' military strategy from afar.<sup>29</sup> They ensured that the Aquitanian king avoided 'learning foreign customs on account of his tender years'.<sup>30</sup> Thus, according to the Astronomer,

23 Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici*, c. 6, p. 182: 'Deinde sacerdotes honorare ut patres, populum diligere ut filios, superbos et nequissimos homines in viam salutis coactos dirigere, cenobiorum consolator fuisset et pauperum pater'.

24 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 19, p. 334: 'ita ut non modo regem, sed ipsius opera potius eum vociferarentur sacerdotem'.

25 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 19, p. 336.

26 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 19, pp. 336-338.

27 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 19, p. 338.

28 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 7, pp. 304-307.

29 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 13, pp. 312-320 and c. 15, p. 324. Chief among these advisers was Meginhar: Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 325-326.

30 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 4, p. 294: 'Inter quae cavens, ne aut Aquitanorum populus propter eius longum abscessum insolesceret aut filius in tenerioribus annis peregrinorum aliquid disceret morum'.

Charlemagne was ruling through his son, teaching him 'on the job' while also instilling a sense of duty and obedience. It is an observation that is also seen in his description of the *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817. Here, Louis 'sent forth two of his sons, Pippin into Aquitaine and Louis into Bavaria, so that the people might know whose authority they ought to obey': a deliberately ambiguous formulation, that seems to imply both that these two were indeed rulers in their respective kingdoms, and that they were representatives of imperial authority.<sup>31</sup> While the father-son relationship evinced in this narrative may be nothing particularly new for the era, it seems telling that Ermold gives more agency to the king and shows his piety to be on par with that of the emperor.<sup>32</sup> In his portrayal, Louis was perfectly capable of improving the supposed deplorable state of the Church on his own. In doing so, he also improved the general state of affairs in his kingdom.

From the sparse charter evidence, a similar picture emerges. Only four charters issued by Louis the Pious as king of Aquitaine are extant: one fragment from Aniane, two complete originals from Nouaillé, south of Poitiers, and one interpolated charter from Cormery, in the vicinity of Tours.<sup>33</sup> Barring the possibility that the overwhelming majority of Louis' royal charters were lost over the centuries, this dearth may be seen as an indication that the royal chancery of Aquitaine was not primarily seen as the place to get things done. Nevertheless, a sense of hierarchy comparable to that presented by the Astronomer speaks from the contents of these texts. In the interpolated charter, granting the monks of Cormery the right to navigate two boats 'over all the rivers in our kingdom', imperial authority is invoked explicitly as a supplement to royal power.<sup>34</sup> Here, the relation between king and emperor, son and father, is acknowledged by Louis, and

31 Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 29, p. 380: 'Nam his rite ordinatis, postquam imperator in eodem placito filium primogenitum Hlotharium coimperatorem appellari et esse voluit et duorum filiorum suorum Pippinum in Aquitaniam, Hludouicum in Baioariam misit, ut scilicet sciret populus, cui deberet potestati parere'. On the *Ordinatio Imperii*, see Kasten, *Königssöhne*, pp. 170-174; Kaschke, *Die Karolingischen Reichsteilungen*, pp. 324-353.

32 On the idea behind 'sub-kingdoms', see Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, pp. 208-213.

33 The new MGH edition of Louis' charters by Kölzer lists nine charters dated to the period before Louis became emperor. Of these, five are deemed 'unecht' (nos. 2, 3, 7, 8 and 9) and one is 'interpoliert' (no. 4). The remaining three are for Nouaillé (no. 1, a. 794, pp. 1-5; no. 5, a. 808, pp. 14-17) and a fragment from Aniane (no. 6, a. 808, pp. 17-19).

34 *Cartularium Cormaricense*, c. 5, pp. 13-14: 'Ad cujus concessionis auctoritatem corroborandam, hoc praesens fieri iussimus praeceptum, per quod imperiali auctoritate iubemus ut nullus nostrorum praesentium sive futurorum in hac regali sanctione audeat illis in aliqua parte contradicere'. See Depreux, 'Die Kanzlei', pp. 160-161.

communicated to his subjects. The two charters issued for the *cellola* of Nouaillé nuance this picture. The first, from 794, is a confirmation of royal immunities. It is an exceptional text – the oldest surviving charter issued by Louis the Pious, with subscriptions that help reconstruct the composition of Louis' chancery in those days.<sup>35</sup> It did not lean as heavily on imperial authority as the charter for Cormery, but did not completely ignore it either: Charlemagne's involvement in the foundation of Nouaillé is mentioned, as is Abbot Ato's loyalty to both Louis and his 'lord and father'.<sup>36</sup> In the second charter, issued in 808, the members of the community of Saint-Hilaire of Poitiers who wished to conform to the *Regula Benedicti* and become monks instead of canons, received royal permission to move to Nouaillé.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the charter also recognized the immunity of the monastery, and placed it under royal protection for the sum of 20 *solidi* per year. In this case, any reference to paternal authority is wholly absent.

If it is possible to infer anything from these charters and narratives, it seems that, while Louis had to invoke his father's authority when granting economic privileges, he was given more autonomy when attempting to make a mark on the lives of monks. The difference in focus between the two charters for Nouaillé may even be an indication that Louis the Pious and his court were taking their first tentative steps towards the reforms that came to characterize the first decade of his imperial reign. The juxtaposition between the material and spiritual well-being of the realm portrayed in these charters shows that religious matters need not strictly be centralized, as long as the right person was available to provide guidance.

At this point, two observations can be made. The first is that the ideal of (filial) obedience to the emperor was a broad notion that could be adapted to the needs of the narrator. The second is that these narrators agreed that the improvement of the Frankish Church would be a matter of personal responsibility; it was not dependent on any direct order from the court, but rather on one's piety and willingness to take the initiative – provided one had the possibilities to do so, of course. To someone like the Astronomer, such a distinction would have made perfect sense, as it allowed him to attach moral consequences to Louis' entire career in politics. For Ermold, this was how he perceived the *status quo* and how he reflected it back onto

35 An attempt to that effect has been undertaken by Dickau 'Studien zur Kanzlei', but cf. Depreux, 'Die Kanzlei' who points out the weak points in Dickau's arguments.

36 *Cartulaire de Nouaillé*, c. 6, pp. 8-10. On Ato, Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 114-115, and Fleckenstein, *Hofkapelle* 1, p. 59.

37 *Cartulaire de Nouaillé*, c. 9, pp. 14-17.

the imperial court. For the monks who moved from Saint-Hilaire to Nouaillé, it showed who allowed them to live their lives the way they wanted to, but also who took ultimate responsibility for the division of their community.

## Building an Empire

As much as Louis' ascension to the imperial throne in 814 may have been unexpected, his experiences as king of Aquitaine had prepared him for his new role and he took seriously his responsibilities as ruler of the Frankish empire. The new emperor had his own ideas on how to further improve the court, the Church, and the realm as they were left to him – ideas that have shaped the image of Louis in subsequent centuries and which remain unavoidably and inextricably bound up with his name and the religious reforms that characterized the first years of his reign.<sup>38</sup> Still, it should not be forgotten that these reforms only look as comprehensive and goal-oriented as they do in hindsight; from a contemporary point of view, they were an intrinsic and unavoidable part of a dialogue on how to be a good Christian.<sup>39</sup> From an imperial perspective, it was part and parcel of what it meant to be the ruler: as the responsibility for his subjects in this life and the afterlife was bequeathed to him, he inadvertently entered into an ongoing process of negotiations about what this might mean in practice. Seen from the perspective of the others involved in these negotiations, however, Louis' involvement did not necessarily imply that somebody else had taken the reins of reform. It meant that a new voice had joined the choir – a loud voice, perhaps, but nonetheless one that was bound by the same rules as theirs, and one that was equally invested in maintaining harmony. In short, Louis' throne stood at the intersection between *imperium* (empire) and *ecclesia* (church), and it was up to him to balance the powers and duties that came with his new position.

This *ecclesia* is one of the keys to understanding Carolingian rulership. Although its meaning in contemporary sources is as multivalent as the modern idea of the 'Church', it is a useful concept which not only invokes the Christian Church, its hierarchy or even its buildings, but also the idea that all of the faithful were part of a larger social whole, an apostolic community unified by a shared understanding and practice of liturgy and

38 Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire', pp. 28-54.

39 Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire*, pp. 423-427.

with the Carolingian court at its heart.<sup>40</sup> For the elites orbiting the court, their collective identity thus was understood to be both Christian and Frankish, and as such, it was the *ecclesia* which served as the glue that kept the disparate regions of the empire together, and even accelerated the formation of a Carolingian state.<sup>41</sup> The ideal was shaped by the intellectual elites at the Carolingian court, who in turn modelled it on Old Testament ideas of the Chosen People and their transformation from the synagogue into the *ecclesia*.<sup>42</sup> Adherence to this ideal implied at least a token acceptance of the imperial unity propagated by the Carolingian dynasty.<sup>43</sup> In this construction, *imperium* referred not to any geopolitical entity per se (an 'empire'), but rather to a conception of rulership that became current from the late eighth century onwards, a way of unifying, from the top down, the 'diversity of intersecting [sub-]networks of social interaction' that had developed along with the extension of realms themselves.<sup>44</sup> Rather than a territory, *imperium* denoted the authority and responsibilities that came with ruling a multitude of peoples.

The idea of the responsibilities held by the emperor and his prelates for the spiritual well-being of the faithful had been part of late antique and early medieval ideals of rulership for a long time already.<sup>45</sup> *Imperium* thus became a *ministerium* writ large: the sacral duties and moral obligations of kingship. The ruler, being divinely anointed, fully partook in the piety and the awesome responsibility that came with his crown.<sup>46</sup> *Ecclesia*, with its

40 De Jong, 'Sacrum palatium', pp. 124-6; for a specific example of the way 'understanding' and 'practice' would overlap, see Patzold, 'Pater noster'; for a recent overview of the scholarship on Carolingian liturgy, see Palazzo, 'Liturgie carolingienne'.

41 Fried, 'Der karolingische Herrschaftsverband'; De Jong, 'State of the Church'; Reimitz, 'Omnes Franci' and more generally by the same author, *History, Frankish Identity*.

42 Garrison, 'The Franks as the New Israel?'; Garrison, 'Divine election for nations'; a general overview of the development of this ideology is offered by Vanderputten, *Een Heilig Volk is Geboren*.

43 De Jong, 'Empire as ecclesia', esp. pp. 223-224.

44 Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, pp. 15-16, pp. 22-26 and pp. 28-31; cf. Le Jan, 'Les élites carolingiennes', esp. p. 345, for an analysis more specific to the Carolingian age.

45 De Jong, 'Charlemagne's Church', pp. 125-129; Fouracre, 'Long shadow', p. 18.

46 Struve, 'Regnum und Sacerdotium', p. 192: 'Der weltlichen Obrigkeit fiel hierbei eine fest umrissene, den Normen der christlichen Ethik verpflichtete Funktion zu: die Zurechtweisung [correction] der ihr anvertrauten Menschen. Die irdische Herrschaft erhielt dieser Auffassung zufolge den Charakter eines Amtes [ministerium]. Der König erschien als Beauftragter Gottes [minister Dei], der demselben für seine Amtsführung Rechenschaft abzulegen hatte' ('The secular authorities were accorded a clearly delineated function, which owed much to the norms set by Christian ethics: to rebuke [correctio] the people dependent on them. Because of this notion, worldly rulership took on characteristics of a ministry [ministerium]. The king became

connotations of a religion that all subjects of the empire (nominally) adhered to, was an integral part of the ideological basis upon which the unity of the *imperium* was built, and vice versa.<sup>47</sup> This was not limited to political unity. It also included peace and concord within the realms, as achieved through the avoidance of God's displeasure.<sup>48</sup>

Both concepts thus denote specific ways in which the Carolingian elites were rethinking their authority of themselves and that of their rulers. *Imperium* was a vertical notion, the totality of responsibilities carried by the ruler of the Frankish realm, especially once it had started to coalesce into a more integrated *imperium Christianum* by the later eighth and early ninth century.<sup>49</sup> *Ecclesia* represented a more horizontal idea, which started from the notion that all of Christendom was essentially connected by a faith shared among its members, expressed through a *cultus divinus* that applied to all.<sup>50</sup> Instead of being devoted to maintaining order in this earthly life, the ideal behind the *ecclesia* was to enable everyone to attain salvation.<sup>51</sup> This was seen as the main responsibility of the many bishops and other high-ranking members of the clergy who worked as shepherds of their flock within the Carolingian empire.<sup>52</sup> Needless to say, *imperium* and *ecclesia* were rarely, if ever, separate. In order for the *ecclesia* to function, a sense of worldly order and hierarchy needed to be maintained; without peace and concord in the empire, the prerequisites for reaching Heaven would be that much more difficult to create. Conversely, the justifications for and acceptance of the *imperium* and the social power this entailed were largely dependent on the ideology represented by the *ecclesia* and the elites supporting it.

a representative of God [*minister Dei*], to whom he was accountable for how he carried out his reign as well'). See also Sassier, *Royauté et Idéologie*, pp. 136-140; Noble, 'Secular sanctity', p. 13; Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm*, p. 238; cf. Vauchez, *Spiritualité*, pp. 18-19; Garipzanov, *Symbolic Language*, p. 309. On *ministerium*, see also Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, pp. 131-153, esp. p. 133.

47 Van Espelo, 'A testimony of Carolingian rule?', pp. 270-281; McKitterick, 'Unity and diversity'.

48 See Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings*; Patzold, 'Eine "loyale Palastrevolution"', esp. 62: 'zum anderen könnte mit ihr [*unitas imperii*] aber auch die 'Einmütigkeit des Reiches' bezeichnet sein – mithin jener Friede und jene Eintracht, durch die ein *scandalum* in der Kirche und die Ungnade Gottes verhindert werden sollten' ('on the other hand, this idea of *unitas imperii* could also designate 'unanimity' within the empire – which is to say the kind of peace and concord which should prevent a *scandalum* within the Church, or the wrath of God'); De Jong, 'Ecclesia and the early medieval polity', esp. p. 119.

49 Alberi, 'Evolution'; Fichtenau, *Carolingian Empire*, pp. 62-66; Phelan, *Formation*, pp. 48-93.

50 Staubach, 'Cultus Divinus'; De Jong, 'Rethinking'.

51 Generally, see Palmer, *Apocalypse*, pp. 130-188.

52 Suchan, *Mahnen und Regieren*, pp. 127-317.



The idea that the *ecclesia* might be a defining factor in shaping Frankish ideas about their *imperium* had only really taken root among the Carolingian family, and the elite intellectuals that surrounded them: the court.<sup>53</sup> It was at the court that unitary ideals were formulated. Given that the court itself should be regarded as a loose conglomeration of minds rather than a close-knit community of people in a palace, it was also through the court that these ideals migrated to other parts of the empire.<sup>54</sup> The magnates, bishops, etc. who were part of the extended community that we may call a court helped shape and perpetuate the idea and identity of Carolingian rulership, and strengthen the ‘bonds of empire’ in the periphery.<sup>55</sup>

The Carolingian court was no product of historical necessity. It had been formed almost haphazardly from the eighth century onwards, by conflict as well as through cooperation between numerous parties of local elites, bishops and monastic communities.<sup>56</sup> This process, catalysed during the reign of Charlemagne, was still a work in progress when Louis the Pious took to the throne.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, it is clear that an elite community – but not necessarily a ‘state’ or an ‘indivisible empire’ – had sprung up around the emperor by then, a community that acknowledged the importance of the ruler for its own existence.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, acceptance of the central role of the Carolingian court was becoming increasingly commonplace for those members of the elite whose own position depended on having a steady access to a ruler’s ear (and his benevolence): as rulers asserted their authority, the role of their entourage became more defined as well, and thus easier to justify.

One way to communicate this, and thereby command and maintain unity among the elites, was through the propagation of the idea of loyalty.<sup>59</sup>

53 Tremp, ‘Zwischen *Stabilitas* und *Mutatio Regni*’, pp. 113–115.

54 See Hincmar of Reims’ remark in the acts of the Council of Quierzy (858), c. 5: ‘Palatium enim regis dicitur propter rationabiles homines inhabitantes et non propter parietes insensibiles sive macerias’ (‘For the palace of a king is so called for the reasonable people living there, and not for its unfeeling walls or enclosures’), ed. Hartmann, *MGH Concilia* 3, p. 422; Nelson, ‘La cour impériale’; Airlie, “For it is written in the law” and ‘Palace of memory’. McKitterick, ‘The migration of ideas’.

55 Demonstrated for bishops by Patzold, ‘Bischöfe als Träger der politischen Ordnung’, and for the secular elites by Airlie, ‘Aristocracy in the service of the state’, esp. p. 104.

56 For the case of Neustria, see Kaiser, ‘Royauté et pouvoir épiscopal’; Heuclin, ‘Les abbés des monastères neustriens’.

57 The necessity of cooperation between ruler and aristocracy was already noted by Schmid, ‘Das Problem der “Unteilbarkeit des Reiches”’.

58 Kaschke, ‘Zur Trennung von Reich und Herrscher’.

59 Esders, ‘Rechtliche Grundlagen’; Magnou-Nortier, *Foi et Fidélité*, as well as the additions she later made to her monograph in an article: ‘Nouveaux propos sur *Foi et Fidélité*’; Airlie, “Semper fideles”?.

The word used for this concept in medieval sources, *fides*, was also used to designate the more general 'faith', which added a religious dimension to what would otherwise seem to be a purely legal affair.<sup>60</sup> When properly harnessed, *fides* could unify people in different parts of the realm together by binding them to their ruler through *missi dominici* – envoys or representatives of the court – or by appealing to local interests through local power brokers.<sup>61</sup> This was no ordinary promise of political allegiance.<sup>62</sup> Already in Roman times, it was clear that 'loyalty was no favour', but a duty that superseded any personal ties one may have had with the emperor.<sup>63</sup> As Late Antiquity gave way to the Early Middle Ages, the oath became ever more ubiquitous as it 'left the public and judicial sphere that it had inhabited in Roman law, and spread through every sector of social life' – becoming increasingly reliant on the written word in the process.<sup>64</sup> By the Carolingian era, *fides* went deeper still.<sup>65</sup> Under Charlemagne, the idea emerged that confirming one's faith by receiving baptism was to become a subject of the king, that to swear an oath of loyalty was a sacrament that was not to be taken lightly.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the oath was not merely seen as a purely political act, but also vital to the functioning of the *ecclesia* and the Frankish world as a whole.<sup>67</sup> This emphasis on relation between the collective and the individual added an ethical component to this phenomenon, and created challenges which could also be politicized. Unsurprisingly, this was spelled out most explicitly during the high-stakes conflicts that fall beyond the scope of this book. In their condemnation of Louis the Pious in 833, the bishops wrote in the so-called *Relatio Compendiensis* that one of the emperor's most grievous sins had been to lead his loyal subjects astray, and that the oath they had sworn relinquished them of part of the responsibility, for example.<sup>68</sup> In 858,

60 Cf. Esders, 'Treueidleistung und Rechtsveränderung'.

61 Esders, 'Eliten und Raum', pp. 26-28.

62 Le Jan, 'Structures familiales', pp. 315-317.

63 Flaig, 'Is loyalty a favor?', p. 61. Cf. Esders, 'Rechtliche Grundlagen', pp. 430-431, who, invoking Holenstein's *Die Huldigung der Untertanen*, p. 52, speaks of the oath as a form of 'Fremdbestimmung in Selbstzwang'.

64 Lupoi, *The Origins*, pp. 339-340. On this broad development and its implications, see also the seminal work by Prodi, *Il Sacramento del Potere*. Ganshof, 'Charlemagne's use of the oath'; Depreux, 'Les Carolingiens et le serment', pp. 78-79.

65 Esders, 'Fidelität und Rechtsvielfalt'.

66 Esders, "'Faithful believers'"; cf. Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft*, pp. 104-110; Depreux, 'Les Carolingiens et le serment', p. 65.

67 Le Jan, 'Les élites carolingiennes', pp. 335-336; Esders, 'Eliten und Raum'.

68 *Relatio Compendiensis*; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 234-241; a translation of the *Relatio* appears on pp. 271-277.

the bishops gathered at the Council of Quierzy explicitly stated that they would support Charles the Bald against the incursions by his brother, but did not feel they had 'to carry out any oath-swearing', because their support stemmed from their function within the *ecclesia* and not the other way around.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, the issue was recognized in the more optimistic early ninth century, too, for instance, when it was stated in the *Capitulare missorum generale* of 802 that 'the lord emperor cannot himself provide the necessary care and discipline for each man individually'.<sup>70</sup> Although the oath was intended to secure the loyalty of the elites, everybody pledging to become *fideles Dei et regis* would thereby also partake in the ruler's responsibility for the realm, with the ruler and his court being the point towards which the *fides* would flow.<sup>71</sup>

In theory, rulers served as focal points for authority and as the ultimate arbiters in conflicts among their subjects. They bore responsibility for all that transpired within the realms, and were answerable only to God.<sup>72</sup> Their subjects would ease this burden by sharing in the ruler's responsibility, based on his wishes and his wisdom.<sup>73</sup> In doing so, they were very much aware that their oath was, by its very nature, a promise to God to help uphold the authority of the king. Political expediency and divine approval collided, and became a powerful tool to ensure that the bewildering array of local interests would all be focused on a single point. In practice, ideas about a ruler's responsibilities would thus have been shaped by his subjects, their own specific needs, and the circumstances under which they appealed to their ruler, as much as by the court itself.<sup>74</sup> Through such interactions, driven by a mechanism of shared responsibilities, the 'social power' of the court was extended throughout the hierarchical structure of the realm.<sup>75</sup> More importantly, it led to a greater investment in the fate of the kingdom by the *fideles*, who were drawn into a dialogue amongst themselves and with the ruler about the direction they ought to be taking.<sup>76</sup>

69 *Council of Quierzy*, c. 15, p. 426; on the context of this council, see Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 185-189.

70 *Capitulare Missorum Generale*, c. 3, p. 92.

71 Helbig, 'Fideles Dei et regis'.

72 De Jong, 'State of the Church'; Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, pp. 298-299.

73 Guillot, 'L'exhortation'.

74 Nelson, 'Peers'.

75 Bühner-Thierry, 'Pensée hiérarchique', p. 369; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, pp. 1-33.

76 Airlie, "'Semper fideles'?", pp. 133-134; Airlie, 'Bonds of power'.

## Communities and Discourse Communities

Maintaining such a dialogue was easier said than done. As shown by Julia Smith, the post-Roman world was ‘a kaleidoscope of multiple transformations, continuities, innovations, permutations’.<sup>77</sup> Ideas of homogeneity were confronted with a plethora of local voices and regional identities, each of which were complicated further by different aspects of gender identity or social status. These diversities should be seen as an inherent part of the Carolingian empire, and more often than not were exacerbated rather than stemmed by broad social changes. As much as the formation and consolidation of a common identity was a perennial problem in human history, the political and social shifts occurring in the wake of the rise of the Carolingians made life difficult even for the elites, who had to renegotiate their position with every change they saw around them. All the while, they would have been more aware of the vicissitudes of life as their mobility was considerably higher than that of the people for whom they were responsible, due to the vast distances they had to cover to get anything done.<sup>78</sup> The identity that continued to matter most to the rank and file of Carolingian society was the one derived from the small worlds they inhabited – not necessarily the one that radiated from a central, yet distant, court.<sup>79</sup>

This is where the second advantage of the Carolingian division of responsibilities comes into play. By giving every member of the court a stake in running the *ecclesia*, the ruler allowed everybody to give advice, which in turn led to an almost continuous debate, to negotiations between the courtiers amongst themselves, between the court and the ruler, and between centre and periphery.<sup>80</sup> Out of necessity, this was not an autocratic system of government; courts were ‘vehicles of negotiation and compromise’.<sup>81</sup> Those who were close to the court were invited to weigh in on important matters,

77 Smith, *Europe after Rome*, pp. 1-9. See also Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire*, pp. 337-345.

78 A point made emphatically in Gravel, *Distances, Rencontres*.

79 McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 214-291, looking from the perspective of court and its closest associates, rightly argues on p. 288 that ‘Charlemagne’s empire was indeed a ‘sophisticated conception of political space’, with a clear differentiation between its central and peripheral spheres of influence within a ‘network of centres of power and lines of communication’ (quoting Pohl, ‘Frontiers and ethnic identities’), but she concedes that it would be much harder to work out ‘issues of jurisdiction, legal rights to property, and multiple loyalty among an inevitably mixed population’ in, for example, the faraway marcher regions. Cf. Wolfram, ‘The creation of the Carolingian frontier-system’. I have borrowed the concept of ‘small worlds’ from Davies, *Small Worlds*.

80 Bang, ‘Court and state’; Bullough, ‘Der Kaiseridee’; Sassier, *Royauté et Idéologie*, pp. 6-69.

81 Bang, ‘Court and state’, p. 120.

for example, during the many synods that were organized throughout the Frankish realm.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, capitularies and conciliar *acta* that resulted from these synods should not be seen as a series of decisions to be enacted throughout the empire, but rather as products of deliberations between various orders within the clergy and the lay aristocracy, each of them representing different regions, different ideas and different interests. The insistence of the resulting texts on consensus should not be mistaken for real unity, therefore. To condense such issues into one comprehensive document required a willingness to play by the rules as well as a willingness to reach a compromise, not a complete unification of everybody's vision for the *ecclesia*.

The sources at our disposal reflect the priorities of the communities from which they have sprung, and could influence the realities of their recipients in a very real way – and it should be noted that these were not limited to texts, either.<sup>83</sup> They communicated ideals from one social group to another, consolidating not only the sense of identity of their primary audience, but also the networks that bound the different communities together in an 'acephalous federation', the infinitely varied tapestry of small worlds that was early medieval Western Europe.<sup>84</sup> Looking at the reforming activities of the early ninth century, it is not my goal to reconstruct what actually happened, but to listen closely to the discordant voices at our disposal, to hear what each of them has to say, and to try and explain these disparate points of view by taking into account the 'social logic of the text'.<sup>85</sup> As the works produced interacted with their readers, they helped build, consolidate and develop a communal identity for their respective audiences.<sup>86</sup> The sources that will be treated in this book help us catch a glimpse of this process, the communication between communities and the ensuing migration of

82 Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, p. 122 and pp. 243-244.

83 For instance, on Carolingian numismatics, see Coupland, 'Money and coinage'; Coupland, 'Charlemagne's coinage'; Garipzanov, 'Coins as symbols'. On architecture, see, for instance, Jacobsen, 'Allgemeine Tendenzen im Kirchenbau'; Rulkens, *Means, Motives and Opportunities*, and Czoock, *Gottes Haus*, who tie ideas about church buildings and the delineation of sacred space into a more general discourse on the *ecclesia*. Chazelle, *Crucified God*, offers an insightful interpretation of the intersections between (visual and poetic) arts and Carolingian (religious) thought.

84 Cameron, 'Social language', pp. 112 and p. 124; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 376.

85 Spiegel, 'History, historicism', p. 25: 'The most fruitful means of investigating this material and discursive mutuality [i.e. the text-context conundrum], I would suggest, is to focus analysis on the moment of inscription, that is, on the ways in which the historical world is internalized in the text and its meaning fixed'. See also Airlie, 'Sad stories', p. 118.

86 As shown for the case of Montecassino by Pohl, 'History in fragments'.

ideas, as well as the means employed by the court to control these flows of information.<sup>87</sup> To some extent, the ideological power of the *ecclesia* served as a regulator, but this required a concerted effort on the part of the court and its emperor, and of the members of the other communities, to properly cater to their 'model readers' and their actual audience.<sup>88</sup> The Frankish realm may have been acephalous in practice, but that did not halt attempts by rulers and their courts to place themselves at its head regardless.

In doing so, they contributed in the creation of a 'discourse community', a loose group of like-minded individuals operating within a 'matrix of meaning' which aided the self-identification of a given community through a conscious or subconscious process of inclusion, while excluding, if at all possible, less desirable elements who were not privy to the social language used.<sup>89</sup> Comparable to the 'textual communities', posited by Brian Stock in 1983, as one of the implications of the increasing literacy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, or to the 'emotional communities' pioneered by Barbara Rosenwein in 2006, this approach opens up another way of looking at medieval communities through the textual evidence we have at our disposal.<sup>90</sup> Essentially, it is based in the assumption that authors, (intended) audiences, and texts operate in an interdependent relation, a constellation of constantly shifting identities. Individual persons are able to belong – or rather, represent themselves as belonging – to multiple communities at once, and switch from one appropriate identity to another as the situation prescribed.<sup>91</sup> Still, they would write under the assumption that a sense of togetherness could be accessed through the proper use of texts: a discourse community.<sup>92</sup> A 'discourse community' is defined by James Porter as 'a local and temporary constraining system, defined by a body of texts (or more generally, practices) that are unified by a common focus'. This

87 Sullivan, 'Context of cultural activity'.

88 Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, pp. 376-390. It has been noted that Mann may give too much credit to the cohesive power of what he calls the *ecumene*, though. The term 'model readers' is borrowed from Umberto Eco through Pohl, 'Social language', p. 131.

89 Pohl, 'Social language', pp. 138-141.

90 Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, pp. 88-101; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, pp. 25-29; Rosenwein, 'Worrying about emotions', p. 842, n. 76.

91 A processual approach for which Jenkins, *Social Identity*, pp. 1-15 and pp. 37-48, favours the use of 'identifications' rather than 'identities' – partly arguing against Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"': 'who hold that looking for identity in the humanities and social sciences has become an all but meaningless exercise.

92 I want to thank Irene van Renswoude for introducing this concept to me, and for her help and input as I was grappling with it. For her own interpretation and use of this term, see Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 13-14.

common pool of texts, in turns, forms a 'system with stated and unstated conventions, a vital history, mechanisms for wielding power, institutional hierarchies, vested interests, and so on'. It thus encompasses both writers and their potential readers, neither of whom are wholly independent from one another.<sup>93</sup> They cut 'across sociological or institutional boundaries' while also engendering 'an internal coherence [...] reinforced and ratified by external opposition, disregard, or disdain' – an approach which values conflict and conversation over the illusion of uniformity which emerges if we focus on texts exclusively.<sup>94</sup> Even the gaps and silences we observe may be part of such a discourse communities, as it is just as important to determine the things that need no further elaboration as it is to define the terms to debate the things that do.<sup>95</sup>

Such communities of course constituted 'ideal identities' rather than the networks of obligations and affective categories that may also define communities.<sup>96</sup> Still, the idea of a discourse community can be a valuable commodity in the historian's toolbox, as demonstrated by Robert Wuthnow in his study on the way ideological change was carried through social structures in the early modern era.<sup>97</sup> For the early medieval period, Irene van Renswoude's work on the rhetoric of free speech has shown how the willingness of early medieval actors to acknowledge a wide range of opinions on various matters and to allow the expression of divergent opinions (in a controlled environment) could be a catalyst for creative tension.<sup>98</sup> A vital point raised by her research is that debate itself was not necessarily seen as a hindrance to reform, but was an intrinsic part of the process, and a way towards the formation of resilient communities. This is why it was so very important to get it right. Whether seen as a necessary evil or a goal unto itself, it was acknowledged that discussion within a group might ultimately be beneficial to all and should not be shut down *a priori*. Through communication, of which our sources are the silent witnesses, members of such groups thus perpetuated ideals and ideas that could hold the group together.<sup>99</sup> If such a system held, as it did in the relatively stable social

93 Porter, *Audience and Rhetoric*, pp. 82-102 and p. 106.

94 Evans, 'Audience and discourse community theory', pp. 1-5; Swales, *Other Floors*, pp. 194-207.

95 Swales, *Other Floors*, p. 204 calls this 'silential relations'.

96 De Ruyter and Conroy, 'Formation of identity', p. 510: 'that aspect of the identity of the individual which is related to what is not yet realized, but which the person would like to achieve'; see Lutter, 'Social groups'.

97 Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse*, pp. 9-19.

98 Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 358-360.

99 Depkat, 'Kommunikationsgeschichte', pp. 30-32.

and political circumstances created by Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, a sense of community might emerge that was larger than one's immediate surroundings – imagined, perhaps, but a community nonetheless.<sup>100</sup>

Within such discourse communities, then, ideas and ideals could be transmitted through the networks that had helped shape it, and be replicated and adapted in the process.<sup>101</sup> Again, it was debate as much as a search for unity or orthodoxy that proved to be the life force of early medieval discourse – the thing that drove the *ecclesia* to continuously improve upon itself.<sup>102</sup> The self-awareness that was part and parcel of this ongoing process of debates and deliberations should be understood as part of the 'reform process' studied in this book. As much as the sources at our disposal convey an image of a court where decisions were made, justified and then propagated, it should not be forgotten that this would and indeed could not happen without support and acceptance 'from below' and from those standing on the outside looking in. Although the discourse communities assumed in this book thrived on interdependence and thus were highly elite and to some extent closed-off systems, the ideas they produced were as much the result of impulses given in the course of conversations and observations about the world at large as they were strictly the brainchild of elite individuals. This means that for all intents and purposes, a discourse community could potentially include a vastly larger group of people than acknowledged in this book: it was recognized by the court that the strength of their ideas laid not only in their provenance, but also in their reception. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, the focus will remain on the immediate intent behind the sources. All of them were meant to change the minds of the respective intended audiences – specifically those who were in a position to effectuate real change in both word and deed, and as far as the authors were concerned.

As already stated by Giles Brown in 1995, 'Reform may have been in the Carolingian interest but that does not mean that it was not sincerely and

100 A process analysed for the situation in postcolonial South-East Asia by Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. His assertion that a political community 'is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' seems to me most useful for any society, including the early medieval Frankish one.

101 Cf. Acham, 'Struktur, funktion und genese von Institutionen', pp. 58-62.

102 As argued in the first *Texts and Identities* volume by De Jong et al., 'Introduction', p. 12: texts are 'an integral part of the past realities under scrutiny, including a plurality of interpretations after the event', and 'the often discordant voices of medieval authors allow modern historians to grasp something of the multiplicity of the early medieval world, and of the disagreements, conflicts, idiosyncrasies and individual perceptions among the people who inhabited it'.



conscientiously pursued'.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, it remains difficult to distinguish between the changes taking place in the early ninth century and the reforms that were instigated at the behest of the court. To think of 'reforms' as being a unidirectional process would be to misunderstand and underestimate the dynamics underpinning them. Writing about the age of Charles Martel (r. 718-741), Timothy Reuter argued that regarding early medieval ideas of reform as clearly delineated programmes with definite goals and methods is anachronistic and may lead to a misunderstanding of the machinations at work in the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>104</sup> Julia Barrow has pointed out that changes to religious life or institutions were not commonly thought of as 'reforms' in the Early Middle Ages.<sup>105</sup> The vocabulary used – such as *emendatio*, *renovatio* and most notably *correctio* – could just as easily be applied to local initiatives or even to instances of personal self-improvement, and only got its institutional connotations much later. As a concept, it was retroactively applied to phenomena visible in earlier sources, which contemporary actors may have regarded as merely being changes. Recently, Alexandra Walsham has demonstrated how this point of view extends to modern research, influenced by centuries of historiography elevating reform to a level of importance wholly alien to contemporary actors.<sup>106</sup> Social-anthropological and even postmodern critiques aiming to reverse this narrative were only partially successful, as they paradoxically had to deal with the observation that the texts at our disposal are inherently static and thus do not allow us to gauge the impact of changes.<sup>107</sup> The view they allow ends up obfuscating 'opposing and contradictory tendencies within religious cultures', she argues, including 'the dynamic and dialectical interactions between asceticism and sensuality, between dogmatism and doubt, and between intense conviction and caution and skepticism'.<sup>108</sup>

The argument within these pages will be based on the idea that the world of the Carolingian elite was full of such opposing and contradictory tendencies, and that the process of debates, of which the sources only show one aspect, was part of the process of reform. Participants in these deliberations ultimately encouraged it as a form of self-improvement, even if they might at the same time express fear for the souls of their interlocutors. Moreover, I will work from the assumption that contemporary observers

103 Brown, 'Introduction: the Carolingian Renaissance', pp. 11-15.

104 Reuter, "Kirchenreform" und "Kirchenpolitik", esp. pp. 40-42.

105 Barrow, 'Ideas and applications'; Barrow, 'Developing definitions'.

106 Walsham, 'Migrations of the holy', pp. 242-251.

107 Walsham, 'Migrations of the holy', pp. 257-260.

108 Walsham, 'Migrations of the holy', p. 264.

were aware of this, and that this awareness is visible in the texts they left behind. After all, as had already been convincingly argued by Raymund Kottje in 1965, it was this diversity that kept the Carolingian Church vital and ready to take on challenges from the outside.<sup>109</sup> Regarding the Church reform movement as a court-instigated drive for uniformity creates tensions within the sources that may not have actually been there, or which may have been caused by different reasons altogether. If 'reform' becomes the one force driving the production of capitularies, the organization of synods, or changes occurring within a monastic community, a dichotomy appears between different 'parties' entrenching themselves in support of or against the court. However, such parties are not visible in the sources, and this image ought to be substituted with a picture of courtiers debating, agreeing to disagree, competing for favour, and formulating compromises – both at the palace and in the course of other negotiations within the wider discourse community.<sup>110</sup> Negotiations between court and cloister or between local and imperial interests were all part of this process of ecclesiastical improvement, and would increasingly supersede ties of kinship or local authority.<sup>111</sup> Working from the assumption that these ecclesiastical negotiations were part and parcel of intellectual life in the early ninth century automatically leads to a more nuanced and dynamic vision of the mechanisms that kept the Carolingian *imperium* running.<sup>112</sup>

## Between Cloister and Court

In the time of Louis the Pious, these negotiations appeared to revolve specifically around the multitude of monastic communities that dotted the Frankish religious and socio-economic landscape. There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is the simple observation that monasteries served as the record-keepers of reform. Their libraries, archives and cartularies, built up over centuries of near-continuous existence, allow modern researchers the clearest view of the processes of change in the Early Middle Ages, and the conflicts that subsequently emerged over how to cope with

109 Kottje, 'Einheit und Vielfalt'.

110 Airlie, 'Talking heads'; Esders, 'Mittelalterlicher Konfliktaustrag'; Noble, 'Kings, clergy and dogma'; Patzold, 'Eine "loyale Palastrevolution"'; Althoff, '*Colloquium familiare*'; West, 'Dissonance of speech'.

111 Shown for the Carolingian episcopacy by Patzold, 'Redéfinir l'office épiscopal'.

112 Cf. Reuter, 'Assembly politics'; Barnwell, 'Political assemblies'.

new circumstances.<sup>113</sup> However, their role went far beyond being the carrier of institutional memory. The position of many monastic communities at the intersection between local aristocratic interests and religious idealism, combined with the fundamental importance of monasticism to the fabric of the Carolingian state, gave them an active role in the debates about the improvement of the *ecclesia*.<sup>114</sup> In fact, reforms and the will to reform were part of the very essence of these communities, as shown by Steven Vanderputten for the high medieval period, and confirmed by Renie Choy for the Carolingians.<sup>115</sup> A monk's willingness to seek perfection strengthened the realm, as it was recognized that actively pursuing self-improvement had a positive effect on the whole of Christendom – and the support provided to the empire by their 'power of prayer' was an integral part of their quest for individual salvation, which in turn made them highly visible and exemplary carriers of the ideals that were fundamental to Carolingian self-understanding. The interdependence between the Carolingian and monastic visions of community was not always free of tension, but it did make them excellent bases from which the Carolingian rulers disseminated their cultural and political dominance throughout the realms. This was aided rather than hampered by the fact that monastic communities often broke free of their purported isolation to become highly influential local places of power and memory.<sup>116</sup> As such, it stands to reason that they would play a central part in the consolidation of Carolingian rule, and the reform efforts undertaken by them.<sup>117</sup>

However, due to their nature, monastic communities could be deceptively hard to influence. Their status was paradoxical: these were highly visible enclaves, whose status in the world was nonetheless dependent on their separation from it.<sup>118</sup> Theoretically, they were closed-off communities with members whose intention it was never to return to the world.<sup>119</sup> Monasteries were seen by contemporaries as outposts of Heaven, with their inhabitants enjoying a splendid isolation which would prevent their corruption by worldly concerns. Consequently, they took it upon themselves to ease the

113 See, for example, Declercq, 'Originals and cartularies'.

114 De Jong, 'Carolingian monasticism'.

115 Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform*; Choy, 'Deposit of Monastic Faith'.

116 Semmler, 'Pippin III. und die fränkischen Klöster'; cf. Ganz, *Temptabat et scribere*; Innes, 'People, places and power'.

117 Hummer, *Politics and Power*, p. 251, speaks of 'the possibilities inherent in monastery-based lordship'.

118 Turner, *Ritual Process*, pp. 94-130.

119 Bargiela-Chiappini, 'Liminal ethnography', Cf. Fludernik, 'Carceral topography', p. 47.

burden of sin for everybody else within the *ecclesia*.<sup>120</sup> In practice, however, monasteries would often grow to become large landholders, with abbots who could come to directly influence imperial affairs, and who sometimes were even recruited or appointed from the laity.<sup>121</sup> This did not deter these communities from representing themselves as an ideal. Consequently, a large body of works exists in which monastic authors attempt to come to terms with their changing role in society.<sup>122</sup> Monastic communities were egalitarian, led by an abbot, and strove to attain the perfect way of life by learning and following a set of rules and practices, going back to ancient practice and biblical precedent.<sup>123</sup> As such, they would stress, for example, the importance of maintaining an ‘internal cloister’ as well as the community itself: the walls of the monastery should be supplemented by walls around a monk’s heart, protecting him from secular influence wherever he would go.<sup>124</sup> The constant reinforcement of these internal ideals helped strengthen the sense of community of the monks, structuring and legitimizing the existence of the community in the wider world, and cemented their place in the ‘sacred foundations’ of the *ecclesia*.<sup>125</sup>

The interdependent relationship between imperial court and monastic communities in Francia has already been the subject of several studies, of which Thomas Noble’s analysis of the influence of monastic ideals on the policies of Louis the Pious in a 1976 article may be the most notable.<sup>126</sup> In it, Noble argued that the emperor’s piety was partially based on a ‘monastic ideal’ that pervaded Carolingian elite culture. Noble was one of the first to explore the idea that Louis’ religious inclinations supported and strengthened the organization and control of his government, rather than undermined it. Four years later, he expanded upon this idea by emphasizing that Louis the Pious was not ‘a weak, vacillating, priest-ridden incompetent’, but a ruler on a ‘quest for organization and regularization’, whose ‘esteem for monastic life, virtues and organization was so high that he made a concerted effort to

120 Hildebrandt, *External School*, pp. 21–37.

121 Felten, ‘Laienäbte’; by the same author also *Äbte und Laienäbte*. See also Helvétius, ‘Labbatiat laïque’. Given the focus of the cases presented here on ideological conceptualizations of monasteries, this – otherwise highly interesting – phenomenon will fall outside of the scope of this book.

122 Hildebrandt, *External School*, pp. 37–48; Angenendt, ‘Gift and countergift’, as well as the seminal works by Rosenwein on the property and social structure around Cluny, *Rhinoceros Bound* and *To Be the Neighbor of St. Peter*.

123 Cf. De Vogüé, ‘Structure et gouvernement’, pp. 581–586. Also, among many others, Diem, *Das monastische Experiment*.

124 De Jong, ‘Internal cloisters’.

125 Turner, *Ritual Process*, pp. 131–133; Kramer, ‘Sacred foundations’.

126 Noble, ‘Monastic ideal’.

organize his empire on the model of a monastery'.<sup>127</sup> Gradually, these ideas have been taken up and engaged with in subsequent studies, all of which have left their mark on this book.<sup>128</sup> The monasticization of the empire, for instance, was seen to be part of a long, ongoing process.<sup>129</sup> Piety, it was recognized, was not a negative trait, but became a reason to advocate the improvement of the Church, not only for considerations of propaganda or politics, but also simply because that was the ideal that all Frankish rulers – or anyone in a position of authority, for that matter – ought to pursue.<sup>130</sup> This, in turn, ties up with the idea that the characteristics of a monk was actually quite compatible with those of a perfect ruler.<sup>131</sup> The Carolingians ensured that 'Charlemagne's government would persist as an empire of the mind'.<sup>132</sup>

The idea that the emperor and his court should be the main purveyors of piety gave rise to the idea that the emperor had a position akin to that of an abbot in a monastery.<sup>133</sup> However, such ideals did not come out of nowhere, and such a model – be it monastic, imperial, or otherwise – would not be accepted by those entities upon which it relied for stability without a solid footing to stand on. Without the support of the aristocracy, the episcopate and the network of monasteries, a ruler would not be able to hold on to his *imperium*, and conversely, this wide support network could only exist with the king or emperor seated in the eye of the storm.<sup>134</sup> As it stood at the dawn of the ninth century, the court, its constituent members, and those dependent on its functioning would all have been locked in a highly dynamic, interdependent relationship. Ruling an empire was more than simply sitting on top of the world and enjoying the view. Rulers were expected to adopt new customs and adapt to new circumstances, while also improving on them when- and wherever possible. If they were successful at this balancing act, their subjects would react accordingly, cementing the

127 Noble, 'Louis the Pious and his piety re-considered', p. 309.

128 See, amongst others, Depreux, 'La *pietas*', pp. 204-206; Zotz, 'Ludwig der Fromme oder Ludwig der Gnädige?'.

129 De Jong, 'Charlemagne's Church', p. 131.

130 Buc, 'The monster', pp. 444-446; Costambeys et al., *The Carolingian World*, p. 134.

131 Romig, *Be a Perfect Man*, pp. 78-80.

132 Nelson, 'Charlemagne and empire', p. 232; Cameron, 'Social language', p. 112; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 377.

133 Schneider, 'Krise und Auflösung', pp. 56 – although Kaschke, *Die Karolingischen Reichsteilungen*, p. 352, rightly characterizes Schneider's characterization of the *Ordinatio* as 'in den Formulierungen etwas überspitzt' ('a bit exaggerated').

134 The challenges raised by this system have been studied by Le Jan, *Famille et Pouvoir*, pp. 31-69; for an analysis of the origins of this model, see Dierkens, 'Carolus monasteriorum'.

hierarchy while simultaneously pushing its boundaries outward and upward. An essential component of early medieval ideas about rulership was the interdependence between the court on the one hand, and its constituent members on the other. The Council of Attigny of 822, with which this book opened, is but one illustration of this: the model of rulership represented in its acts was not contradictory, precisely because it depended on those people and institutions who themselves depended on the emperor, be it the person or the institution.<sup>135</sup>

As we shall see, monastic intellectuals played an undeniable role in the propagation of this way of thinking. At the same time, these same people had one foot in the court, and were constantly reminded of the scale at which things were operating.<sup>136</sup> As such, they would be active participants in the reforms emanating from the court, and adapt their own world view accordingly. The imperial model they helped create became a template for further monastic improvements, both as individual communities and as part of a larger social whole. Their willingness to adapt to the new imperial framework would in turn be incentivized by the court, both in the form of guarantees of protection and immunity, and through the large-scale and fundamental reforms proposed by Louis the Pious shortly after his ascension to the throne.<sup>137</sup>

Consolidation and cooperation were, however, Louis' primary aims. To a large extent, the measures taken by the Frankish court in the first fifteen years of Louis' reign were a continuation of policies initially implemented by his father and grandfather. The foundations upon which Louis and his entourage were building allowed them to rethink existing ecclesiastical ideologies into a much more comprehensive set of ideals than had hitherto been the case.<sup>138</sup> This would go farther than the implementation of the *Regula Benedicti* as the one rule to bind all the monasteries together – arguably the most visible of the Carolingian 'innovations' from the 740s through to the 820s.<sup>139</sup> Under the new emperor, improving monastic life would no longer be a question of following the correct Rule. It should encompass all aspects of Christian life.

135 As illustrated in the case of Nithard's *Histories* by Nelson, 'Public histories', p. 286. See also Depreux, 'The penance of Attigny'.

136 Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 19-22.

137 See Becher, 'Dynastie, Thronfolge und Staatsverständnis'.

138 For example, McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, pp. 57-59 proposes a more gradual, organic process rather than pinpointing a single council as the catalyst.

139 A traditional starting point would be the *Concilium Germanicum*, as proposed among others by Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, p. 70. Cf. Diem, 'Carolingians and the *Regula Benedicti*'.

Again, it is easy to overestimate the goals and intentions of these proposals, especially regarding matters that went beyond the purely ideological.<sup>140</sup> For instance, attempts by, most notably, Josef Semmler to de-emphasize the importance of the *Regula Benedicti* (*RB*) as the sole vehicle of monastic reform have inadvertently led to the assumption that the court pursued a uniformization of monastic *consuetudines*, the day-to-day running of the monasteries themselves according to customs that existed outside the framework provided by that same Rule.<sup>141</sup> While the ultimate goal at court does seem to have been to place every monastery in an optimal position to perform its liturgical duties, the idea that all the communities should conform to a new reality overstates the reach of the court and underestimates contemporary ideas about ecclesiastical unity and diversity.<sup>142</sup> The development of monastic *consuetudines* over time could be studied to trace imperial influence over monastic centres throughout the realm, but need not be reflective of a comprehensive reform programme.<sup>143</sup>

What becomes visible in the sources is the fundamental attempt to categorize the Church into monks on the one hand, and the rest of the clergy on the other; to distinguish between monastic communities and their canonical counterparts.<sup>144</sup> Even though each was seen to hold a substantially different function within the *ecclesia*, they had often been living together in mixed communities, making it difficult to distinguish between the two.<sup>145</sup> This clashed with Louis' ideals about ordering his empire, and increasingly stringent measures were taken to make sure that the canons, who assisted the bishops in his duties and had important ecclesiastical and educational functions in the secular world, had their own communities separated from the monks who, ideally, were to be isolated from any negative influence from the outside.<sup>146</sup> This became one of the main points of the series of councils

140 See, for example, the remarks by Dey, 'Bringing chaos out of order'; Staubauch, 'Populum Dei'.

141 Semmler, 'Benedictus II'. On the concept of *consuetudines*, see Hallinger, 'Consuetudo'.

142 In addition to Kottje, 'Einheit und Vielfalt', and McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, see also Swanson, 'Unity and diversity', as well as the closing remarks by Diem, 'Gregory's Chess Board', pp. 190-191.

143 Already noted by Angerer, 'Consuetudo und Reform'; Rosenwein, 'Rules and the Rule'.

144 Specifically on this issue, see Ling, *Cloister and Beyond*, esp. pp. 22-62.

145 Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, pp. 9-16, gives a summary of the development of the clerical common life. On early medieval and especially Carolingian monasticism(s), see De Jong, 'Carolingian monasticism', esp. pp. 627-629; Semmler, 'Mönche und Kanoniker'; Kramer, 'Sacred foundations'.

146 The emergence of canons as a separate ecclesiastical phenomenon has been extensively studied in Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln*. See also Riché, 'Moines bénédictins',

organized at the palace of Aachen between the years 816 and 819 – but as we will see, the implication of these proposals went much deeper than the superficial recategorization of religious communities. It entailed a thorough redefinition of everyone's place within the ecclesiastical order as envisaged by Louis the Pious.

The redefinition and the understanding of power that came with these reforms is one of this book's core concepts. This aspect of the reforms has been studied extensively, and the source readings in this book owe a tremendous debt to all this previous scholarship. The work done by Semmler and his predecessor, Kassius Hallinger, is especially noteworthy in that they were among the first to recognize the systematic nature of the Carolingian reform movement.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, Hallinger's designation of the movement as 'Anianische Reform', after Benedict of Aniane, one of the main advisers of Louis the Pious, has further cemented this movement's reputation as the brainchild of the monastic entourage of Louis the Pious, and not as part of a broader development.<sup>148</sup> However, while Semmler did a tremendously important job in identifying where reforms were accepted, or rejected, or tweaked, he has mostly been working from the position that these were proposals from up high, which could be rejected or accepted in the first place.<sup>149</sup> Doing so runs the risk of separating these reforms the wider context

pp. 96-103, who argues that there was still plenty of concern for schooling in spite of the ideal of monastic isolation in Carolingian times.

147 For this book, the most relevant works by Hallinger are the two-volume *Gorze-Kluny* and the series *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum*. A retrospective on Hallinger and his legacy has been composed by Engelbert, 'Kassius Hallinger (1911-1991)'.

148 Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*, p. 740. Cf. Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 2-6; Kluetting, *Monasteria semper reformanda*, pp. 19-20.

149 Semmler, 'Benediktinische Reform', pp. 822-823, had already nuanced his earlier position somewhat: 'Nicht in einem Klosterverband, den gemeinsame *consuetudo*, Gebets- und Totenbund, das hierarchische Strukturelement der Zuordnung von *monasteria* zueinander, zwischenklosterliche Kontrollinstanzen zusammenhielten, sah Benedict von Aniane seine monastische Erneuerung, die Formung der karolingerzeitlichen monastischen Gemeinschaften gemäß den Vorschriften der *Regula s. Benedicti* und mit Hilfe der in Auseinandersetzung mit diesem ehrwürdigen Text entwickelten *consuetudo* gesichert, sondern im Gefüge der frankischen Reichskirche, in der Gliedschaft der benediktinischen Kommunitäten im *regnum Francorum*' ('Not as a function of monastic associations, held together by a shared *consuetudo*, prayer confraternities, hierarchical ordering of *monasteria* vis-à-vis one another, or inter-monastic supervisory authorities, did Benedict of Aniane envision his monastic renewal movement, which aimed to shape Carolingian monastic communities according to the prescriptions of the *Regula S. Benedicti* and the *consuetudo* that was developed out of a detailed analysis of this venerable text, but within the fabric of the Frankish imperial Church, or rather in the membership of the Benedictine communities to the *regnum Francorum*').



within which they took place, and de-emphasizes the interactivity that was at their heart.

The attempts undertaken to 'correct' monastic and canonical life went much farther than implied by their stated purpose, and were part of a much larger 'Carolingian experiment' which was aimed at unifying the Christian subjects of the empire, albeit not necessarily in the way foreseen – or even desired – by the emperor and his entourage.<sup>150</sup> It is this fundamental alteration of the Frankish Church that occurred in the process of action and reaction, proposal and admonition that will be made visible in the case studies in this book. If the energetic first years of Louis' reign attest to anything, it is that the new emperor was not content to merely sit on his father's throne, and neither were his subjects content to sit back and let things run their course. It is against this background that the Carolingian understanding of *ecclesia* and *imperium* interacted. Within the discourse community formed by those partaking in the responsibilities of the Frankish rulers, a feeling of mutual dependence emerged from the concern for *correctio* that was shared by all. Relying on frequent and sometimes intense debates, this interdependence relied on the willingness of all participants in the 'Carolingian experiment' to remain engaged in the improvement of the lives of everyone under their authority. This was what was expected of them.

When Louis the Pious was designated the sole heir of the Carolingian empire in 813, he inherited a great sense of responsibility for the *ecclesia* under his care. He had expectations to live up to: his father's, his subjects', his court's – but also his own. Judging by the actions he undertook in the first years of his reign, he took those expectations seriously. Using the momentum built up by the generations before them, Louis, together with his close advisers and followers, set out to hand their subjects the tools to achieve salvation on their own terms.

The flurry of activities taking place in 814 was intended to consolidate Louis' new-found authority, to make clear how he meant to run things. In the process, the multifaceted nature of these 'reforms' also became clear to the participants. Louis set about an empire-wide programme of righting any wrongs that were left over after his father's reign<sup>151</sup>; he ousted his sisters, long-time favourites of Charlemagne, from the palace, and also replaced

150 Borrowed from James, *Origins of France*, pp. 157-169. The term was more recently also used by Wickham, *Medieval Europe*, pp. 61-79.

151 See Rio, *Legal Practice and the Written Word*, pp. 132-137.

some of the old guard of the court with members of his own entourage<sup>152</sup>; he confirmed large numbers of charters and immunities granted by his father, attaching his name to the donation in the process<sup>153</sup>; last but not least, he forbade the singing of Germanic folk songs in the palace.<sup>154</sup> The *renovatio regni Francorum* – which also featured on Louis the Pious' imperial seal – thus touched the lives of many, in a wide variety of ways.<sup>155</sup> It had consequences that extended far beyond the walls of the palace, as each proposed change raised new questions, and every answer prompted a new debate.

152 De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 19-24, and also Scharer, 'Charlemagne's daughters'. Cf. Brunner, *Oppositionelle Gruppen*, pp. 96-100; Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie*, pp. 85-105.

153 Kölzer, *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen*, pp. 27-29; a comprehensive study of the trends visible in the socio-political and economic dynamics of the imperial charters was done by Zwierlein, *Studien zu den Arengen*.

154 As told by Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris*, c. 19, pp. 200-205, in reaction to Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 29, p. 33.

155 Semmler, '*Renovatio regni francorum*', esp. 128; cf. Collins, 'Charlemagne and his critics', pp. 203-206.



## 2. A Model for Empire: The Councils of 813 and the *Institutio Canoniorum*

As Louis came of age, so did the Frankish empire.<sup>1</sup> As the realms evolved into an *imperium Christianum*, more intellectuals became aware of the wages of rulership and the responsibilities that came with a position close to the top.<sup>2</sup> Deliberations on the nature of 'Christian kingship' and the notion of a 'Christian empire' were not exclusive to the Frankish understanding of rulership, and long predate the reign of Louis the Pious, going back to at least the age of Constantine the Great.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, attempts at merging political interests and ecclesiastical ideals were nothing new, even by Carolingian standards: the dynasty had consistently sponsored such efforts since at least the 740s.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, the confluence of imperial and ecclesiastical ideologies was arguably never as fortunate as during the final years of the reign of Charlemagne and the first decade of that of his son.<sup>5</sup> Within that time, the period from 813 and 822, between the coronation of Louis the Pious and his public penance at Attigny nine years later seems especially fruitful. Many issues were addressed in this dynamic decade.<sup>6</sup> The court was reshuffled in 814-815, Louis' *imperium* was confirmed by Pope Stephen II in 816, and the *Ordinatio Imperii* was issued in 817 in the hopes of pre-emptively quelling internecine conflicts.<sup>7</sup> The people at the centre of such debates were confident that their ideas could – and oftentimes *did* – have an impact on how a kingdom was run.<sup>8</sup> Thus, when a large number of bishops, abbots and priests were convoked at Aachen in 816 to rethink the nature of religious communities within the empire, they were also forced to reflect on their own role within the Christian empire.<sup>9</sup> The ecclesiastical councils held in Aachen between 816 and 819 should therefore not be seen as being exclusively concerned

1 Sassier, *Royauté et Idéologie*, pp. 122-130.

2 Van Espelo, 'A testimony of Carolingian rule?'; Alberi, 'Evolution'.

3 Nelson, 'Kingship and empire', pp. 69-71; De Jong, 'Religion', pp. 132-142.

4 Wood, 'Entrusting'; Noble, 'Carolingian religion', pp. 290-294; Garrison, 'The Franks as the New Israel?', pp. 134-140. See also Palmer, 'The vigorous rule of Bishop Lull'.

5 Brown, *Rise*, pp. 434-462; McKitterick, 'Legacy'.

6 Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire', pp. 72-73.

7 Kasten, *Königssöhne*, pp. 170-172; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 19-28; Kaschke, 'Die Teilungsprojekte', pp. 91-94.

8 Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 6-8.

9 Semmler, 'Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils', pp. 16-17.

with the categorization of the constituent parts of the *ecclesia*. Rather, they were part of a wider movement that aimed to engender *correctio* in the hearts and minds of all Christians, thus linking up universal ideals with individual concerns.<sup>10</sup>

The different aspects of ecclesiastical *correctio* at the start of the reign of Louis the Pious should not be viewed in isolation from one another. Neither should one disconnect between the reforms themselves and the changing views on rulership that accompanied them. What mattered to the court was to order the *ecclesia*, creating a clear and structured overarching Church organization. The authority behind these reforms was the same for everyone involved: the *imperium*, as represented by the person of Louis the Pious.<sup>11</sup> As such, the sources pertaining to the *correctio* movement which emanated from Aachen should not be regarded as merely being imperial edicts proposing new *consuetudines* for the monasteries in the Frankish realms; they attempted to describe a new world, and the new life that came with it, in such a way that everybody would be able to find their own path through it.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the debates from which they sprang were used by the ecclesiastical elite to define their own place within the empire, as well as how they viewed their relation with the emperor, and his responsibilities of rulership. While monastic and canonical communities were the primary focus of the texts issued between 816 and 819, in reality the entire *ecclesia* was scrutinized and examined.<sup>13</sup>

This chapter will focus on the texts carrying the decisions made during the councils of 816-819. Instead of explaining the nature of these decisions themselves and their place in the ecclesiastical thought of the Carolingians, however, it will approach them as the end of lengthy deliberations, or even as midway points in a debate that the participants knew had not ended when the council was over.<sup>14</sup> Conciliar acts or capitularies should not just be seen

10 Firey, *A Contrite Heart*, p. 180; Mostert, "...but they pray badly using corrected books", pp. 112-113; Ullmann, *Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 4-8.

11 McKitterick, *History and Memory*, p. 118; Van Espelo, 'A testimony of Carolingian rule?'

12 Smith, "Emending evil ways", p. 211: 'Certainly, *correctio* was at the heart of the Carolingian royal vision of society, but early medieval religious politics did not neatly divide elite from popular, clerical from lay, or court from country. Rather, *correctio* provided a vocabulary, a repertoire of norms, and an array of procedures from which a wide range of individuals and institutions could appropriate whichever elements each cared to select.'

13 *Consuetudines* in the more general sense of non-codified 'legal' customs also underwent a transformation in the wake of Carolingian imperial aspirations. This should not be taken as an early iteration of a common law system, but as an ongoing attempt to adapt Roman legal traditions to the needs of Carolingian politics: Lupoi, *The Origins*, pp. 396-413.

14 Kramer, 'Order in the Church'.

as an impulse to improve the Church (which they certainly were), but, as this chapter will show, they were part of a process in motion. Thus, I will first analyse five councils organized simultaneously under Charlemagne in 813, focusing specifically on the justifications given by the participants for doing what they were doing. These show that they were indeed self-consciously engaging in a dialogue with their peers and their superiors, while improving the Church under their responsibility at the same time. Moving on to Aachen in 816, the second part of this chapter will focus mainly on the *Institutio Canoniorum*, arguably the most important text to emerge from the deliberations held there. Long taken to be a series of measures aimed specifically at the institution of canonical communities, I will show how this text, too, reflects the holistic approach taken to Church reforms by the Carolingian elites.

These texts and councils were not merely part of a concerted effort to remedy persisting problems within the *ecclesia*. Instead, they should also be seen as a reflection on a 'system' as it was developed and implemented. This was a discourse community that rested on the precarious balance between the court on the one hand, and the monastic and canonical communities that were being reformed on the other. Additionally, studying this development through the two-way mirror of this particular set of source material has the advantage – or complication – of demonstrating how worldly rulers, bishops and abbots were each marking out their own territory, while simultaneously showing how religious communities found their particular place in the Carolingian *ecclesia*. They had to reconsider their position in the light of the new ecclesiastical landscape, and renegotiate their position vis-à-vis bishops and rulers in the process. Meanwhile, both the abbots and the bishops involved in these debates were once again reflecting upon themselves as much as on the world around them. Recording the interaction between court and clergy thus became a way of ordering society in and of itself.<sup>15</sup>

### The Road to 813

Councils had long been a staple of Frankish 'political theology', serving both as a counterweight and to support the idea that ministerial kingship was a divinely ordained regal birthright (or: duty) given to the king,

15 McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*, pp. 27–28.

who channelled the power of God in the world.<sup>16</sup> The pastoral power of councils derived from the notion that they represented God's will by presenting the decisions made as the product of the prelates acting in perfect concord.<sup>17</sup> According to the Carolingians, episcopal councils held the highest position in the ecclesiastical organization.<sup>18</sup> The judgement reached by assemblies of high-ranking members of the clergy would generally be accepted by other interested parties as well, even though it was determined that these bishops were, in turn, subject to the 'authority and doctrine' of the archbishops presiding over them.<sup>19</sup> Consensus achieved at a council counted as an indication that a decision had been the right one.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, a lot of effort was put into the establishment of this consensus: it was vital that everybody present felt entitled to make his voice heard without the risk of repercussions, all were clearly aware of the impact of their decisions.<sup>21</sup>

The question remained to what extent the decisions cast during such councils bound the ruler by virtue of being consensual.<sup>22</sup> After all, participants were aware that the results were a product of delicate negotiations between various holders of *ministerium* – the set of pastoral responsibilities with which everyone in a position of authority would have been burdened.<sup>23</sup> The relation between rulership, council and consensus was itself the subject of debate in the time of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious.<sup>24</sup> As courtiers tried to figure out the boundaries of acceptable behaviour at the centre of the *imperium*, the precise roles of councils and councillors still needed to

16 Noble, 'Secular sanctity'; according to Mostert, *Political Theology*, p. 19, political theology is not always evident, but often consists of an 'imaginary text'. Cf. Sullivan, 'Context of cultural activity', pp. 66-67. Halfond, *Archaeology*, pp. 1-31, provides a clear overview of the institution of councils before the rise of the Carolingians.

17 See, for example, Nelson, 'Law and its applications', pp. 308-309 and pp. 315-316; De Jong, *Ecclesia and the early medieval polity*, pp. 123-128.

18 Morrison, *Two Kingdoms*, pp. 68-98.

19 Chazelle, 'Archbishops Ebo and Hincmar of Reims', pp. 1063-1064. Recently, Pangerl, *Metropolitanverfassung*, has done one of the first in-depth studies of the re-emergence of the metropolitan system in a long time, arguing that this development was due largely to the vision of Charlemagne (and to a lesser extent a consequence of a drive for self-regulation). While the influence of the ruler should not be underestimated, this book will work from the assumption that there was as much cooperation between the ecclesiastical elites as obedience to the king.

20 Oehler, *Consensus omnium*; Nelson, 'Kingship and empire', pp. 211-212.

21 Kramer, 'Order in the Church'.

22 Apsner, *Vertrag und Konsens*, pp. 90-128.

23 Sassier, 'Représentation, délégation, *ministerium*'; Stone, *Morality and Masculinity*, pp. 58-63; Pössel, 'Authors and recipients', p. 274.

24 Suchan, 'Kirchenpolitik', pp. 23-24.

be defined.<sup>25</sup> The sources studied in this chapter are themselves part of the ongoing development of what has been termed ‘consensual rulership’.<sup>26</sup> In spite of the insistence in many narratives that the outcome had been established ‘with one voice’ (*una voce*), this should not be taken as an end to the debate. Doing something *una voce* carried connotations of liturgical unity and ‘harmonious concordance’: working together towards a common goal.<sup>27</sup> It gave extra liturgical weight to agreements reached by a collective, as during the Council of Frankfurt in 794, or the Council of Coulainnes of 843, but could also be used to show how linguistic differences were overcome to create understanding among participants, as happened at the Synod of Whitby of 664.<sup>28</sup> Even the unanimity presented in conciliar acts thus represents the complex interdependence needed to keep the various parts making up the *ecclesia* moving forward.<sup>29</sup> It thus stands to reason that Charlemagne, Louis the Pious and their entourage would regard such meetings as being vital to the credibility of their reign, and indeed saw them as contributing to its resilience.

The Carolingians had learned from the best. They were placed in a long tradition that reached back centuries, at least to the precedent set by Constantine the Great when he presided over the Council of Nicaea in 325. The memory of his involvement of ecclesiastical affairs, carefully cultivated by subsequent observers, set the stage for the development of a ‘western’ Christian ideology that, as far as the Carolingians were concerned, also involved the Merovingians and their Visigoth neighbours in the centuries that followed.<sup>30</sup> What is interesting here is that the Carolingians would often highlight not only imperial power, but also the importance of cooperation between the various moving parts of the realm. For instance, in a Carolingian forgery purporting to go back to the sixth century, the foundation of Saint-Maurice-d’Agaune is staged as a dialogue between Sigismund and a

25 Nelson, ‘Intellectual in politics’.

26 On the concept of ‘consensual rulership’, see Schneidmüller, ‘Konsensuale Herrschaft’; cf. Patzold, ‘Konsens und Konkurrenz’, pp. 77-88, for a late-ninth-century case study on the difficulties posed by this arrangement.

27 Rankin, ‘Carolingian music’, p. 278; Morrison, ‘Know thyself’.

28 Council of Coulainnes, praefatio, ed. Hartmann, *MGH Concilia* 3, p. 15. On the Synod of Whitby, see Hall, ‘Interlinguistic communication’, pp. 45-46.

29 Patzold, *Episcopus*, pp. 72-73; Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, pp. 51-64. Reuter, “Kirchenreform” und “Kirchenpolitik”, pp. 50-58; Staab, ‘*Rudi populo rudis adhuc presul*’, pp. 261-268; Airlie, ‘Frankish aristocracy’.

30 Van Renswoude and Raaijmakers, ‘Ruler as referee’; De Jong, ‘Charlemagne’s Church’, pp. 108-109.



group of bishops at a council.<sup>31</sup> During the Adoptionist controversy, a late-eighth-century Christological debate between Frankish bishops and their colleagues in Umayyad-occupied Spain, the legacy of Constantine was used by both parties not to argue about obedience to imperial rule, but rather to highlight the dangers of doing so blindly.<sup>32</sup> An agreement existed on both sides of the Pyrenees that Constantine had perhaps been too authoritarian, which had caused as much harm as good for the Church.<sup>33</sup>

The so-called *Concilium Germanicum* of 742-743, the first major council organized under the authority of the Carolingian family and their ally, the English monk Boniface, shows how this mentality had already taken root before the Carolingians took power.<sup>34</sup> While this council is notable for being the first to explicate that 'monks and nuns should strive to order their world and to live according to the Rule of Saint Benedict', it is equally noteworthy for the insistence that secular and ecclesiastical authority join forces.<sup>35</sup> According to the prologue, the goal of the council was to advise Karloman, Pippin's brother. Karloman, in turn, was presented as having taken the initiative for this gathering. As a first order of business, it was decided that:

A council was to convene each year, so that in our [Karloman's] presence, the canons and rights of the Church may be restored, and the Christian way of life may be improved.<sup>36</sup>

Keeping in mind that the *Concilium Germanicum* was as much the brain child of Boniface as it was of his Carolingian sponsors, the description within the council document of the '*dux* and *princeps* of the Franks' working with the 'best of my bishops, who are under my rule' already shows that reforms depended on the close and wilful cooperation between all parties.<sup>37</sup>

If council *acta* convey this image, the same went for the many capitularies that were promulgated from the court during the reigns of Charlemagne

31 Rosenwein, 'One site, many meanings', pp. 285-290; Diem, 'Who is allowed to pray for the king?', pp. 51-52.

32 On this controversy, see Cavadini, *Last Christology*; Close, *Uniformiser la Foi*, pp. 19-138.

33 Kramer, 'Adopt, adapt and improve'; Pohl, 'Creating cultural resources'.

34 Von Padberg, *Bonifatius*, pp. 53-70, esp. pp. 65-69; Hartmann, *Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, pp. 50-53.

35 *Concilium Germanicum*, c. 7, p. 4: 'Et ut monachi et ancille Dei monasteriales iuxta regulam sancti Benedicti ordinare et vivere, vitam propriam gubernare studeant'.

36 *Concilium Germanicum*, c. 1, p. 3: 'Statuimus per annos singulos synodum congregare, ut nobis presentibus canonum decreta et aecclesiae iura restaurentur, et relegio Christiana emendetur'.

37 *Concilium Germanicum*, Prologue, p. 2: 'Ego Karlmannus, dux et princeps Francorum [...] cum consilio servorum Dei et optimatum meorum episcopos qui in regno meo sunt'.

and Louis the Pious.<sup>38</sup> In addition to their supposedly legislative functions, these widely disseminated lists of *capitula* served to show how the court had to come to terms, time and again, with its position in the eye of the proverbial storm.<sup>39</sup> Although their role in the transmission of royal or imperial legislation cannot be underestimated, they provided an equally visible reflection of consensus and cooperation among the elite. This in turn made them powerful tools for extending and strengthening the social identity of their recipients, and, by implication, the social power of the ruler who was ultimately responsible for their contents.<sup>40</sup> Regardless of how far away the court might be, these documents served as a ‘reflection of the realities of power’ to their recipients.<sup>41</sup> These realities were either welcomed or resented, but always acknowledged.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, even famously programmatic texts like the *Admonitio Generalis* of 789 or the *Epistola de Litteris Colendis*, composed in the 790s, emphasize the reciprocal responsibility between bearers of authority and their subordinates in terms echoing the relation between teacher and student.<sup>43</sup> With its focus on a correct use of language, the *Epistola de Litteris Colendis*, the only extant copy of which was written to Abbot Baugulf of Fulda, started by positing that ‘it is better to do what is good than to know it, yet knowing comes before doing’, and finished by stating how the advantage of such exemplary knowledge is that others dwelling in the presence of learned men may be ‘edified [...] by [their] appearance’.<sup>44</sup> In the *Admonitio Generalis*, much more overtly concerned with

38 On the difficulties connected with the conceptualization of ‘capitularies’, see Patzold, ‘Normen im Buch’.

39 McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*, pp. 27–37.

40 Pössel, ‘Authors and recipients’, pp. 270–274, introduces the concept of ‘social identity’. Cf. Gravel, *Distances, Recontres*, pp. 108–110. A contrary opinion, mentioned by Pössel, is voiced by Hannig, who – based, according to Pössel, on an ‘older conceptualization of ruler and aristocracy as necessarily opposed’ – argues that the capitularies actually show the existence of an ‘ideological warfare’ between the emperor and his nobility instead of seeing them as building an identity; Hannig, *Consensus fidelium*.

41 Pössel, ‘Authors and recipients’, p. 270.

42 Nelson, ‘Dispute settlement’, pp. 46–48.

43 Martin, ‘Remarks on the *Epistola de litteris colendis*’; Mordek et al., *Die Admonitio Generalis*, pp. 1–63; generally, see Contreni, ‘Pursuit of knowledge’.

44 *Epistola de Litteris Colendis*, p. 251: ‘Quamvis enim melius sit bene facere quam nosse, prius tamen est nosse quam facere. [...] Optamus enim vos, sicut decet ecclesiae milites, et interius devotos et exterius doctos castosque bene vivendo et scholasticos bene loquendo, ut, quicumque vos propter nomen Domini et sanctae conversationis nobilitatem ad vivendum expetierit, sicut de aspectu vestro aedificatur visus, ita quoque de spaientia vestra, quam in legendo seu cantando perceperit, instructus omnipotenti Domino gratias agendo gaudens valeat’; trans. King, *Translated Sources*, pp. 232–233.

reforms, this point was made explicitly, not only through the comparisons drawn between Charlemagne and his Old Testament predecessors, but also when its audience is told, in the closing statement of the prologue:

Do not omit, and thereby fail to preach with pious zeal, anything which seems to your holiness advantageous to the people of God, that almighty God may reward both your sagacity and the obedience of your subjects with eternal felicity.<sup>45</sup>

The *Admonitio Generalis* moreover exemplifies the difficult relation between self-conscious idealization and subsequent interpretation. Written in the name of Charlemagne, the text itself was co-authored by, among others, Alcuin and Theodulf. Indeed, it may have been due to their influence that the text was intended as constructive criticism, not as law per se.<sup>46</sup> It had to, in order to deal with the discrepancy between ideals of a Christian, Frankish identity as they existed among the Carolingian intellectual elites on the one hand, and the reality of small worlds and permeable local identities on the other.<sup>47</sup> The court seemed to have been aware that the impetus provided by the *Admonitio Generalis* might lead to wildly different reactions across the realm.<sup>48</sup> As such, it is a cautious document, in which Charlemagne spent quite some time justifying his request that:

The pastors of Christ's churches and leaders of His flock and brightest luminaries of the world, strive with vigilant care and sedulous admonition to lead the people of God to the pastures of eternal life.<sup>49</sup>

45 *Admonitio Generalis*, Prologus, p. 184: 'Nec aliquid, quod vestrae sanctitati populo Dei utile videatur, omittit ut pio studio non ammoneatis, quatenus ut et vestra sollertia et subjectorum oboedientia aeterna felicitate ab omnipotente Deo remuneretur'; trans. King, *Translated Sources*, p. 210.

46 Scheibe, 'Alcuin', and most recently Mordek et al., *Die Admonitio Generalis*, pp. 47-63. Ling, *Cloister and Beyond*, pp. 113-120, also posits that Angilramn of Metz (d. 791) may have been involved in the composition of this text.

47 On the one hand, see Reimitz, 'Omnis Franci'; on the other, see, for example, Davies, *Small Worlds* or the contributions to Patzold and Van Rhijn, *Men in the Middle*. Generally, see also, for example, Prinz, 'Kirchen und Klöster', who on p. 788 ends his analysis of the interaction between courtly and intellectual activities with the 'bange und bis heute aktuelle Frage, ob und wieweit sich der geistige Mensch, der Intellektuelle, für handfeste Zwecke der Politik – hier der Kirchenpolitik – einspannen lassen darf' ('the anxious and still-current question, to which extent spiritual people, intellectuals, should even be roped into pursuing concrete political goals – in this case ecclesiastical politics').

48 This it did: Van Rhijn, 'Manuscripts for local priests'; Patzold, 'Pater noster'.

49 *Admonitio Generalis*, Praefatio, p. 180: 'quapropter placuit nobis vestram rogare solertiam, o pastores ecclesiarum Christi et ductores gregis eius et clarissima mundi luminaria, ut vigili

The king's struggles were even compared with those of his Old Testament forebear Josiah in the process – an addition probably made at the instigation of Theodulf.<sup>50</sup> It was a bold yet careful statement, which in itself indicated that Charlemagne wanted to present his efforts as being about more than tearing down old structures to build them up again.<sup>51</sup>

Often considered a starting point of the Carolingian reforms, the *Admonitio Generalis* actually 'needs to be seen in the context of the succession of increasingly elaborate statements about the integration of the Christian faith within the institutional and political framework of the Frankish realm'.<sup>52</sup> It was part of the efforts by the court to bind its subjects with ideals of loyalty and a shared responsibility for the fate of the *ecclesia*, which had become increasingly convincing at the same time. Conversely, admonitions by the king should be taken very seriously, but not because they were ordered: they should be heeded because it was the right thing to do, and the state of the Church required it. A similar sentiment underlies many other texts connected with Carolingian *correctio*. Theodulf of Orléans, for example, in his *De Ordine Baptismi*, composed in response to a questionnaire on baptismal practices sent around from the court in 812, applauded that particular imperial initiative. He assumed that:

These questions, meanwhile, [...] have not only been learned by the royal highness because of the need to learn, but also because they endeavour to teach.<sup>53</sup>

His colleague Leidrad of Lyon echoed this praise in the closing sentence of his response to the same questions about baptism, thanking the emperor for inciting the bishops to think about what they teach their flocks, 'to get rid of our mental turpitude and inciting us to do holy works'.<sup>54</sup> Both accepted

cura et sedula ammonitione populum Dei ad pascua vitae aeternae ducere studeatis'; trans. King, *Translated Sources*, p. 209.

50 Rosé, 'Le roi Josias'; Airlie, "For it is written in the law", pp. 229-230; Bullough, *Alcuin*, pp. 379-381.

51 De Jong, 'Charlemagne's Church', pp. 115-116.

52 McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 239-240.

53 Theodulf, *De Ordine Baptismi*, p. 281: 'Quaestiones interea iste, ut ego te nosse certus sum, a regali celsitudine non sunt factae necessitate discendi, sed studio docendi'. For the general context of this questionnaire, see McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 299-311, and the first volume of Keefe, *Water and the Word*.

54 Leidrad, *Liber de Sacramento Baptismi*, p. 384: 'Ecce haec iuxta sensus nostri ad interrogata respondimus breviter, significantes quomodo plebem nostram doceamus, et ea quam docemus, qualiter nos ipsi custodiamus. Nunc autem maximes vobis referimus gratias, constantissime et

the role of the ruler in such educational endeavours. As Theodulf explained in his response, this was the right order of things. He acknowledged that the point of this inquiry was neither to teach the emperor about proper baptismal rites, nor to uniformize them afterwards, but to force bishops to think about this issue – just like the emperor should encourage all his subjects to do their proper work.<sup>55</sup> In return, the bishops were made aware of their responsibility to teach their subordinates, further strengthening the structure of Carolingian governance by ensuring the ‘bottlenecks of local *correctio*’ would never get clogged.<sup>56</sup> From an episcopal point of view, responsibility for the flock should idealistically entail responsibility for everybody within the *ecclesia*, but these aspirations were tempered by a pragmatic realism that allowed people to perform their duties.

No matter how succinctly formulated, behind every set of capitularies or conciliar acts lurked lengthy deliberations, which more often than not incorporated input from all parts of the empire. It was acknowledged in the time of Charlemagne that these deliberations were as important as the legislation that emerged as a result, if not more so – and that any initiative taken by the court was bound to set new developments in motion.<sup>57</sup> Intellectual elites thrived on discussions and debates as long as these were arbitrated by a well-informed court, and the court, in turn, welcomed well-intentioned counter-initiatives as long as they stayed within the bounds of orthodoxy.<sup>58</sup> The insistence on unanimity notwithstanding, cooperation between court and clergy needed constant reinforcement, and in spite of an increased reliance on the written word as a permanent record of things to come, a degree of flexibility and openness would be expected on all sides.<sup>59</sup>

The Carolingian model of rulership as it shines through in such texts was one in which cooperation and ideological unity were of the utmost importance. As the scale at which the Carolingian court operated grew ever since their first attempts at regulating the Church with the help of Boniface, their self-confidence had grown to the extent that the discourse community now worked to improve the *ecclesia* by addressing issues in a highly self-reflective manner. With this, the stakes increased accordingly.

gloriosissime imperator, semper felix, optime, auguste, qui nos pia vestra sollicitudine tanquam dormientes excitatis, et torporem mentis nostrae excutitis, et ad sanctum exercitum provocatis’.

55 Theodulf, *De Ordini Baptismi*, ed. Keefe, *Water and the Word* 2, p. 281.

56 Van Rhijn, ‘Priests and the Carolingian reforms’.

57 Airlie, ‘Talking heads’; Noble, ‘Secular sanctity’, p. 26; McKitterick, ‘The Church’, pp. 153-154.

58 Nelson, *Opposition*, p. 25; Van Renswoude and Kramer, ‘Dissens, Debatte und Diskurs’.

59 Collins, ‘Charlemagne and his critics’; Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 283-284.

While this might be construed as reflecting an increased centralization of the *ecclesia*, it may not have felt as such to contemporary observers. The baptismal inquiry did not result in new 'rules' that were propagated from the court, for instance. Rather, it shows willingness on the part of both the court and the high clergy to rethink a fundamental aspect of their religion, and in the process self-reflexively renegotiate their position in the world, the empire, and the *ecclesia*.

One of the most visible instances of this dynamic process occurred in the year 813. It was last year of Charlemagne's reign, as well as the year Louis was crowned co-emperor, and acclaimed as the officially recognized heir by the elites witnessing the event.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, 813 saw the organization of no less than five synods held simultaneously throughout the realm, called together by the emperor with the purpose of identifying points for the improvement of the *ecclesia*.<sup>61</sup> Charlemagne may even have seized this project to pass the torch to his son, and to present him with a clear jumping-off point for his own reign. Shortly after Louis' arrival in Aachen, he rekindled the negotiations that had started in the wake of his coronation. More councils were organized almost immediately, although this time around they were held at the palace itself, under the auspicious eye of the ruler, and they resulted most visibly in a massive canonical compilation known as the *Institutio Canoniorum*.

The next section will take a closer look at these five councils and the representations of rulership and authority contained in their prologues. Having done that, these findings will be put next to the self-perception contained in the *Institutio Canoniorum*, which will allow us to see how ideas about bishops and abbots differed between the more localized councils of 813 and the all-encompassing text that was produced over the five years that followed. The sources pertaining to this process provide a snapshot of the ecclesiastical elites in the middle of a debate. Their goal was not only to come up with new regulations, but also to redefine their role within society. This involved justifying both their episcopal authority and their clerical obedience to the leaders of the *ecclesia*: the framing of the councils of 813 forced emperor and episcopate alike to rethink their world, their history, and their expectations.<sup>62</sup>

60 In addition to the sources discussed below, see Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 30, pp. 34-35.

61 Generally, see Hartmann, *Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, pp. 129-140.

62 Nelson, 'Kingship and empire'; De Jong, '*Sacrum palatium*', p. 1256, and Nelson, 'Aachen as a place of power', p. 233.

## Teaching the Empire

Judging by the report in the *Annales Regni Francorum* (*ARF*), the year 813 was all about stability for the Carolingians. While wars and unrest plagued neighbouring kingdoms, Charlemagne consolidated the peace with his East Roman counterpart Michael, and also with the kings of the Danes to the north.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, he held an assembly in Aachen where he elevated his surviving son Louis to the position of co-emperor, and had a collection made of the canons gathered in five regional councils organized earlier that year, in Reims, Tours, Mainz, Chalon-sur-Saône, and Arles.

The order in which these events have been presented in the *ARF* is noteworthy. Firstly, the report is bookended with affairs in Byzantium. In the ‘mild spring’, peace with the Byzantine empire was ratified, ending the long process of recognition by the East Romans.<sup>64</sup> Then, Louis is called to the palace, and Charlemagne ‘shared the title of emperor with him’, while simultaneously making Louis’ nephew Bernard, king of Italy.<sup>65</sup> Only then the *ARF* mention the five councils ‘held on his order [...] to improve the condition of the churches [*statu ecclesiarum corrigendo*]’. They are only mentioned in the context of their collected conclusions, which were presented to Charlemagne, in autumn. The *ARF* notes that a copy was kept in the archives of the palace, and ends with the statement that the canons themselves may be found in the cities where the councils had been held. It is clear that the general assembly and Louis’ coronation were the focal point of this episode, and the five councils were only mentioned as part of the preparations for the assembly in September.

This presentation differs from another near-contemporary source, the so-called *Chronicon Moissiacense* (*CM*), an enigmatic universal chronicle that was most probably composed in the south of Francia in the course of the 820s. For the events of 813, this composition maintains a different order from the one presented in the *ARF*. First, the text tells of a *concilium magnum*

63 McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 127-129; Smith, ‘*Fines imperii*’, pp. 171-172.

64 *ARF*, a. 813, p. 137.

65 *ARF*, a. 813, p. 138: ‘Ac deinde habito generali conventu, evocatum ad se apud Aquasgrani filium suum Hludowicum Aquitaniae regem, coronam illi inposuit et imperialis nominis sibi consortem fecit; Bernhardumque nepotem suum, filium Pippini filii sui, Italiae praefecit et regem appellari iussit. Concilia quoque iussu eius super statu ecclesiarum corrigendo per totam Galliam ab episcopis celebrata sunt, quorum unum Mogontiaci, alterum Remis, tertium Turonis, quartum Cabillione, quintum Arelati congregatum est et constitutionum, quae in singulis factae sunt, collatio coram imperatore in illo conventu habita. Quas qui nosse voluerit, in supradictis quinque civitatibus invenire poterit, quamquam et in archivo palatii exemplaria illarum habeantur’. See also Depreux, ‘Königtum’.

held in Aachen ‘with the Franks’, during which the decision was made to organize four councils (this version omits the council of Chalon-sur-Saône for reasons unclear) ‘and he ordered that whatever they determined at these synods, they would report at a *placitum* organized by the emperor’.<sup>66</sup> The text then relates how in September, a great assembly of the *populus* was held at the palace, during which a group of prelates presented Charlemagne with ‘46 articles concerning matters of necessity to God’s church and the Christian people’. Only after this has happened is Louis’ succession decided, and acclaimed immediately afterwards.<sup>67</sup>

The context of Louis’ coronation in 813 has been explained elsewhere in greater detail, achieved by combining and distilling the extant source material into one coherent narrative.<sup>68</sup> It is equally interesting to note, however, that the placement of these councils in the respective chronicles reflects the overarching writing goals of both texts, and shows different ways to interpret this series of fortunate events. For the composers of the *ARF*, it was important to show to the audience how the Carolingian dynasty would continue without a hitch, and how the appointment of a successor happened around the same time the ecclesiastical reforms were given new impetus.<sup>69</sup> As this passage was probably composed after Charlemagne’s death, shortly afterwards, the author(s) of the *ARF* could have chosen this framing device to show how the new emperor not only had the support of his subjects, but was also given the tools – and the advisers – to continue the works started by his father.<sup>70</sup> The composer of the *CM*, on the other hand, separated the councils from the coronation and thereby made a distinction between the dynastic affairs of the Carolingians and the greater concerns of the *ecclesia* for which they were responsible.<sup>71</sup> For that reason, the *CM* first wraps up the councils and the articles of improvement produced there before telling of Louis’ coronation, whereas the *ARF* shows the entanglement between these two developments.

66 *Chronicon Moissiacense (CM)*, a. 813 p. 145: ‘Hoc anno sedit piissimus Karolus imperator apud Aquis palatium et habuit ibi consilium magnum cum Francis et decrevit quatuor synodos fieri, id est ad Magoncia civitatae unum, alterum in Remis, tertium Turonis, quartum Arelato civitate. Mandavitque ut, quicquid in unum quemquem synodum definissent, ad placitum constituti imperatori renunciassent. Quod ita factum est’.

67 *CM*, a. 813, p. 146.

68 Davis, *Charlemagne’s Practice of Empire*, pp. 252-259 and pp. 372-377; Kasten, *Königssöhne*, pp. 162-165.

69 See, generally, McKitterick, ‘Constructing the past’.

70 On the composition of the *ARF*, see among others McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 27-49.

71 Kats and Claszen, *Chronicon Moissiacense Maius*, vol. 1, p. 86.



Both of these versions highlight the important point that, although the councils were presented as a major overhaul of the Carolingian *ecclesia*, their conclusions were presented as advice to the court; the result of local deliberations framed as proposals for the court to take into account. At each meeting, local power brokers had set out to respond to the emperor's call from their own perspective, expressing their local concerns in such a way that they would resonate at the highest level.<sup>72</sup> It is assumed that they were implemented as part of an empire-wide programme of reform, but interestingly, this is never explicitly stated, as if the chroniclers thought it more important to show how the empire was involved in the education of the new emperor than to dwell on the importance of these councils for the 'reforms' they represent.<sup>73</sup> This affects our reading of the written records of these five councils. The overlaps and differences between them are not merely reflective of programmatic imperial concerns, but local interpretations of a common set of questions, which moreover served to rally local elites to a Carolingian cause.<sup>74</sup> By actively engaging them in the debate on the future of the empire, the court required the councils to speak the same language: the language of *correctio*.

Two capitularies from 811 indicate that this was a project long in the making.<sup>75</sup> As 'briefing papers for participants in an upcoming assembly', these two texts may give an indication of what Charlemagne wanted to achieve, which would in turn give a sense of purpose and direction to the participants in these five councils.<sup>76</sup> It is as yet unclear whether these capitularies indeed set the agenda for the councils of 813, or if they should be understood as a courtly expression of interest in separating the secular and ecclesiastical spheres of interest.<sup>77</sup> Many of the points raised in these two documents had not yet been made as explicitly as they were here, and many of these points recur in the conciliar *acta* of 813.<sup>78</sup> Regardless of their connection to any identifiable council, however, these capitularies show a court intent on formulating questions as well as obtaining answers. These were documents meant to engender debate, which in turn were hoped to

72 Schmitz, 'Reformkonzilien', p. 3.

73 It nevertheless was assumed by Ganshof, 'Note', that Charlemagne sent out an agenda in preparation for these councils (an idea that should not wholly be discounted). Cf. Patzold, *Episcopus*, pp. 74-80, who argues against the 'decomposition' postulated earlier by Ganshof, 'La fin du règne', but sees in these councils a sign of continuing vitality.

74 Schmitz, 'Reformkonzilien', p. 2.

75 *Capitula Tractanda cum Comitibus Episcopis et Abbatibus* and *Capitula de Causis cum Episcopis et Abbatibus Tractandis*.

76 Nelson, 'Voice of Charlemagne', p. 81.

77 Patzold, *Episcopus*, pp. 75-77.

78 Nelson, 'Voice of Charlemagne', pp. 84-85.

yield useful advice. The participants lived up to the expectations. Looking at the prologues of the *acta* from Arles, Reims, Mainz, Chalon-sur-Saône, and Tours, it becomes clear that they have all been framed as reactions to a laudable initiative, similar to the responses to Charlemagne's baptismal inquiry rites the year before.<sup>79</sup>

The *acta* of the Council of Arles open with a short sermon-like text in which those present implore God to grant Charlemagne, 'at whose command our brotherhood has assented to this meeting', stability, justice, and the ability to benignly rule the *populus*.<sup>80</sup> This introduction is followed by a speech by the archbishops Nibridius of Narbonne and John of Arles, in which they explain that the emperor, a 'disciple and supporter of Christ [...] observing that evil is acting against him', wished for the 'churches who support his reign' to 'instruct the pious through preaching, furnish [them] with saintly morals, and build [them] with the example of blessed lives'.<sup>81</sup> Thus, they continue, he has asked all episcopal centres to pray for him, and to help the 'multiplicity of the Church of God' to unanimously help 'protect against the ancient enemy'.<sup>82</sup> The gathered clergy were happy to oblige and provided him with a number of *capitula* to assist everybody in the world in walking the 'road to salvation'.<sup>83</sup> If it was not enough, they add in closing, he could freely add more to it, and whatever was deemed reasonable he could use to 'bring about divine clemency'.<sup>84</sup>

79 See Guyotjeannin, "Antiqua et authentica", pp. 11-14, on the usefulness of *topoi* in prologues as historical sources.

80 *Concilium Arelatense*, Prologus, p. 248: 'serenissimum ac religiosissimum praedictum domnum nostrum Karolum imperatorem, cuius iussu fraternitatis nostrae coctus est adunatus'.

81 *Concilium Arelatense*, Prologus, p. 249: 'gloriosissimus etenim ac serenissimus domnus noster [...] verus Christi discipulus et imitator, ecclesiae Dei statum vigili instantia roborare disponit [...] maligna contra se observatione agentibus animi libertate gratissima ac pie miserationis instantia ignoscere consuevit, ut qui in diversis sanctae vitae studiis sese exercendo praepollet atque omnibus Dei sacerdotibus obsecrans et obtestans, ut ecclesias, quas regendas susceperunt, pia praedicatione instruant, moribus sanctis exornent ac beatae vitae exemplis aedificent'. On John of Arles and Nibridius of Narbonne, see Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 274-275 and pp. 123-125.

82 *Concilium Arelatense*, Prologus, p. 249: 'Quocirca quoniam pro tot tantisque beneficiis, quae multimoda devotione ecclesiae Dei vel gentibus praerogare studet, quid illi unanimitas nostra condigne respondeat [...] ut suae potentiae defensione protecti antiqui histis decipulam evadant'.

83 *Concilium Arelatense*, Prologus, p. 249: 'Et quia initiandis ab beatam vitam hominibus haec prima semper est via salutis praevia quoque nostris et institutis pariter et praeceptis, quae per veram credulitatem in omni terrarum orbe diffusa expanditur, nostrae collationis eloquii praedicetur'.

84 *Concilium Arelatense*, Explicit, p. 253: 'Haec igitur sub brevitate, quae emendatione digna perspeximus, quam brevissime adnotavimus et domno imperatori praesentanda decrevimus, poscentes eius clementiam, ut, si quid hic minus est, eius prudentia suppleatur, si quid secus

Incorporating this speech into the *acta* was deliberate. Its opening has been lifted from chapter 8 of the Sixteenth Council of Toledo (693), which dealt with the responsibility borne by the people in the realms to protect the offspring of the king. In the Council of Arles, the parts relating to these children have been taken out, so that it is now about the protection of the *ecclesia* as a whole.<sup>85</sup> Even though that particular intertextual reference may have been lost on their audience in Aachen, the southern bishops may have seen the subjects of the ruler as his 'children', or they may have had Louis in mind, who was still their king in 813, even though he was in Aachen being prepared for the empire when they composed their text.<sup>86</sup> As Louis was getting ready for his coronation, he probably received a crash course on how to run an empire.<sup>87</sup> Could the bishops gathered in Arles be showing their approval of the new emperor, and help him along the way? It is tempting to think that they, the ones who had seen Louis grow into his role as king of Aquitaine, felt responsible for his well-being and that of the realms in general.

The remaining conciliar *acta* also signalled that they were friendly to Charlemagne's initiative and intend to give advice, not prescriptions. The bishops in Reims were 'gathered by Lord Charles the pious *Caesar* after the custom of the emperors of old', and presented the result of their deliberations for his consideration, 'for the *correctio* of all the Christians in the empire'.<sup>88</sup> That this was done, they add, 'according to the *consuetudines* established by the venerable fathers', served first and foremost to assure the emperor that they were doing everything according to plan.<sup>89</sup> It also showed that they tapped into a further key aspect of Carolingian cultural efforts: the insistence that these activities stood in a venerable tradition.<sup>90</sup> The *acta* of

quam se ratio habet, eius iudicio emendetur, si quid rationabiliter taxatum est, eius adiutorio divina opitulante clementia perficiatur'.

85 *Concilium Toletanum Decimum Sextum*, cap. 8 (De munimine prolis regiae), pp. 574-575.

86 Wolff, 'L'Aquitaine et ses marges', pp. 32-47; Geary, *Aristocracy in Provence*; Boshof, *Ludwiger Fromme*, pp. 28-36.

87 De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 14-19; Kasten, *Königssöhne*, pp. 220-223.

88 *Concilium Remense*, Prologus, p. 254: 'Hic est ordo capitulorum breviter adnotatus, quae [...] notata sunt in conventu metropolitanae sedis Remensis ecclesiae a domno Karolo piissimo Caesare more priscorum imperatorum congregato [...] ad laudem et gloriam sui sancti nominis et ad mercedem praefati gloriosissimi principis nostri seu correctionem totius Christiani imperii in eo considerata vel statuenda erant, eo cooperante secundum suam magnam misericordiam et piissimam voluntatem ordinari mererentur'.

89 Halfond, *Archaeology*, pp. 87-89.

90 *Concilium Remense*, Prologus, p. 254: 'Primo omnium [...] statutum est secundum consuetudinem ieiunium triduanum'.

Mainz take the form of a letter to the court, and detail how those present, after a three-day fast, got together in the *claustrum* of the community of Saint Alban's to thank God that He had provided his Church with such a capable *rector*.<sup>91</sup> This time, we learn that the participants were divided into three groups: the bishops would study the Acts of the Apostles, the canons, and the works of Gregory the Great; the abbots and monks would read the *RB*, 'discussing [...] how the life of monks could be augmented'; and the 'counts and judges' would decide how to improve the *vulgi iusticia*.<sup>92</sup> Their conclusions were sent to Charlemagne to aid and educate him how to improve his 'imperial dignity, so that we all and all the Christian *plebes* would be bettered'.<sup>93</sup> The bishops in Chalon-sur-Saône simply started by saying that they convened the bishops and abbots of *Gallia Lugdunensis* 'in order to aid our Lord Jesus Christ and at the command of our most serene and glorious august Charles'.<sup>94</sup> The archaic geographical designation for the province possibly served to emphasize the point that, although they boasted a Roman past, they were nonetheless also part of the new empire.<sup>95</sup> Accepting Charlemagne's intermediary role, they gathered everything that might be improved, and 'presented them to the lord emperor for his most sacred judgement'.<sup>96</sup> These *acta* were unabashedly framed as recommendations based on hearsay (*Dictum nobis est...*), and are perhaps the most overt in presenting their ideas as recommendations: even the institution of the Sunday as a day of rest was left to the 'command [*imperium*] of the lord emperor'.<sup>97</sup> Finally, the text from Tours credited 'divine inspiration' first

91 *Concilium Moguntinense*, Prologus, p. 259: 'Christi consona voce gratias egimus Deo patri omnipotenti, quia sanctae ecclesiae suae tam pium ac devotum in servitio Dei concessit habere rectorem'. See also Hartmann, *Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, p. 130.

92 *Concilium Moguntinense*, Prologus, pp. 259-260.

93 *Concilium Moguntinense*, Prologus, p. 260: 'tamen vestra pietas ita dignum esse iudicaverit, et quicquid in eis emendatione dignum repperitur vestra magnifica imperialis dignitas iubeat emendare, ut ita emendata nobis omnibus et cunctae Christianae plebi ac posteris nostris proficiant ad vitam et salutem'.

94 *Concilium Cabillonense*, Prologus, p. 274: 'Auxiliante domino nostro Iesu Christo et imperante serenissimo atque inclito augusto Karolo convenimus episcopi et abbates totius Galliae Lugdunensis in urbem Caballonensem'.

95 The designation *Gallia Lugdunensis* for the region was rare in Carolingian sources. It occurs in Orosius, *Historiarum Libri VII*, lib. 1, cap. 2.64, and the so-called *Notitia Galliarum*, a popular text in early medieval episcopal circles: Harries, 'Church and state'. For the situation in Antiquity, see Goudineau, 'Les provinces de Gaule', pp. 161-170; on the endurance of the tradition, see Cowdrey, 'Structure of the Church', p. 240.

96 *Concilium Cabillonense*, Prologus, p. 274.

97 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 50, p. 283: 'ut authentica constitutione illius venerandi diei observatio iuxta imperium domni imperatoris statuatur'.

and foremost, relating how the emperor was inspired to spur his 'bishops, abbots and venerable clergy' into action; they congregated in Tours, and wrote several *capitula* on those things they thought could be emended 'according to the rules of the canons'.<sup>98</sup>

Far from being mere *humilitas topoi*, these prologues all accepted a certain model for empire: the emperor was inspired by God to improve the state of the *ecclesia*, and he in turn depended on his court to execute this office.<sup>99</sup> The prelates involved accepted their responsibility. Given that they were treating questions about the entire *ecclesia*, and that this was a work in progress, they deferred their conclusions back to a higher authority. That was the main goal. In addition to demonstrating different local concerns for and conceptualizations of Church reform, they all show a centralized negotiation in action: the emperor called, and the clergy answered.

Of the prologues, only the council of Mainz mentioned the laity, and explains that the monastic communities held their discussions in a separate forum. In Arles and Reims, on the other hand, no one category has been highlighted. The former talked of *fraternitas* in very general terms, whereas the latter mentioned the metropolitans supervising the synod. Only the texts from Chalon-sur-Saône and Tours mention that both *episcopi* and *abbates* were present. All texts nonetheless provide recommendations concerning the lives of monks and nuns, canons and priests alike, as well as the lives of their superiors, the bishops and abbots actually holding these deliberations. This introspection adds another dimension to the *acta*. These were bishops and abbots deciding on the lives of abbots and bishops, making recommendations to the imperial court about things they felt could be improved about their own behaviour. Although it was not clear to what extent their decisions would receive an empire-wide response, these councils represent the essence of Carolingian Church, namely *correctio* and *emendatio*: the clergy were in many ways correcting themselves – just the way the emperor expected it.<sup>100</sup>

98 *Concilium Turonense*, Prologus, p. 286: 'Quantum piissimi imperatoris nostri excellens animus divinae sapientiae fulgore sit irradiatus ad gubernandum praesentium rerum statum, ipsius imperii sibi a Deo dati liquido testantur negotia [...]. His igitur intentus pios aut religiosos Dei sacerdotes ecclesiae gubernacula in regno sibi divina largitate collatio tenentes saluberrimis exhortationibus admonuit, ut operam darent et actibus eminent, quibus et se bene opprando et sibi commissos verbis et exemplis instruendo regerent. [...] Sitquidem urbe Turonis congregati episcopi, abbates et venerabilis clerus pro parvitate nostra pauca, quae ad tantum opus pertinere animadvertimus et quae secundum canonicam regulam emendatione indigent, distincte per capitula adnotavimus, serenissimo imperatori nostro ostendenda'.

99 On *humilitas*, see, for example, Poulin, *L'Idéal de Sainteté*, pp. 81–98.

100 Cf. Schramm, 'Karl der Große', p. 336.

Although the self-reflective nature of these five councils was not unique, the combination with a pro-active stance with regards to Church reforms as a means of self-improvement is an interesting feature. Before 813, council *acta* usually presented themselves as collective reactions against immediate problems, such as the heterodox movements addressed at Frankfurt in 794 or at Aachen in 809.<sup>101</sup> Statements associated with individual *correctio*, on the other hand, are mostly found in capitularies issued in the name of the emperor.<sup>102</sup> In that way, the synods of 813 continue in the tradition of the councils from the time of Boniface, as these were also called together so as to simply 'give counsel to [the *princeps*] how the law of God and the ecclesiastical *religio* could be recuperated'.<sup>103</sup> In short, these *acta* combined the idealism of such capitularies as the *Admonitio Generalis* of 789 or the *Capitulare Missorum Generale* of 802 with the consensus inherent in the texts emanating from the earliest 'Carolingian' synods.<sup>104</sup> They were framed as pieces of advisory literature, the result of consensual decision-making, with a subtext of being royal or imperial orders.<sup>105</sup>

Apart from these ideological similarities contained in the prologues, each of the councils also retained its own character. Between the many recommendations about a potential centralized reform effort, they show the diversity still marking the Carolingian *ecclesia*.<sup>106</sup> The councils of 813 not only treated the question who ought to take the lead in these reforms, but also what was to be emended in the first place. Each prologue represents both an internal dialogue on local affairs and a dialogue with the *ecclesia* as a whole. Thus, each of the individual councils reflects on the relation between monasteries, episcopal courts and imperial ideals as well.

The congregation in Arles, in the south-east of the kingdom of Aquitaine, emphasized their Visigothic connections. The tone had been set by the use of the Sixteenth Council of Toledo, and it was continued when they cited the Fourth Council of Toledo in their advice on baptismal education

101 See also Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire*, pp. 252-253, on the possible Bavarian roots of this shift.

102 McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*, pp. 30-35.

103 *Concilium Germanicum*, Prologus, at 2: 'ut mihi consilium dedissent, quomodo lex Dei et aecclesiastica relegio recuperetur'; c. 1, at 3: 'ut nobis presentibus canonum decreta et aecclesiae iura restaurentur, et relegio Christialia emendetur'.

104 Innes, 'Charlemagne's government', esp. pp. 85-86.

105 Pössel, 'Authors and recipients', pp. 271-273.

106 Patzold, *Episcopus*, pp. 76-77.

and comital support to uphold priestly authority.<sup>107</sup> The bishops decided to further emphasize this heritage by employing a curious Iberian dating system of the *era*, which according to Isidore, was linked with the Roman conquest of the peninsula in 38 BC.<sup>108</sup> In the redrafted prologue of the Sixteenth Council of Toledo, the Council of Arles also recalculated the date without converting it to, for example, the better-known *annus Domini* system. Given as 730 in the Visigothic *acta*, this council was set in 'the forty-sixth year of our glorious and orthodox lord and prince, Emperor Charles, on the sixth day of the Ides of May, in the *era* 851'.<sup>109</sup> This attachment to Roman or even 'Visigothic' time may have reinforced the idea that these bishops, in spite of their heritage, were part of an empire that had already been unified under the first Roman emperor who had appropriated the title of Augustus.<sup>110</sup> Like the bishops in Chalon-sur-Saône, they wanted to convey that their imperial roots went deep, and there was room for several identities moving at several different paces, as long as they were moving towards the same goal and under the supervision of an 'orthodox' ruler.

The clergy gathered in Arles stressed ecclesiastical unity and cooperation above all else. After a reconfirmation of their faith, the participants first decreed that 'all bishops, priests, as well as the abbots and monks collected as one' should pray for the emperor and his sons.<sup>111</sup> In the next *caput*, the responsibility of the archbishops to teach their bishops about baptism and the mysteries of the church is reaffirmed, so that these bishops may pass on the knowledge to their priests and clerics, 'for ignorance is the mother of errors', they state, quoting the Fourth Council of Toledo. This same source is then used to explain why laymen should not evict priests from their parishes. These enclaves were necessary for the priests, 'who have been taught by their bishops', to do God's work, meaning that local rulers were also banned

107 *Concilium Arelatense*, cc. 3-4, pp. 250-251; Ullmann, 'Public welfare', pp. 17-19; Moore, *Sacred Kingdom*, p. 280, erroneously writes that the council references the Fourteenth Council of Toledo instead.

108 Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 5.36.4; Roth, 'Calendar', p. 190.

109 *Concilium Arelatense*, Prologus, at 248: 'Dum anno XL sexto incliti et orthodoxi domni et principis nostri Karoli imperatoris, sub die sexto Idus Maias era DCCCLI [851 - 38 = 813] unanimitatis nostrae conventus in Arelatensium urbe'.

110 McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 370-371; Ganz, 'Einhard's Charlemagne', esp. p. 48.

111 *Concilium Arelatense*, c. 2, p. 250: 'Ut pro excellentissimo atque gloriosissimo domno nostro Karolo rege seu liberis eius omnes episcopi, presbyteri seu abbates et monachi in unum collecti, in quantum extremitas nostra praevallet, psalmodia, missarum sollempnia atque laetaniarum officia omnipotenti Deo devotissime exsolvent, decrevimus'.

from using churches as courts or for *placita*.<sup>112</sup> If the priests were allowed to do their job, the text continues, they preach ‘for the benefit of the entire Church’, something they should not only do inside their comfort zone in the *civitas*, but also outside, in accordance with their pastoral duty.<sup>113</sup> If everyone functioned according to their status in life, then *pax et concordia* would reign ‘between bishops and counts, between clerics and monks, and within the entire *populus Christianum*’, provided that these judges and counts would accept the supremacy of the episcopacy.<sup>114</sup>

The aim of the council of Arles would have been to confirm the bishop’s responsibility for all that transpired in his diocese. To the authors of the *acta*, this included everything except what transpired inside monastery walls. A bishop’s only duty in that respect was to safeguard the isolation of female communities, and to establish whether ‘monks endeavoured to live according to a rule’ and canons according to the *ordo canonicum*.<sup>115</sup> The assumption was that the *regula* in itself would be enough to ensure a proper way of living within the confines of the cloister.

Similar concerns are visible in the text from Reims. Consisting of a large number of terse chapters, these *acta* were more concerned with educating and properly ordering the clergy. This becomes evident when looking at the opening chapters, which state that everybody should know the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer ‘to the best of their intellect’, before going into the requirements for ‘those who would ascend the Church hierarchy [*gradus ecclesiasticus*]’.<sup>116</sup> Aspiring clergymen should start by reading the Letters of Saint Paul and then upgrading to the Gospel.<sup>117</sup> As they climbed the ladder, their responsibility increased along with their knowledge. Learning how to say Mass made the difference between a deacon and a *presbyter*, while a proper understanding of baptismal rites would turn a *presbyter* into a

112 *Concilium Arelatense*, c. 3, p. 250: ‘ignorantia mater cunctorum est errorum et maxime in sacerdotibus Dei vitanda est’ (cf. *Concilium Toletanum IV*, c. 25); c. 4, pp. 250-251 (cf. *Concilium Toletanum IV*, c. 26); c. 22, p. 253.

113 *Concilium Arelatense*, c. 10, at 251: ‘Providimus enim pro aedificatione omnium ecclesiarum et pro utilitate totius populi, ut non solum in civitatibus, sed etiam in omnibus parrochiis presbyteri ad populum verbum faciant, ut et bene vivere studeant et populo sihi commisse praedicare non neglegant’. Ling, *Cloister and Beyond*, pp. 143-150.

114 *Concilium Arelatense*, c. 12-13, pp. 251-252.

115 *Concilium Arelatense*, cc. 6-7, p. 251; c. 7 quotes the Council of Epaon of 517, c. 38, p. 28. On this Merovingian council, see Helvétius, ‘L’organisation des monastères féminins’, pp. 156-157.

116 *Concilium Remense*, cc. 1-3, p. 254: ‘Ut quicumque ad gradus ecclesiasticos condigne ascendere voluerit, unusquisque intellegeret, qualiter secundum possibilitatem intellectus sui in eo gradu, ubi constitutus est, Deo militare et se ipsum valeret custodire’.

117 *Concilium Remense*, cc. 4-5, p. 254.



*sacerdos*.<sup>118</sup> Then, another distinction was made between the *canonicus* who had to peruse the *sancti canones*, and the abbot, who was expected to memorize the *RB*, 'so that he could guard and also govern himself and his [monks]'.<sup>119</sup> Further ascending the hierarchy, the *pastores ecclesiae* of the Church were told to take Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis* to heart, in order to 'understand how to live themselves and how they should admonish their subjects'.<sup>120</sup> Interestingly, the text here distinguishes between *sacerdos* and *episcopus*, using the former to denote the sacral aspects of the priestly office, and the latter when talking about specifically episcopal duties. The vocabulary thus reflects an awareness of the multifaceted nature of the responsibilities held by these officials. Finally, every cleric should read the *sententiae patrum*, which could refer to the Sayings of the Desert Fathers, specifically, but might also more generally mean the corpus of patristic literature the Carolingians had at their disposal.<sup>121</sup> To complete the circle, priests were to use the knowledge thus gathered in their sermons to the people, and make them intelligible to everyone in their own language.<sup>122</sup> This precept, which also occurs in the Council of Tours, has a distinctly Alcuinian flavour, and may point to Anglo-Saxon influences on the proceedings, either directly or through the agency of Alcuin's pupils.<sup>123</sup>

Unlike the Council of Arles, Reims singled out the abbot as the teacher of a monastic community, the one who had to explain the *RB* in a way similar to the pastoral duties of a bishop.<sup>124</sup> Still, they were never treated as equals, with the exception of the common admonition that neither bishop nor abbot should allow jokes during mealtimes.<sup>125</sup> The rules regarding the interaction between judges and bishops further emphasized the point that bishops had a pastoral duty beyond their own community. Monasteries were

118 *Concilium Remense*, c. 6, p. 254.

119 *Concilium Remense*, c. 8, p. 254: 'Lecti sunt sancti canones'; c. 9, p. 255: 'Lecta est regula sancti Benedicti, ut ad memoriam reduceret abbatibus minus scientibus'.

120 *Concilium Remense*, c. 10, p. 254: 'Lectae sunt sententiae libri pastoralis beati Gregorii, ut pastores ecclesiae intellegent, quomodo ipsi vivere et qualiter sibi subiectos deberent ammonere'.

121 *Concilium Remense*, c. 11, p. 254: 'Diversorum ibi sententiae relatae sunt patrum, ut audientes in omnibus, quae supra inserta leguntur'. See also Otten, 'Texture of tradition'.

122 *Concilium Remense*, c. 15, p. 255: 'Ut episcopi sermones et omelias sanctorum patrum, prout omnes intellegere possent, secundum proprietatem linguae praedicare studeant'. On this precept, see Ullmann, *Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 28-29 and n. 3.

123 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 17, p. 289; Ling, *Cloister and Beyond*, pp. 151-152. On the 'Alcuinian' rhetoric of (self-)improvement, see Garrison, 'An Aspect of Alcuin'.

124 Cf. Hildebrandt, *External School*, pp. 54-55; Noble, 'Monastic ideal', pp. 246-247.

125 *Concilium Remense*, c. 17, at 255: 'Ut episcopi et abbates ante se ioca turpia facere non permittant'. Innes, "He never even allowed".

directly dependent on the emperor in this model, up to and including the contentious issue of abbatial elections.<sup>126</sup> This was the defining difference between monastic and canonical clergy at the Council of Reims. Both monks and canons lived in *monasteria*, and both required ‘plenty of *consilium* how to fight for God, and to better guard their own souls’. However, monks were to stay out of secular affairs altogether, whereas canons were allowed to venture out.<sup>127</sup>

If the main concern in Arles was to ensure cooperation within the *ecclesia*, and the bishops in Reims wanted to highlight the importance of education, the Council of Mainz delineated existing divisions within the *ecclesia* – something which already starts in the prologue, where a separation between bishops, abbots and laity was established, to the ultimate benefit of the *plebs Christianus*.<sup>128</sup> Presided over by Archbishops Richulf of Mainz and Arn of Salzburg together with the court chaplain Hildebald of Cologne, the *acta* of Mainz devoted more space to these Christian people.<sup>129</sup> After a series of chapters pertaining to the morals of all believers, culminating in a call for peace and concord reminiscent of the one written in Reims, a set of provisions for the care of orphans, widows and *pauperes* was inserted. Next, bishops were exhorted to rule (*regere et gubernare*) the Church and to share competencies with the counts and judges in their diocese.<sup>130</sup> This division between ecclesiastical and secular elites is explained later in the *acta*, when the main difference between clergy and laity is described in almost Gelasian terms: clerics wield spiritual weapons, and thus have to relinquish their secular ones when relinquishing the world.<sup>131</sup>

The differences between *saeculum* and the Church are translated into practical matters, such as in rules governing ecclesiastical possessions, or a

126 *Concilium Remense*, c. 23, p. 256. For the female counterpart, see c. 33, p. 256: ‘De monasteriis puellarum considerandum est et domni imperatoris misericordia imploranda, ut victum et necessaria a sibi praelatis consequi possint sanctaemoniales, et vita illarum et castitas secundum fragilitatis sexum diligenter provisiva tueatur’.

127 *Concilium Remense*, cc. 25, 26 and 29, p. 256.

128 *Concilium Moguntinense*, Prologus, p. 259: ‘Incipientes igitur in nomine Domini communi consensu et voluntate tractare pariter de statu verae religionis ac de utilitate et profectu Christianae plebis, convenit in nobis de nostro communi collegio clericorum seu laicorum tres facere turmas, sicut et fecimus’.

129 On these bishops, see Bullough, ‘Charlemagne’s “men of God”’, pp. 142–150; Schieffer, ‘Erzbischof Richulf (787–813)’.

130 *Concilium Moguntinense*, cc. 1–7, pp. 260–262; c. 8, p. 262: ‘Ut episcopi potestatem habeant res ecclesiasticas praevidere, regere et gubernare atque dispensare secundum canonum auctoritatem, volumus, et ut laici in eorum ministerio oboediant episcopis ad regendas ecclesias Dei’.

131 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 17, p. 266.

ban on singing songs within earshot of churches.<sup>132</sup> They also underlie a list of qualities expected of *advocati* – people who connect monastic communities to the outside world – or an admonition that those who ‘minister the altar of the Lord’ should avoid secular affairs.<sup>133</sup> Still, the delineation between clergy and laity should not be understood as an attempt to separate the two, but rather to propose ways in which they might coexist. In a telling *admonitio*, the synod ordered the *sacerdotes* to make sure the *populus Christianus* knew the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed, and connected this with the institution of schools, ‘either in monasteries or in the court of *presbyters*’.<sup>134</sup> Whereas in Arles, this knowledge was a prerequisite for combating ignorance as ‘the mother of all errors’ and thus safeguarding the unity of the *ecclesia*, the prelates in Mainz actively promoted learning and teaching the populace, for the same reasons.

Even more explicit is a diptych on maintaining peace in church. The authors first state that, ‘no one should presume to forcibly remove a suspect who has fled into a church, and neither should he be given over to punishment or death’; it was up to the *rectores* of the church to ensure that he would escape with ‘life and limb’.<sup>135</sup> Next, it is unequivocally stated that church buildings were not to be used as secular courts.<sup>136</sup> These two decrees echo a passage from the *Capitulatio de Partibus Saxoniae*, a legal text from the late eighth century issued by Charlemagne as part of his attempts to integrate the recently conquered Saxons into his kingdom.<sup>137</sup> In this text, a provision about church asylum makes it clear that this would be a prelude to, but not part of the trial itself.<sup>138</sup> After the fugitive has faced his prosecutors ‘with life and limb’ unscathed, it would be up to a *placitum* to determine what should happen to him next. The *acta* of

132 *Concilium Moguntinense*, cc. 39-42, p. 271; c. 48, p. 272.

133 On *advocati*: *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 50, p. 272; on the ban on trade, c. 14, p. 264.

134 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 45, pp. 271-272: ‘Symbolum, quod est signaculum fidei, et orationem dominicam discere semper ammoneant sacerdotes populum Christianum [...]. Propterea dignum est, ut filios suos donent ad scolam, sive ad monasteria sive foras presbyteris, ut fidem catholicam recte discant et orationem dominicam, ut domi alios edocere valeant’.

135 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 39, p. 271: ‘Reum confugientem ad ecclesiam nemo abstrahere preasumat neque inde donare ad poenam vel ad mortem, ut honor Dei et sanctorum eius conservetur. Sed et rectores ecclesiarum pacem et vitam ac membra eis obtinere studeant; tamen legitime componant quod inique fecerunt’.

136 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 40, p. 271: ‘Praecipimus, ut in ecclesiis aut in domibus ecclesiarum vel atrii placita saecularia minime fiant’.

137 Schubert, ‘Die *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae*’, pp. 26-28. Flierman, ‘Religious Saxons’; Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, pp. 111-112.

138 *Capitulatio de Partibus Saxoniae*, c. 2, pp. 37-38. Cf. Nelson, ‘Religion and politics’, pp. 23-24, reacting against Hen, ‘Charlemagne’s jihad’.

the Council of Mainz reinforced the significance of church asylum, but specified that this should not imply that any defendant be tried within that same sacred space.<sup>139</sup> Secular justice should be applied by secular judges, and bishops would decide on all matters pertaining to the Church, even if it involved laypeople.<sup>140</sup> In this sense these *acta* take position in an ongoing debate that was made visible in a fierce debate between Alcuin, Charlemagne and Theodulf in 802, for example. There, the issue of church asylum became a hot topic again specifically because a refugee cleric had hidden away in Tours.<sup>141</sup> The roots of this problem, however, went even deeper and affected more people than just those involved in that particular conflict.<sup>142</sup>

In addition to this division between pastors and the *populus*, there is one further demarcation within the text, between monks and canons. The final determination of who went where was up to the bishops, who also had to make sure both types of community were lacking in nothing.<sup>143</sup> Figuring out how to do this was another matter. In two chapters, the canonical way of life is specified: canons should live in a cloister, and, 'to the extent that human frailty permits' according to 'the doctrine of divine Scripture and the documents of the Holy Fathers'.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, the text continues, quoting from Isidore of Seville's *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, these canons should keep themselves free from the pleasures of the world and 'apply themselves to continual training [...] so that as they give effort to knowledge, they may administer the grace of their learning to the people'.<sup>145</sup> Monks, the following two chapters continue, had to go one step further. They too had to live

139 Cf. Czock, *Gottes Haus*, pp. 200-204.

140 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 8, p. 261: 'Ut episcopi potestatem habeant res ecclesiasticas praevidere, [...] et ut laici in eorum ministerio oboediant episcopis ad regendas ecclesias Dei'.

141 Noizet, 'Alcuin contre Théodulphe'; Kramer, 'Exemption'.

142 Meens, 'Sanctuary'.

143 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 20-21, pp. 266-267.

144 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 9, p. 261-262: 'In omnibus igitur, quantum humana permittit fragilitas, decrevimus, ut canonici clerici canonicè vivant, observantes divinae scripturae doctrinam et documenta sanctorum patrum [...] et in suo claustrò maneant'.

145 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 10, p. 263: 'Discretionem igitur esse volumus atque decrevimus inter eos, qui dicunt se saeculum reliquisse, et adhuc saeculum sectantur [...] ut ita discernantur, sicut in Regula Clericorum dictum est [...] Item Isidorus: "Seniores quoque debitam praebeant oboedientiam nec ullo iactantiae studio se adtollant. Postremo in doctrina, in lectionibus psalmis, ymnis et canticis exercitio iugi incumbant. Tales enim esse debent, qui divinis cultibus se mancipandos student exhibere, scilicet ut, dum scientiae operam dant, doctrinae gratiam populis administrent"; *De ecclesiasticis officiis (DEO)*, lib. 2, c. 2; on the complex interplay of texts and quotations, which also touches upon the use of the Rule of Chrodegang, see Ling, *Cloister and Beyond*, pp. 131-143.

according to rules, again ‘as far as human frailty permits’, but here the *RB* as explained by their abbot ruled their life.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, monks were also forbidden to attend *placita*, and the worldly affairs of a monastery were to be administered by a deacon to prevent the *praepositus*, who by the early ninth century had essentially become the right-hand man of the abbot, from falling into the ‘snare of the Devil’.<sup>147</sup> It was a concern already implied by Benedict of Nursia when he warned that the appointment of the *praepositus* should be an intramural affair, as ‘it happens all too often that the constituting of a *praepositus* leads to *scandalum* in monasteries’, especially ‘in those places where the *praepositus* is constituted by the same bishop or the same abbots who constitute the abbot himself’.<sup>148</sup> According to the *RB*, this would lead to the absurd situation of effectively placing the appointee outside of abbatial authority, which would in turn subvert the very fabric of communal life, held together as it was by the ideal of obedience.

A moralistic outlook similar to that taken in Mainz drove the *acta* of Chalon-sur-Saône, whose *capitula* were intended to point out ‘things [...] that required *emendatio*’ according to the emperor.<sup>149</sup> Leaning on scriptural authority, these *acta* start with the statement that all *episcopi* had to study the ‘writings [...] that are called canonical’, including the *Regula Pastoralis*.<sup>150</sup> Knowing these *norma* enabled them to be an example to the *populus*, and help them ‘uproot sins and plant virtues’ through preaching.<sup>151</sup> In order to ensure their example would be upheld, schools should be established as a shield against heresies and to turn more people into the ‘salt of the Earth’ lauded by Christ during his Sermon on the Mount.<sup>152</sup> This aim, that everybody should have the opportunity to live like a good Christian, was the main reason why bishops should be especially irrefragable.<sup>153</sup> All this

146 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 11, p. 263: ‘Abbates autem censuimus ita cum monachis suis pleniter vivere [...] secundum doctrinam sanctae regulae Benedicti, quantum humana permittit fragilitas’.

147 *Concilium Moguntinense*, c. 11, p. 263: ‘Ac deinde decrevimus, sicut sancta regula dicit, ut monasteriorum ubi fieri possit, per decanos ordinetur, quia illi praepositi saepe in elationem incidunt et in laqueum diaboli’; c. 12, p. 264: ‘ut monachi ad saecularia placita nullatenus veniant, neque ipse abba sine consilio episcopi sui’.

148 *RB*, c. 65. See also Semmler, ‘Benedictus II’, pp. 31–32, n. 18.

149 *Concilium Cabillonense*, Prologus, p. 274: ‘rebus, in quibus nobis emendatio necessaria videbatur’.

150 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 1, p. 274.

151 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 2, p. 274: ‘Et sint subditis norma vivendi, ita videlicet et verbis et exemplis populo ad aeternam patriam pergenti ducatum praebant’, and c. 37, p. 281.

152 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 3, pp. 274–275.

153 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 5, p. 275: ‘Ut iuxta apostoli vocem sacerdotes inreprehensibiles sint’.

should not be enforced. Writing about oaths, for example, the council states that obedience to the bishop should not be sworn, but enacted.<sup>154</sup> Similarly, penance should not be left to written rules, but would depend on public enactment and the emperor's interpretation – a subject they were especially keen on.<sup>155</sup> Bishops should not take personal preference into account when applying penance; they were more like doctors in that regard, and in the end God would know the 'contrite hearts' of those in need of medicine.<sup>156</sup> The assumption was that clerics who had learned to live a virtuous life did not require constant guidance. Only when they behaved in a way 'more akin to tyranny than to the right order' or otherwise acted counter to the norms set out in these *acta*, should a bishop intervene.<sup>157</sup> As long as the clergy did their jobs without letting their status go to their heads, things would turn out fine.<sup>158</sup>

One of the few rules specifically aimed at the monastic life in the *acta* of Chalon-sur-Saône stipulated that new monks should not give all their possessions to their church because they had to, but 'voluntarily', thankful that their donation aided orphans, widows, and poor people.<sup>159</sup> Conversely, accepting donations given under false pretences or through coercion was against the *ministerium* of abbots and bishops.<sup>160</sup> Other than that, the bishops were content to write that abbots and monks should 'live according to the *RB* in almost all the regular monasteries established in

154 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 13, p. 276: 'Quod iuramentum, quia periculosum est, omnes una inhibendum statuimus'.

155 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 25, p. 278; Meens, *Penance*, pp. 114-123.

156 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 34, p. 280: 'multo magis his observandum est, qui non corporum, sed animarum medici existunt. [...] Cor autem contritum et humilitatum Deus non despicit'. Firey, *A Contrite Heart*, pp. 200-204.

157 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 15, p. 277: 'ab eis censum exigunt, quod magis ad tirannidem quam ad rectitudinis ordinem pertinet'.

158 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 14, p. 276: 'Cavendum est sane, ne, cum episcopi parrochias suas peragrunt, quantam non solum erga subditos, sed erga socios tirannidem exercent nec, quod absit, cum caritate, sed cum quadam iudiciaria invectione stipendia ab eis exigant'.

159 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 6, p. 275: 'Oblatio namque spontanea esse debet [...]. Ecclesia vero sancta non solum fideles spoliare non debet, quin potius inopibus opem ferre, ut debiles, pauperes, viduae, ophani et ceteri necessitatem patientes a sancta ecclesia utpote a pia matre et monium gubernatrice subsidium accipiant'. Cf. the *Capitula de causis cum episcopis et abbatibus tractandis*, cc. 4-6 and c. 8, on the concerns connected with 'relinquishing the world'.

160 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 7, p. 275: 'ut episcopi sive abbates, qui non in fructum animarum, sed in avaritiam et turpe lucrum inhiantes quoslibet homines inlectos circumveniendo totonderunt et res eorum tali persuasione non solmn acceperunt, sed potius subriperunt, penitentiae canonicae sive regulari utpote turpis lucri sectatores subiaceant'.

these parts'.<sup>161</sup> This was to be commended, they continued, 'because the writings of Saint Benedict show all of them how they ought to live'.<sup>162</sup> It seems the moralistic goals of the council of Chalon-sur-Saône prevented the participants from wanting to interfere too deeply in monastic life itself. Their goal was not to establish where one community ended and the next one began; they wanted to establish how everybody should live the best possible life. As far as monks were concerned, how that should be done was already contained in the *RB*. Conversely, things that required flexibility, such as penance, should not be left to uncontrollable multitudes of texts, but required the involvement of the bishops, the emperor, and the entire community.

Finally, the Council of Tours closes the circle by calling attention to the members of the *ecclesia* – represented by the abbots, *sacerdotes*, and clergy – and how their actions reflected their relation with the empire. Their loyalty to Charlemagne was reinforced by gathering at his command and praying on his behalf.<sup>163</sup> Also, *episcopi* should strive to be good *exempla* by studying Scripture, the *libri canonici*, and of course Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*, while abstaining from joking, hunting or anything else that offended the eyes or ears.<sup>164</sup> This call to action did not just pertain to bishops, either. Young widows were expected to visibly remain in mourning so as to prevent 'being alive and dead both at once'; the congregation was supposed to enter the church and attend Mass in revered silence; and 'counts and judges were admonished not to permit vile and unworthy persons to approach them to give testimony'.<sup>165</sup> They were expected to respect the office of bishop, and not to spurn the counsel provided by them – although, on the other hand, bishops should 'humbly support' their secular counterparts, reinforcing

161 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 22, p. 278: 'De abbatibus vero et monachis idcirco hic pauca scribimus, quia paene omnia monasteria regularia in his regionibus constituta secundum regulam sancti Benedicti se vivere fatentur'.

162 *Concilium Cabillonense*, c. 22, p. 278: 'quae beati Benedicti documenta per omnia demonstrant, qualiter eis vivendum sit'.

163 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 1, pp. 286-287: 'ut oboedientes sint domno excellentissimo imperatori nostro et fidem, quam ei promissam habent, inviolabiter conservare studeant. Orationes quoque assiduas intente fundere pro eius stabilitate ac incolomitate omnes se velle secundum nostram admonitionem unanimiter professi sunt'.

164 *Concilium Turonense*, cc. 2-8, p. 287.

165 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 27, p. 290: 'Ut iuvenes viduae cito nequaquam velentur, usque dum probetur illarum religio, et bona ab eis nota sit conversatio, ne forte de hisdem dici possit ab apostolo: "Quae autem in deliciis sunt viventes mortuae sunt" [1 Tim. 5:6]'; *Concilium Turonense*, c. 38, p. 291: 'Sacerdotes debent fideles admonere, ut, quando ad ecclesiam conveniunt, sine strepitu ac tumultu eam ingrediantur'; *Concilium Turonense*, c. 34, p. 291: 'Summopere admonendi sunt comites et iudices, ne viles et indignas personas coram se permittant ad testimonium accedere'.

the idea that nobody acted in isolation. After all, the authors wrote, 'All men, and especially Christians, should strive to have peace, unanimity and concord between [each other]'.<sup>166</sup>

The *sacrum palatium* and the knowledge it generated stood above all, as evidenced by a *caput* on the correct way of performing penance.<sup>167</sup> Due to the many irregularities that still persisted, it is recommended that 'the bishops should congregate at the palace, so that it may be determined by them whose penitential book from among the ancient authors should be supported above all'.<sup>168</sup> It remains unclear if the bishops should nominate their own books, or if these were furnished by the palace library, but it is clear that they figured this was a greater task than they could handle in Tours alone. Interestingly, the group that was the subject of this chapter consisted of the same prelates gathered in Tours, writing these very recommendations 'according to the rule of the canons'.<sup>169</sup> These bishops, for their part, felt they could turn to the court whenever they could not reach consensus or when they would not leave something important up to chance. 'Whatever our prince likes to do about this, we, his faithful servants, are always happy and ready to oblige his wishes and his will', they wrote in closing.<sup>170</sup> They almost seem to relinquish responsibility as soon as they received it, being careful to submit to the will of the court in the most important instances. This could be for political reasons, of course. The emperor was in a position to protect their property or put a check to aristocrats exacting a levy from priests taking over a parish.<sup>171</sup> Maybe some of the participants in the council, with the conflict of 802 still lingering on their minds, even felt the need to reconfirm that the palace should indeed be at the centre of it all, no matter how small the issue at hand.

Although the prologue to the Council of Tours stated that there were abbots present at the proceedings, most of the opening narrative is centred on the *sacerdotes* who were responsible for the 'governance of the Church in the *regnum*', and this (im)balance is continued in the rest of the text

166 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 32, p. 290: 'Omnes homines et maxime Christiani studeant inter se pacem, unanimitatem et concordiam habere, odium vero et discordiam longe a se propellere'.

167 Meens, *Penance*, p. 115.

168 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 22, p. 289; De Jong, 'Sacrum palatium', pp. 1243-1244.

169 *Concilium Turonense*, Prologus, p. 286: 'episcopi, abbates et venerabilis clerus [...] quae secundum canonicam regulam emendatione indigent'.

170 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 51, p. 293: 'sed quomodo deinceps piissimo principi nostro de his agendum placebit, nos fideles famuli eius libenti animo ad nutum et voluntatem eius parati sumus'.

171 Wood, *Proprietary Church*, pp. 527-529, esp. also n. 68. Cf. *Concilium Turonense*, c. 15, p. 288; c. 51, p. 293.



itself.<sup>172</sup> Only one *caput* is aimed directly and specifically at monastic communities, and, as was the case in the Council of Reims, it was only to state that ‘the monasteries of monks, where in the past the Rule of the Blessed Father Benedict was upheld’, but which had fallen into disrepute through negligence, ‘should return to a pristine state’.<sup>173</sup> The way to accomplish this was to appoint abbots who lived according to the Rule and taught others to act similarly. Otherwise, the text finished, ‘they seem more like canons than like monks’.<sup>174</sup> Another echo of the conflict of 802 may be felt here: as Charlemagne, in the course of a heated exchange of letters, sought to put Alcuin back in his place, he held it against them that the reputation of the community of Saint Martin was damaged by the unclear position of its monks.<sup>175</sup> ‘Sometimes you claim to be monks’, the emperor wrote, ‘sometimes canons, and sometimes neither’, ultimately leading to *mala fama*.<sup>176</sup> Proper leadership would go a long way towards avoiding similar reproaches in the future. The *Regula*, channelled by an abbot, should be the defining factor of a monk’s life; canons also lived in a *monasterium*, celebrated the liturgy together in one place, slept in a dormitory, and ate meals together. The major difference was that canons lived in episcopal cities. They had bishops to ‘admonish and teach’ them and, more importantly, to take care of their material needs.<sup>177</sup> In between these two types, other canonical communities had to rely on ‘abbots who, [...] by going ahead, show the way [*via*] which, by advancing correctly [*recte*], lead to a better life’.<sup>178</sup> In Tours, it was the

172 *Concilium Turonense*, Prologus, p. 286.

173 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 25, p. 290: ‘Monasteria monachorum, in quibus olim regula beati Benedicti patris conservabatur, sed nunc forte qualicumque neglegentia subrepente remissius ac dissolutius custoditur vel certe penitus abolita neglegitur, bonum videtur ut ad pristinum revertantur statum’.

174 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 25, p. 290: ‘et abbates eorundem in eodem habitu ac vita, qua ipsa regula praecipiens incedere ac vivere studeant, quoniam aliqua sunt monasteria, in quibus iam pauci sunt monachi, qui praedicti patris regulam suis abbatibus promissam habeant, quippe cum ipsi abbates magis canonicis quam monachice inter suos conversari videntur’.

175 Kramer, ‘Exemption’, pp. 66-71.

176 Charlemagne, *Epistola 247*, ed. Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae 4*, p. 400; Ling, *Cloister and Beyond*, pp. 117-119.

177 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 23, p. 289: ‘Canonici clerici civitatum, qui in episcopis conversantur, consideravimus, ut in claustris habitantes simul omnes in uno dormitorio dormiant simulque in uno reficiantur rectorio, quo facilius possint ad horas canonicas celebrandas occurrere ac de vita et conversatione sua admoneri et doceri’. Noble, ‘The Christian Church’, p. 266; Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln*, pp. 235-237.

178 *Concilium Turonense*, c. 24, p. 289: ‘Simili modo et abbates monasteriorum, in quibus canonica vita antiquitus fuit vel nunc videtur esse, sollicite suis praevideant canonicis [...] sintque abbates sibi subditis bene vivendo duces et praevidii vianque demonstrent, qua recte

*Regula* that made the *monachus*, but that should not preclude others from following in their footsteps.

While the prelates participating in these councils welcomed the role of the court as a focal point and instigator of any ecclesiastical reform initiative, it was evident that they all had different ideas what the challenges were, and how they might be solved.<sup>179</sup> This reflected the general idea behind these councils. They were intended to provide new impetus to the reform movement in the empire. However, the fact that they had been centrally organized at various places in the realm illustrates how the court felt it was worthwhile to gather the opinions of the intellectual elite before taking the next steps.<sup>180</sup> The approach parallels the pragmatic gusto that characterized the reign of Charlemagne, when the court would also present results as the product of the best minds in the empire, personified by the ruler.<sup>181</sup> In this case, however, the court may have realized that the results of this project required everyone to make real changes in their daily lives.<sup>182</sup> These reforms concerned the entire *ecclesia*, and it was necessary to involve the ecclesiastical elites in the decision-making process. In the context of the transfer of the *nomen imperatoris* in 813, the results of each of the councils sent to Aachen reinforced the image of unity as the result of a dynamic interplay between local concerns and courtly interests, precisely because they indicate the different ways each of the episcopal communities tackled the challenges the encountered.<sup>183</sup> As an added advantage, this process thus provided Louis with a powerful image of the burdens of *imperium* he was about to face – and how the *ecclesia* could help him bear this burden while adding to it in the process.

Much more is hidden in these five council *acta*, and more detailed analyses need to be done to fully grasp the implications of the sources used, to account for the overlaps, similarities and differences between the various

gradiendo ad meliorem vitam pervenire valeant'. A forthcoming article by Ling, 'Monks, canons', will shed more light on this aspect of the relation between monks, canons and their bishops.

179 Fried, 'Elite und Ideologie', regards these councils as reflective of a drive for uniformization and centralization instigated by the Carolingian court – an interpretation which overestimates the reach of the court at this point; he may be correct in his assessment that 813-819 marks an apex of Carolingian achievement, but in my opinion, this achievement was to catalyse debate, not to order uniformity.

180 De Jong, 'Charlemagne's Church', p. 128.

181 Davis, 'A pattern for power', p. 245.

182 This is the gist of Semmler's 'Benedictus II' and 'Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils', for example: although uniformization was not an issue, changes *were* expected.

183 See Beumann, '*Nomen imperatoris*'; Borst, 'Kaisertum und Namentheorie'.

*capita*, or to gauge the influence of individuals on the proceedings.<sup>184</sup> For now such questions may be left open, if only because they accurately reflect the bewildering state of the Carolingian *ecclesia* in the year 813. Even though the *acta* indicate a particular set of concerns shared among the participants, the individual nature of these compositions, their different focal points and variety in direction all point to the conclusion that this was a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter* rather than an attempt to uniformize.

This may have been intentional. It is impossible to ignore the timing of these councils as a prelude to the coronation of Louis the Pious. By all accounts, the ultimate goal of these five councils was to present Charlemagne with a condensed list of things that required his attention. This they did, in Aachen, so the emperor may simply have seized the opportunity to also publicly elevate his son to become his equal in the presence of all key players within the kingdom. The differences between contemporary historiographical accounts of these councils noted above show that the connection between councils and dynastic policy – if any – was not clear to contemporary observers, either. As presented in the *ARF*, the coincidence of these councils with the elevation of Louis showed the intimate connections between court and church reform. The gathering in Aachen presented the fledgling emperor Louis with a set of blueprints for the empire, formulated by important ecclesiastical gatherings all throughout the realm. It was important that Louis' elevation occurred before the presentation of these conciliar teachings, so that continuity would be safeguarded. The peripheral perspective of the *CM* was more insistent on the central role of the court in running the *ecclesia*, and left the education and coronation of Louis the Pious in the hands of his father. In this version, the gathered elites first imparted their wisdom on the ruling emperor, and then approved of Louis' coronation. Continuity was assured, but this time it was in the hands of the court as channelled through the imperial crown.

Regardless of these narrative perspectives, it is important to remember that these councils were not indicative of an increasing uniformization of the *ecclesia*. Seen from Aachen, they reflect the growing role of the court in the debate on how to correct *correctio*; seen from a local perspective, they presented bishops with the opportunity to reframe their relation to the court. The model for empire seen through these councils is one in which people were told to propose things to put on the agenda, and were subsequently

184 Generally, Ling, *Cloister and Beyond*, has more detailed information on the way the life of the canons would be shaped through these stipulations. See also Moore, *Sacred Kingdom*, pp. 279-284.

invited to court to help hammer out the details. The diversity of the observations made in the ensuing corpus of texts demonstrates the flexibility of the Carolingian Church. What was at stake was to make sure that both the old and the new emperor were aware of this. These were not laws, but recommendations – more what one would call guidelines than actual rules.

Charlemagne's death in January 814 did little to dampen the enthusiasm of the bishops, abbots and aristocrats involved. A new emperor had been appointed and groomed to continue the work started by his forebears. Indeed, it did not take long after Louis' arrival in the palace to organize a new series of councils, this time held in Aachen itself between 816 and 819. The most important text to come out of these synods will be the focus for the remainder of this chapter: the *Institutio Canoniorum*.

### 'An Effort, not an Honour': Bishops and Their Responsibilities

If the five councils of 813 should be seen in a broader political context, the same goes for the synods organized at the palace in Aachen during the first five years of the reign of Louis the Pious. In addition to the confirmation of a large number of charters and immunities, the court was re-arranged as Louis' entourage from Aquitaine was integrated into the existing corridors of power.<sup>185</sup> Louis elected his son Lothar as co-emperor, and was confirmed as emperor by Pope Stephen IV in 816, itself the result of intricate political schemes between Aachen and Rome; arrangements were made for the division of the empire among Louis' three sons; and the first rebellion against Louis, led by his nephew Bernard of Italy, was quelled with unfortunate results for the instigator.<sup>186</sup> The activities at court between 814 and 819 show a ruler eager to make his mark on the *imperium* by intensifying the momentum built by his father. It is in this context that we should see the reform councils that took place in Aachen from 816 to 819.<sup>187</sup> By now, the mind-set at court was truly imperial, and Louis' entourage wanted to continue the debate and live up to the expectations set by the reforming activities of 813.

185 Kölzer, *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen*, p. 16; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 19-24; Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, pp. 199-200; Booker, *Past Convictions*, pp. 153-154; Collins, 'Charlemagne and his critics'.

186 Noble, *Republic*, pp. 302-308; cf. Buc, 'Ritual and interpretation' and 'Political ritual'; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 25-28; Kasten, *Königssöhne*, pp. 172; Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 134-137. Bougard, '*Italia infirma est*', argues that, surprisingly, the death of Bernard does not seem to have caused any resentment towards Louis on the peninsula itself.

187 Hartmann, *Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, pp. 156-169.

Through sheer scale and intent, the councils of 816-819 themselves were momentous in their own way.<sup>188</sup> Apart from their direct impact, the texts they produced also betray a high level of self-awareness and self-definition of those involved in their creation.<sup>189</sup> While the precise relation between the extant manuscripts remains impossible to reconstruct, there is a surprisingly high degree of thematic unity among the texts, most of which ultimately revolve around the questions of how to distinguish between monastic and canonical communities, why this was important, and what bishops should do about it.<sup>190</sup> These goals were even reflected in the organization of the councils: the so-called *Capitulare Monasticum*, usually seen to be the result of the 817 meeting specifically, was the product of deliberations among abbots exclusively.<sup>191</sup> Although most of the extant documents are quite brief and mostly describe changes that should be made to the *consuetudines* of monastic communities, they present us with several hints as to the collective nature of what transpired inside the palace at the time – one of which is the repeated insistence that their deliberations indeed took place inside the palace.<sup>192</sup>

In spite of such messages, the many different texts produced tell us that this was a comprehensive, unified attempt at improving religious life in the empire while at the same time conveying a message about the multiplicity that persisted. As with the councils of 813, the *Capitulare*

188 Angerer, 'Consuetudo und Reform', p. 112, speaks of the council/capitularies of 817 as a 'Paukenschlag' (bombshell).

189 Especially the texts edited as *Synodi Primae Aquisgranensis Decreta Authentica*; *Synodi Secundae Aquisgranensis Decreta Authentica*; but see also the *Capitulare Monasticum*. To these compositions may be added an as yet understudied *florilegium* of works by Gregory the Great and Basilios, among others, attributed to Benedict of Aniane: Dolbeau, 'Florilège carolingien de Septimanie'; Dolbeau refers to a different MSS than the one studied by Étaix, 'Un florilège ascétique'. See also Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 151-152.

190 Semmler, 'Zur Überlieferung der monastischen Gesetzgebung'; Semmler, 'Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils'. According to the lapidary statement by Mordek, *Bibliotheca*, p. 999, 'Die monastische Gesetzgebung Ludwigs des Frommen dürfte durch die Forschungen Semmlers geklärt sein' ('The monastic legislation of Louis the Pious should be clarified through the research done by Semmler'). But see Lukas, 'Additio I: Die sogenannte *Collectio capitularis*', p. 8: 'Semmlers Modell der Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse zwischen den vier Versionen des monastischen Kapitulars enthält also letztlich zu viele Ungereimtheiten, um ein stimmiges Bild der Entstehung dieses Textes zu bieten. Ihm ein konkretes Gegenmodell entgegenzusetzen, ist bei der verwirrenden Vielfalt der Überlieferung nicht möglich' ('Semmler's model for the relationship of dependence between the four versions of the monastic capitulary thus in the end contains too many inconsistencies to offer a coherent idea about the genesis of this text. To create an alternative model, however, is not possible due to the confusing complexity of the capitulary's transmission').

191 Albers, 'Reformsynode'; Gaillard, *D'Une Réforme à l'Autre*, 123-147.

192 Kramer and Gantner, 'Lateran thinking'.

*Monasticum* and its worldly counterpart, the *Capitulare Ecclesiasticum*, are reflective of a degree of uncertainty, of the leeway that was still given to the monasteries, as long as they were ruled by a *regula*, controlled by a bishop, and concerned for the empire. Through its presentation as a collective response to an ongoing project and its focus on the internal life of monasteries as communities with a function within the wider world, the *Capitulare Monasticum* proposed part of a definition of ‘monasticism’ by insisting on its regularity – preferably that of the *RB*.<sup>193</sup> Meanwhile, the *Capitulare Ecclesiasticum* called the participants to both observe the *capitula* themselves, and to teach their subjects about them.<sup>194</sup> Ostensibly aimed at bishops and thus more focused on the pastoral side of things, the importance of Church possessions and episcopal control is paramount, but the stipulations stop outside the cloister: only the election of abbots and the eligibility of slaves to enter a monastery are mentioned, implying that the internal autonomy of monasteries had become a *fait accompli* – an observation echoed, for example, in an early-ninth-century *ordo* for the organization of such meetings, written in the area around Salzburg.<sup>195</sup> The *Capitulare Ecclesiasticum* sought to regulate all clergy under episcopal supervision; the text was not just for reading, but also for teaching and guiding the priests and canons who neglected their duties ‘partly out of ignorance and partly out of laziness’.<sup>196</sup> They, too, required a *regula* to keep them on the straight and narrow.

This was a niche that the *Institutio Canoniorum (IC)*, by far the longest text to come out of these councils, aimed to fill. According to its prologue, the best and brightest were gathered to deliberate how to re-order the lives of canons and monks, bishops and abbots to the extent that:

All those who are thought to belong to the canonical profession may proceed on the path he has undertaken without stumbling, and live together in the service of Christ, with great devotion and unanimous concord.<sup>197</sup>

193 Gaillard, ‘De l’interaction entre crise et réforme’; Semmler, ‘Benedictus II’.

194 *Capitulare Ecclesiasticum*, p. 275.

195 *Ordo* 30, ed. Schneider, *MGH Ordines de Celebrando Concilio* 1, pp. 591–594. Semmler, ‘Benediktinische Reform’, p. 822; Van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, p. 226; Diesenberger, *Predigt und Politik*, pp. 98–101.

196 *Capitulare Ecclesiasticum*, c. 3, p. 276.

197 *Institutio Canoniorum (IC)*, Prologus, p. 312: ‘quatenus omnes, qui canonica censentur professione, per viam propositi sui inoffenso gressu incederunt et in Christi militia devotius unanimes atque concordex existerunt’; trans. Bertram, *Chrodegang Rules*, p. 96.

This was not a new issue, and it would persist after the centralized councils studied in this chapter, as seen for example in a number of capitularies issued by Lothar in Italy following his father's initiatives.<sup>198</sup> When studied as products of the ongoing dialogue between court, cloister and *canones*, the source material connected to these councils reveals much about the interaction between them, how it was perceived, who was thought to be in a position to effectuate these reforms, and who was ultimately responsible for their enforcement. Compared to the other two *capitularia*, this compilation took a wholly different approach to such issues by taking into account the position of the bishop both as shepherd and as the leader of his community.

Both the title and the prologue of the work suggest that the *Institutio Canoniorum* (*IC*) was written specifically to establish a 'pattern for the education' of the canonical clergy.<sup>199</sup> The composers of the text were moreover aware that any prescription for canons would also influence how bishops ought to behave, which in turn had repercussions for monastic communities. The *IC* is thus not simply a set of new regulations, and neither is it a mere *florilegium* for the benefit of the clergy. The composers have woven together all the ideas they had conceived during previous councils together and all the older and authoritative knowledge at their disposal to form a new, programmatic text demonstrating that no one in the *ecclesia* could function in isolation. The result, a massive compilation of patristic and canonical texts, combined with a set of rules aimed at the canonical clergy, is a highly self-reflective work that shows the all-encompassing nature of the Carolingian reforms from the vantage point of the imperial court.

It is clear that this compilation was widely distributed. According to an overview given by Hubert Mordek, 136 manuscripts of the *IC* from between the ninth and the fourteenth century are extant, with another 22 copies which may have been lost.<sup>200</sup> A vast majority of these are single codices containing the text in its entirety, but even the number of excerpts stands as a testament to the widespread use of this text. The fact that later authors, composers and compilers made use of the *IC* shows that this compilation

198 Semmler, 'Monachus'; Specifically, the 825 *Capitulare Olonnense Ecclesiasticum Primum*, c. 7, pp. 326-327, stipulates that bishops are responsible for the conversion of their canonical communities according to the rules laid out 'earlier'. That earlier text is no longer extant, but its monastic 'equivalent', the *Capitula de Inspiciendis Monasteriis*, may be found in one of the manuscripts that also contains the Capitulary of Olonne.

199 *IC*, Prologus, p. 313: 'ab omnibus, qui in canonica professione Domino militant, hanc institutionis formam tot ecclesiasticorum virorum vigilanti studio congestam dignisque preconiis laudatam iuxta virium possibilitatem modis omnibus observandam'.

200 Mordek, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 1045-1056.

was taken seriously. Especially the final chapter, c. 145, a brief summary of the work in total, proved popular in this regard, but most of the subsequent canon collections using the *IC* did not limit themselves to this shortened version, and rightly so. As will be shown, the *IC* was intended to be read as one integral composition.

Attached to the *IC* in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (*MGH*) edition is the *Institutio Sanctimonialium*, a similar set of regulations that was specifically meant for female communities.<sup>201</sup> This text did not share its male counterpart's reception: nine manuscripts have to date been identified, most of which stem from the early ninth century.<sup>202</sup> While this might attest to a lack of interest in this particular take on female sanctity, it is interesting to see that most extant copies were produced shortly after the council.<sup>203</sup> It therefore seems that the express imperial demand that these texts were to be copied and spread throughout the realms was taken seriously, at least at first. As Gerhard Schmitz has noted, the question to what extent these canons – both for male and female clergy – have been copied verbatim as intended, or have experienced some form of rewriting in the process, is still open.<sup>204</sup> Did the copyist obey the imperial wish that these texts were copied to the letter, and how did this hold up as manuscripts drifted ever further from the original? This is a question that has proven difficult to answer for the *Institutio Sanctimonialium*, and will be even more of a challenge for the *IC* – which accounts for the fact that a detailed analysis of the *IS* falls beyond the scope of this book.<sup>205</sup> Although many manuscripts of the *IC* have been identified, they have not yet been put in a comprehensive manuscript matrix, which continues to hamper our understanding of the impact of these texts.<sup>206</sup> Thus far, studies of the *IC* have focused on its role as part of a wider monastic or canonical reform movement imposed by the court, undoubtedly steered by the fact that the *MGH* implies that these were

201 *Institutio Sanctimonialium Aquisgranensis*.

202 Generally, see Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*; Gerhard Schmitz, 'Aachen 816'; Mordek, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 1057–1058.

203 Schmitz, 'Aachen 816', pp. 509–517; Werminghoff, 'Beschlüsse des Aachener Concils', p. 634, called the *Institutio Sanctimonialium* an 'Übersetzung [of the *IC*] ins Weibliche' ('an adaption of the *IC* for a female audience'), which may explain his lack of interest in that particular text and its manuscript transmission.

204 Schmitz, 'Aachen 816', pp. 532–533.

205 This gap is filled by the excellent MA thesis by Michael Eber, *Kanoniker und Kanonissen in der Aachener Reform*. While this thesis remains unpublished at the moment of writing, its main conclusions will form the basis of a forthcoming article: Eber, 'Canons, canonesses and connections'.

206 On the idea of the 'manuscript matrix', see Nichols, 'Introduction'.



*acta* of the 816 Council of Aachen. However, as will be shown, the *IC* reads more like a *speculum episcoporum* than the conciliar *acta* from the first half of this chapter. Still, it should be seen as a product of the same time, when a more specific articulation of institutions was considered a first step towards improving them.

In order to fully comprehend the meaning of and the intentions behind the *IC*, it is vital to take the large swathe of patristic and canonical quotations contained in the text into account. These have been largely ignored in modern research, which is curious given that they make up the lion's share of the *IC*.<sup>207</sup> No less than 113 chapters separate the Prologue from the 30 'actual' canons, and these should certainly not be regarded as mere quotations.<sup>208</sup> This is where the collective mind of the participating bishops and abbots showed that reform should be as much about a return to old values as it is about finding new directions.<sup>209</sup> This is where they seized the opportunity to define their place in the world; after all, as they were articulating their own essential role within the Church, they were also reappraising the place of the *ecclesia* in Frankish society.

## Church Fathers in Aachen

The patristic quotations in the *IC* are roughly divided into three parts. After the prologue, the first part consists primarily of excerpts from Isidore of Seville's *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*; Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis* (*RP*) and Julianus Pomerius' *De Vita Contemplativa* (*DVC*) – misidentified within the text as Prosper of Aquitaine.<sup>210</sup> This section also contains a sermon by Augustine and two letters by Jerome, detailing *who* the clergy should be. The second part, which mainly contains canonical quotations that probably stem from a version of the *Dionysio-Hadriana*, tells members of the *ecclesia*

207 That is, 113 of 145 *capita*, or 82 of 113 pages in the *MGH* edition: pp. 312-394. The most recent edition and translation of the text, by Bertram, *Chrodegang Rules*, pp. 96-174, only lists the chapter titles, pp. 97-103 and pp. 134-139, respectively.

208 Bertram, *Chrodegang Rules*, pp. 88-89, speaks of 'the actual Rule of Aachen as opposed to its supporting documents'.

209 As such, the question of authorship will not be touched upon in this book; I will work from the assumption that the *IC* was a collective endeavour. Various authors have been put forward, such as Ansegis of Saint-Wandrille or Amalarius of Metz, by Werminghoff, 'Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils'; Benedict of Aniane, by Narberhaus, *Benedikt von Aniane*, pp. 47-50; and Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, by Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 75-76.

210 *IC*, cc. 1-38, pp. 318-360. On the misattribution of Pomerius, see Timmermann, 'Sharers', pp. 1-4.

exactly *what* they should do.<sup>211</sup> The third section includes more letters and sermons by Augustine and Jerome, and continues to quote heavily from both Gregory and Isidore; it describes *how* clerics ought to behave.<sup>212</sup> The primary target audience of the text is clearly formed by the bishops in the Frankish realms, charged with the education of those subordinate to them – which theoretically included everyone. The *IC* was thus not composed primarily for canonical communities, but was also aimed at the bishops who were supposed to be guiding them, who had to cope with the institutionalization of this hitherto fuzzy category of clergymen, and whose responsibility it was to safeguard both their behaviour and their reputation.<sup>213</sup> As these same prelates were the ones composing the text in the first place, it should not be surprising that the *IC* is also exceedingly self-reflexive.

The patristic texts used have been heavily edited and interpolated. Moreover, the selection of authors may seem limited, but this reinforces the ideas that these were deliberate choices: the composers were not striving for intellectual exclusivity, but relying on those texts whose authority had already been established, texts that everyone could relate to.<sup>214</sup> In at least one case, they had gone a step further. As demonstrated by Albert Werminghoff, who prepared the *MGH* edition of the *IC* at the start of the twentieth century, the passages attributed to Gregory the Great have actually been lifted from a collection of that pope's writings by the seventh-century Visigothic bishop, Taio (or Taus) of Zaragoza.<sup>215</sup> While this discovery is interesting in its own right, and raises the possibility that more such *florilegia* have been used instead of the 'original' sources identified in the edition, the fact that Taio's collection has been used also serves to illuminate the way the participants in the council regarded the sources they used – Gregory the Great especially so.<sup>216</sup> It is therefore useful to dwell a bit longer on this particular collection, its author and its intentions.

Taio's story is interesting in itself, and his relationship with the various kings and bishops he served under certainly made its mark on the

211 *IC*, cc. 39-93, pp. 360-370. On the *Dionysio-Hadriana* collection and its arrival in Aachen, see Mordek, *Kirchenrecht und Reform*, pp. 151-162; Mordek, 'Dionysio-Hadriana und *Vetus Gallica*'. This collection was highly prevalent in Carolingian ecclesiological discourse – for instance, it also featured heavily in the *Admonitio Generalis*: Mordek et al., *Die Admonitio Generalis*, p. 31.

212 *IC*, cc. 93-113, pp. 370-394.

213 Cf. De Jong, 'Imitatio morum'.

214 Otten, 'Texture of tradition'.

215 Werminghoff, 'Beschlüsse des Aachener Concils', pp. 612-616.

216 Judic, 'La tradition de Grégoire le Grand', pp. 40-42.

composition of his *Libri Sententiarum V*.<sup>217</sup> His first intellectual endeavour probably was his involvement in the revision of the *Lex Visigothorum* instigated by his predecessor Braulio and the kings Chindasuinth and Reccesuinth in the early seventh century.<sup>218</sup> Chindasuinth then sent him to Rome in the late 640s to retrieve a missing part of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*.<sup>219</sup> Once there, he became so enamoured with Gregory's views that he composed a collection of his writings, dedicated to his sponsor, Bishop Quiricus of Barcelona. While doing so Zaragoza was set upon by the rebel Froia until it was rescued by 'the orthodox and great worshiper of God, Prince Reccesuinth'.<sup>220</sup> This not only delayed Taio's work to the extent that he had to explain it in his prologue, but also allowed him to clarify the theme of his work to Quiricus: he followed a thread linking 'the all-powerful Lord [...] until the end of this world', insisting on an Augustinian vision of a heavenly Jerusalem that opposed to the confusion that was Babylon.<sup>221</sup> In his *Praefatio*, Froia represented the chaos of Babylon, while Reccesuinth stood for peace, justice and the Christian way that led to Jerusalem. This was not simply a compendium to the works of Gregory, and neither writing it nor reading it was easy.<sup>222</sup> This work was meant for those who were serious about the Kingdom of Heaven, who, like Taio, longed for the 'unity of the catholic Church'.<sup>223</sup> And, even though the participants in Aachen, over 150 years later, only really cited parts of the second of his five books, it seems as if they had taken the words of Taio's preface to heart.

Taio's five books of *Sententiae* rearranged Gregory's writings into a completely new work.<sup>224</sup> Book I is a cosmology, in which God, his creations, and his relationship with Man is discussed.<sup>225</sup> Book II deals with the history of the Church, starting with the teachings of Christ, and going from the spread of Christianity to the then-current state of affairs, in which bishops, priests, the faithful, and monks are discussed in order.<sup>226</sup> Book III reads like a *Speculum Principorum* (or *Laicorum*) and treats human history, the virtues, religion, and

217 Cf. Collins, *Early Medieval Spain*, pp. 73-74.

218 See, for example, Díaz, 'Visigothic political institutions', pp. 337ff.

219 Madoz, 'Tajón de Zaragoza'.

220 Taio, *Sententiae*, Praefatio, c. 2, col. 727C. On this conflict, see Castellanos, 'Political nature of taxation', esp. pp. 213-214; cf. Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, p. 81.

221 Cf. Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings*, pp. 64-68.

222 Taio, *Sententiae*, Praefatio, c. 5, col. 730B.

223 Taio, *Sententiae*, Praefatio, c. 5, col. 730B: 'obsecro per sanctae catholicae Ecclesiae unitatem'.

224 O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain*, p. 87, described the work as 'poorly organized'.

225 Taio, *Sententiae*, cols. 731-775.

226 Taio, *Sententiae*, cols. 775-831.

life in general.<sup>227</sup> Book IV focuses on the vices, dreams and visions, and other ephemeral phenomena, whereas Book V deals with justice and its opposites – hypocrisy, heresy and impiety – and the punishments that awaited sinners at the end of the world.<sup>228</sup> Taio's *Sententiae* thus present a study of life, the universe and everything, channelled through the works of Gregory the Great.

Given the resurgence of the popularity of the pope's works in the Carolingian era, it seems safe to assume that the composers of the *IC* were aware they were using an adaptation.<sup>229</sup> By electing to take their material from Book II of Taio's *Sententiae* instead of perusing the works of Gregory himself, they showed that they were thinking not exclusively in terms of the rules they had to follow, but also of their place in the world and their role in the lives of others.<sup>230</sup> They were not quoting from the *Regula Pastoralis*, or the *Moralia in Iob*, or the letters of Gregory. They were looking at these works through the lens of a recontextualization which demonstrated how they were about life itself, and not only about bishops or the Book of Job. This conscious use of patristic writings by the composers of the *IC* to relate to their position in the world shows how they, like Taio, adhered to the words of Deut 32:7: 'Ask your father, and he will declare to you; ask your elders and they will tell you'.<sup>231</sup> The *IC* was intended to be the response of self-proclaimed elders to the question how they would reform the *ecclesia*. In attempting to do so, they turned to their own fathers as well.<sup>232</sup>

At the start of the *IC*, Isidore's *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis* (*DEO*) is used to describe the various offices of the Church.<sup>233</sup> Curiously, the order of

227 Taio, *Sententiae*, cols. 831-911.

228 Taio, *Sententiae*, cols. 911-957; cols 957-990.

229 Mews and Renkin, 'Legacy of Gregory', pp. 325-333; more generally still, see Leyser, 'The memory of Gregory'. An interesting insight into the way *florilegia* were regarded in the later ninth century is provided by Notker the Stammerer in his *Notitia de Illustribus Viris*. In it, on p. 59, he recommends the use of such collections to become acquainted with the wisdom of the Fathers, as these present their work in an ordered fashion: Kaczinski, 'Reading the Church Fathers'. Many thanks to Johanna Jebe for pointing out this reference.

230 Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, p. 134.

231 Taio, *Epistola ad Eugenium*, col. 724C: 'Optaveram siquidem tuae nunc adesse praesentiae, ut sicut scriptum est: "Interroga patrem tuum, et annuntiabit tibi, majores tuos, et dicent tibi" [Deut. 32:7], ex tui oris prudentia formulam sumerem, cum in principio hujus operis velut cujusdam telae verborum texturam praeponerem'.

232 More research into the use of patristic texts in the *IC* is sorely needed: Schmitz, 'Aachen 816', pp. 497-500; Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit*, p. 62, n. 13. Both authors are writing on the *Institutio Sanctimonialium* specifically, but their points about the reception of the Church Fathers address broader issues. Forthcoming articles by Wieser, 'Beyond the Church Fathers', and Eber, 'Canons, canonesses and connections', will start to fill this niche.

233 *IC*, cc. 1-9, pp. 318-326.

these offices has been reversed. Whereas Isidore started his listing with bishops – *sacerdotes* – and worked his way downward towards the porters – *ostiarii* – before moving on to treating monks, penitents, married people, and catechumens, the *IC* started with the *ostiarii* and ascends the orders to the *sacerdos*.<sup>234</sup> One explanation for this reversal could be that the composers intended the rest of the *IC* to be about these *sacerdotes*. They may have envisaged this as a *cursus honorum* similar to the *gradi ecclesiastici* described in the Council of Reims in 813.<sup>235</sup> Apparently, this did not necessarily include monks. Isidore devoted a chapter to them, which has been left out of the *IC* entirely.<sup>236</sup> This seems to reflect the status of monks in the Carolingian discourse as being allowed to live their regulated lives more or less outside the system. Even within the *DEO*, they were the first of ‘those who carry out the ministries of religion’ to have no connection with the Temple of Solomon.<sup>237</sup> Their biblical examples were the prophets Elijah and Elisha, as well as John the Baptist, but mostly the ‘noble leaders’ who came afterwards – exemplary abbots and holy men – united by their ‘pursuit of poverty’.<sup>238</sup> The order described by Isidore started with the *sacerdotes*, the heirs of Moses, Aaron and the apostle Peter. In that scheme, it could be significant that Isidore’s most important monastic role models were prophets whose role it was to criticize authority figures and keep them on the straight and narrow.<sup>239</sup> Their calling came from God directly. Being Christians, they remained under episcopal authority, but monastic communities nonetheless fell outside of the scope of the *IC* at this point.

The *IC* is about the clergy with a function in the Temple, whose office it was to serve at the altar of the Lord.<sup>240</sup> They occupied an institution within the *ecclesia*, and they were marked as such by their tonsure:

A precedent which has been introduced by the apostles, so that those who were consecrated to serve the cult of God would be inaugurated by having their hair cut.<sup>241</sup>

234 Cf. *DEO*, lib. 2, cc. 1-14.

235 *Concilium Remense*, cc. 3-4, p. 254.

236 *DEO*, lib. 2, c. 15 (in the *CCSL* edition, this is listed as c. 16).

237 *DEO*, lib. 2, Praefatio: ‘deinceps exordia eorum qui diuino cultui ministeria religionis independunt ordine persequemur’.

238 *DEO*, lib. 2, c. 15.1.

239 For a similar case, see De Jong, ‘Becoming Jeremiah’; Booker, *Past Convictions*, p. 178.

240 Garrison, ‘The Franks as the New Israel?’, p. 156; De Jong, ‘*Sacrum palatium*’, pp. 1253-1255 points at similar imagery in the *Admonitio Generalis*.

241 *IC*, c. 1, p. 318; *DEO*, lib. 2, c. 4.1. See Goosmann, ‘The long-haired kings’; Diesenberger, ‘Hair’.

The tonsure was the principal means of identifying the clergy. It distinguished them from the laity and established their spiritual authority. The tonsure, like a *tiara*, was an external sign of their elect status.<sup>242</sup> This becomes a *Leitmotif* of this first part of the *IC*. Consistently self-reflective, it is impressed upon the bishops that they have been marked as different. This should not be limited to their tonsure or their vestments, but also to their behaviour.<sup>243</sup> They were shepherds, watchmen, and, as Isidore reminds them, that ‘is the name of a work, not of an honour’.<sup>244</sup> The idea is elaborated upon in the third part of the *IC*, where a citation from Jerome’s letter to Nepotian explains what it meant to be a member of the elite:

A clergyman, then, as he serves Christ’s church, must first understand what his name means; and then, when he realizes this, must endeavour to be that which he is called. For since the Greek word κληρος means ‘lot’ or ‘inheritance’, the clergy are so called either because they are of the lot of the Lord, or else because the Lord Himself is the fate, that is, the inheritance of the clerics. And because he himself [a cleric] is as it were a portion of the Lord, or partakes in the Lord, he should conduct himself in such a manner that he himself possesses the Lord and is possessed by the Lord.<sup>245</sup>

One did not simply become a bishop by choice, the *IC* explains. One should not enter the clergy for personal gain or for worldly honours, nor to garner praise.<sup>246</sup> It was one’s destiny, one’s duty to bear the heavy burden of authority, to act within the secular world, and still strive for holiness – two things that were not mutually exclusive, as they clarify using Pomerius’ *DVC* in chapter 19 of the *IC*, and which was a central thesis of the works of Gregory the Great as well.<sup>247</sup>

<sup>242</sup> *IC*, c. 1, p. 318; *DEO*, lib. 2, c. 4.4.

<sup>243</sup> *IC*, c. 9, p. 323; *DEO*, lib. 2, c. 5.2. More specifically still, *IC*, c. 24, p. 346; Taio, *Sententiae*, lib. 2, c. 35; Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*, lib. 2, c. 3.

<sup>244</sup> *IC*, c. 9, p. 323; *DEO*, lib. 2, c. 5.8: ‘Episcopus autem, ut quidam prudentiam ait, nomen est operis, non honoris’. Isidore has borrowed this quote from Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. 19, c. 19.

<sup>245</sup> *IC*, c. 94, p. 370: ‘Igitur clericus, qui Christi servit ecclesiae, interpretetur primo vocabulum suum et nominis diffinitione prolata nitatur esse quod dicitur. Si enim clerus Grece, Latine sors appellatur, propterea vocantur clerici, quia de sorte sunt Domini vel quia Dominus ipse sors, id est pars, clericorum est. Et quia velut ipse pars Domini est vel Dominum partem habet, talem se exhibere debet, ut ipse possideat Dominum et ipse possideatur a Domino’. A similar definition may be found in *IC*, c. 99, p. 377: see also Grifoni, ‘This is a cleric’.

<sup>246</sup> *IC*, c. 38, pp. 359–360.

<sup>247</sup> *IC*, c. 19, pp. 342–343, in a chapter called ‘Prosperi, quod sacerdotes sancti contemplativae vitae fieri participes possunt’; cf. Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa*, lib. 1, c. 13. See Leyser, ‘Let me speak, let me speak’; Timmermann, ‘Sharers’.

The text impressed upon its readers that being a bishop was a sacrifice and ultimately a humbling experience. Equally important was that, like a sacrifice, they should not succumb to excessive zeal, either. For this, they needed self-discipline and a proper education, to shield them from the dangers of being burned either from within or without. In a passage forming a bridge between the common vices of the clergy and the duties they have to fulfil, the bishops turned to Taio, who had reworked parts of Gregory the Great's *Homiliae in Ezechielium* into a culinary metaphor in which the bishop – the *doctor* – is shielded by an 'iron wall' of knowledge. This iron wall, in turn, is the *sartago* or 'frying pan' from Lev. 6:21-22, used to offer the sacrifice to the Lord, thoroughly cooked, but not burned.<sup>248</sup> Bishops should similarly be warmed by a love for God, but prevented from turning their zeal into anger or extreme strictness.<sup>249</sup>

This was emphasized because individual bishops theoretically had no mechanism of control other than their self-discipline. As shepherds of the Lord, who held the powers of binding and loosing, they had no higher authority to answer to than God.<sup>250</sup> Although this meant they would have to account for their deeds in the afterlife, those abusing their worldly position actually harmed their flock: the people who look up to their bishop, and who are bound to imitate his example. Their sins would be visited upon him as well, the authors stressed, invoking Ezekiel's famous injunction that:

When [the Lord] threatens the sinner with doom of death, and word thou give him none to leave off his sinning, die he shall, as he deserves to die, but thou for his death shalt answer to me.<sup>251</sup>

If bishops were unworthy, the entire realm would suffer.<sup>252</sup> Therefore, the *IC* stressed the importance of sharing the burdens of authority, urging the prelates to act together, as parts of the same episcopal body – or rather, as the head ruling over the body of Christianity.<sup>253</sup> If the head was badly treated,

248 Taio, *Sententiae*, c. 34, cols. 829D-832A.

249 *IC*, c. 34, p. 355; see Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechielum*, 1.12.29-30. *Doctor* is used as 'someone who teaches': Teeuwen, *Vocabulary of Intellectual Life*, pp. 76-79.

250 *IC*, c. 22, p. 344, as well as c. 12, pp. 330-336, which consists of excerpts from Augustine, *Sermo de Pastoribus*.

251 Cf. Savigni, 'L'Église et l'épiscopat'.

252 *IC*, c. 14, p. 340.

253 *IC*, c. 26, p. 340: 'Sed iam quid adnuntiet, audiamus. "Si me dicente ad impium: Impie, morte morieris, non fueris locutus ut se custodiat impius a via sua, ipse impius in iniquitate

its sickness would enter into the body.<sup>254</sup> This was why the insertion of 54 canons and papal rulings made sense. Their position between two parts of more moralistic, less overtly practical sections shows that there was more to their inclusion than merely reminding the audience of the rules with which they should have already been familiar.

The duality of authorship and audience helps explain this inclusion. The composers first and foremost reminded their audience that there were venerable rules to follow. Thus, the *IC* includes canons going back to patristic times, starting with the famous Councils of Nicaea (325), Chalcedon (451) and Antioch (341), but including a large number of other synods – all aimed at showing that episcopal authority had a long history.<sup>255</sup> The fact that they also attest to a long-standing relationship with imperial authority cannot have been lost on the participants of the council, either.<sup>256</sup> Moreover, when regarded thematically, the canons did more than merely reiterate older regulations. A large number of them were concerned with morality and misplaced feelings of superiority, from a canon stating that ‘if certain clerics advanced by their own bishops are supercilious, let them not remain whence they are unwilling to come forth’, to two closely related injunctions against ‘anyone condemning him who eats flesh [...] as though he were without hope [of salvation]’ and ‘those who are living a virgin life for the Lord’s sake, and who treat arrogantly the married’.<sup>257</sup> These were concerns not about the habits of the Carolingian clergy – be they priests, *clerici canonici*, or the bishops themselves – but about the moral superiority they seemed to think came with it. As they ascended the hierarchy, the combination of power and humility became more and more of an issue. Bishops were chosen by God and should neither refuse their burden nor think light of it. Neither, for that matter, should the clergy under their authority spurn advancement at the hands of their superiors either: they were part of the same *ordo*, and should act accordingly, even if their greater responsibility also meant they ought to exercise greater humility.

sua morietur, sanguinem vero eius de manu tua requiram” [Ez. 33:8, but cf. Ez. 3:18]. On this key moral verse, see De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 114-115; Booker, *Past Convictions*, pp. 142ff.; Kramer, ‘Justified & ancient’.

254 *IC*, c. 30, p. 352: ‘Caput enim languidum doctor est agens peccatum, cuius malum ad corpus pervenit’ (‘For the powerless head is the driving force behind sins, from where bad things come to the body’).

255 Mordek, ‘Kirchenrechtliche Autoritäten’. For an overview of Carolingian canonical collections, see Kéry, *Canonical Collections*.

256 Cf. De Jong, ‘Religion’, p. 137.

257 *IC*, c. 57 (Carthage, c. 31), p. 364; c. 65 (Gangra, c. 2), p. 365; c. 67 (Gangra, c. 10), p. 365.



Social cohesion is another main concern in this part of the *IC*. This is not only visible in the constant insistence that participants in synods had all been part of the decision-making process, but almost paradoxically also in the regulations aimed at maintaining order within the *ecclesia*.<sup>258</sup> Priests were supposed to stay in one place, no one was allowed to interfere in another diocese or parish, and excommunications by one bishop could not be ignored by another.<sup>259</sup> Liturgical practices such as fasts should be uniformly enacted, not exaggerated under the pretence of asceticism.<sup>260</sup> Like the opening chapters of the *IC*, in which Isidore's ordering of the clerical offices was reversed to ascend to the episcopacy, the canonical citations insist on hierarchy, in which 'deacons shall have *honor* from the subdeacons and all the inferior clergy', but they may not 'sit down in the presence of a priest'.<sup>261</sup> Bishops, in turn, superseded priests, archbishops stood over bishops, and synods acted as the supreme body of authority in the Church. Towering over it all stood the emperor; he did not have the power to revoke excommunications, but could be appealed to provide the plaintiff did so with the 'consent of his metropolitan'.<sup>262</sup> Only archbishops should have direct access to the emperor's ear, and only a council had more authority in ecclesiastical matters, giving the ruler a place within the ecclesiastical framework, above, but not beyond the prelates composing the text.<sup>263</sup> The emperor thus transcended clerical *ordines* without breaking free of the *ordo*.

This section of canons also includes a number of standardized rules for clerics and the sanctions they would face for breaking them. Priests were supposed to stay sober, not harbour any secular ambitions, steer clear of taverns, and, in the very first canon, are told not to live together with women, except those that are beyond suspicion.<sup>264</sup> Next to morals and *ordo*, this presents a third major theme of this part, which leads up to the final section of the *IC*: the interaction with the world and the importance one's good

258 *IC*, c. 60 (Laodicea 363, c. 24), p. 364, offers the following delineation of who were part of the *ordo ecclesiasticum*: 'a praebiteris usque ad diaconos et reliquum ecclesiasticum ordinem, id est usque ad subdiaconos, lectores, contores, exorcistas et ostiarios et ex numero continentum et monachorum' ('from the priests until the deacons and the rest of the ecclesiastical order, that is until the subdeacons, lectors, cantors, exorcists and porters or any from among the monks').

259 *IC*, c. 87 (Chalcedon, c. 20), p. 368. On excommunication: *IC*, c. 42 (Nicaea 325, c. 5), p. 361; c. 54 (Carthago 419, c. 29), p. 363; c. 70 (Antioch, c. 2), p. 366; and especially c. 72 (Antioch, c. 6), p. 366.

260 *IC*, c. 68 (Gangra, c. 18), p. 365.

261 *IC*, c. 77 (Laodicea, c. 20), p. 367.

262 *IC*, c. 73 (Antioch, c. 11), p. 366.

263 Depreux, 'Hiérarchie et ordre'; De Jong, '*Sacrum palatium*', pp.1252-1255.

264 *IC*, c. 39 (Nicaea, c. 3), p. 360.

reputation by avoiding the social stigma of *mala fama* by which those in a position of authority could lose their power along with their reputation.<sup>265</sup>

This third part of the *IC* even ends on this note, quoting, among others, two sermons of Augustine, both called *On the Way of Life of the Clergy* in the *IC*.<sup>266</sup> These sermons crown a series of letters by Jerome and a large number of passages from the *DVC* that were all concerned with the way the clergy should comport themselves. In these sermons, Augustine defended his community of canons against allegations of dishonesty, caused by the fact that some clerics kept possessions – which Augustine had expressly forbidden.<sup>267</sup> His eloquent statements against clerical wealth notwithstanding, at the heart of the matter for the Carolingian bishops was the damage to the reputation of the community. As the Church Father put it himself: ‘There are two things, conscience and reputation; conscience for yourself, reputation for your neighbour’; those in a position of power should take care not to tarnish their reputation even if they are living well.<sup>268</sup> The *IC* echoes the idea that the two should operate in harmony. As long as the clergy acted according to their good conscience, they would retain their reputation and with it, the right to act as an example to their flock:

As the apostle says, you see, ‘We have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men’ [1 Cor. 4:9]; those who love us look for something to admire in us, those who hate us malign us. We, however, set in the middle between both parties, have the duty, with the help of the Lord our God, to protect both our way of life and our reputation, lest our admirers are put to shame by our detractors.<sup>269</sup>

Good *sacerdotes* should practice what they preached. They should lead by example, and do so willingly. In exchange, their upkeep would be taken care of by the faithful, the chosen people of God.

265 Firey, ‘Blushing’, pp. 195-196. Over a decade later, similar issues would still be at the centre of attention during the council of Paris: Dutton, *Politics of Dreaming*, pp. 98-100. Cf. also Felten, ‘Laienäbte’, pp. 417-420.

266 *IC*, c. 112-113, pp. 385-394. Wieser, ‘Beyond the Church Fathers’.

267 Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, pp. 483-485.

268 *IC*, c. 112, p. 385: ‘Duae res sunt, conscientia et fama, conscientia tibi, fama proximo tuo’.

269 *IC*, c. 113, p. 389: ‘Quod enim ait apostolus: “Exspectaculum facti sumus mundo et angelis et hominibus”, qui nos amant quaerunt quod laudent in nobis; qui autem nos oderunt detrahunt nobis. Nos autem in utroque medio constituti adiuvante domino Deo nostro et vitam nostram et famam nostram sic custodire debemus, ut non erubescant de detractoribus laudatores’.

## Correcting Communities

A short *explicit* links the patristic section of the *IC* to the ‘new’ canons:

It is clear that the Holy Church is bound to follow the example of the Fathers we have quoted, whose writings show that she flourished abundantly under the teachings of the Apostles; superiors are therefore bound to take pains always to imitate the Fathers, as subordinates are to obey, for it is by following their example and their teaching that they may attain to that blissful joy where the Fathers have gone before.<sup>270</sup>

To the extent that the patristic *florilegium* was made by bishops, for bishops, it justified their position and clarified their complex relationship with the faithful, their flock, the ruler, and the Lord. They had been chosen by God, through the agency of the faithful, crowned by their tonsure and set apart not only through their appearance, but also through their blameless behaviour. Therefore, they had to ensure that they remained pure not just in the bodily sense, but also in their minds. Being ‘in the world but not of it’ was about more than maintaining their celibacy.<sup>271</sup> It was about maintaining their integrity as priests, because only if they operated *en bloc* could they form the head that controls the limbs of the body that is the *ecclesia*, and prepare the Christian people for life in the City of God.<sup>272</sup>

Although never overtly stated, the Augustinian streak visible in the *florilegium* continues throughout the ‘regular’ part of the *IC*. This was nowhere made clearer than in *caput* 114, the first chapter of the part of the *Institutio* that is explicitly framed as a discreet rule for the canonical clergy. Entitled ‘Which precepts are specifically to be applied to monks, and which to Christians in general’, it is the longest of this section and consists mostly of biblical passages not only exalting the apostolic life, but also demonstrating how Christians were able to live ‘in styles appropriate to [their] different gifts’, leading them towards their ‘holy mother, the heavenly

270 *IC*, *Explicit*, p. 394: ‘Quia ergo constat sanctam ecclesiam praedictorum patrum exempla sequi debere, quorum noscitur documentis post apostolica instituta ubertim conuscare, debent non solum praelati imitando, verum etiam subditi obsequendo usquequaque studere, qualiter eorum exemplis et doctrinis parentes ad felicitatis gaudia, quo illi praecesserunt, valeant pervenire, quoniam sicut hi, qui eorum doctrinis et exemplis summa devotione oboediunt, aeternis gaudiis inseruntur, ita nimirum ea sectari nolentes aeternis suppliciis mancipantur’.

271 De Jong, ‘*Imitatio morum*’; Beaudette, “In the world but not of it”.

272 Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, pp. 173-184; Booker, *Past Convictions*, pp. 135-136 (for a reversal of the metaphor).

Jerusalem'.<sup>273</sup> The biblical quotations used in this chapter suggest it drew on an anti-Pelagian letter written by Augustine to Hilary of Syracuse in 414 or 415.<sup>274</sup> It dealt heavily with questions of faith and free will, as well as ideas about law and its fraught relationship with the world, a subject of interest to the composers of the *IC* especially.

The first part of Letter 157 addresses the problem of Original Sin and how Christ's sacrifice absolved the world, but also how this would not enable people to automatically attain salvation without God's grace – the freedom they had been given was the freedom to choose the medicine administered by Christ, who in turn enabled them to live up to His expectations.<sup>275</sup> For Augustine, Christ's rule 'teaches us what we ought to will'.<sup>276</sup> It made God's will understandable by humans, which in turn enabled good Christians to recognize personal 'transgressions' as sins, thus allowing them, individually, to do better and thereby get a glimpse of the good life.<sup>277</sup> Connected to this is the problem of wealth and personal possessions, which is dealt with in the second part of the letter: Was being wealthy a sin in and of itself, as claimed by the Pelagians?<sup>278</sup> Augustine answered this question with a resounding no: the Bible never indicated that wealth was a bad thing.<sup>279</sup> There were nevertheless dangers to being rich. Most importantly, it was easy to forget that you owed your prosperity to God, which in turn opened you up to sins like avarice or pride.<sup>280</sup> Even if the apostolic life is, in principle, the better one, it would be wrong to condemn 'the lesser good deeds' while 'rousing people to the greater good'; someone who was generous and virtuous, and thus used 'the gift he has from God', was just as likely to attain Heaven as someone who, like a monk, had relinquished all possessions and live a truly perfect life.<sup>281</sup> After all, Augustine concluded, 'what I hold about the Church of Christ in the World is that it must carry within her both good and bad

273 *IC*, c. 114, p. 397.

274 Augustine, *Epistola 157*; Van Waesberghe, *Akense Regels*, pp. 137-165; Rees, *Pelagius*, pp. 173-174; Brown, *Augustine*, pp. 340-353.

275 Augustine, *Epistola 157*, cc. 2-8, cols. 674-677.

276 Augustine, *Epistola 157*, c. 10, col. 678: 'Ad abundantiam igitur delictorum lex nos docet, quid uelle debeamus, nisi adiuvet gratia, ut, quod volumus, valeamus et, quod valuerimus, impleamus'.

277 Augustine, *Epistola 157*, c. 17, col. 681.

278 Rees, *Pelagius*, pp. 171-173; cf. Augustine, *Epistula 156* (written by Hilarius to Augustine), cols. 673-674.

279 Augustine, *Epistola 157*, c. 23, col. 686.

280 Augustine, *Epistola 157*, c. 26, col. 686.

281 Augustine, *Epistola 157*, c. 37, col. 691.

people until the end of this world'.<sup>282</sup> That did not make the (material) world a bad place, but a dangerous one.

Although Augustine's Letter 157 is mostly quoted through the biblical quotations in *IC* 114, its ideas may be found throughout the *IC* and even the entire Early Middle Ages.<sup>283</sup> For instance, the idea that those *not* living an apostolic life may still aspire to holiness had been brought up using Pomerius and Jerome already, whereas Gregory the Great's assertion that to be a bishop was to be a 'sacrifice' implied the absence of choice, even though it should not prevent them from trying their best regardless.<sup>284</sup> On the other hand, this Augustinian link also demonstrates why the bishops' responsibilities would not convey unto them any form of superiority. They were reminded that 'no-one, no matter how powerful, could know whether their actions were in accord with the inscrutable agency of God's grace'.<sup>285</sup> Their authority may have been granted by God, but that only provided them with the means to give their flocks the possibility of choosing His grace. They should therefore guard themselves against 'spiritual élitism' as well as against the baser threats posed by the world – a world that they, unlike monks, could not avoid.

This posed an interesting conundrum. It went right to the heart of the *IC*'s narrative goals and touched upon monastic and canonical communities alike. This was about church possessions, about wealth and how to deal with it. As the *IC* implied, monks only lived a secluded, apostolic life because bishops watched over them and allowed them sustenance out of the possessions of the church. The implication was that they were theoretically shielded by their cloistered existence and their adherence to a *regula*, but bishops could nonetheless impose themselves on the one link these communities had with the world outside: their land.<sup>286</sup> This was where monks still required episcopal protection, and, *mutatis mutandis*, where they remained under episcopal responsibility. 'The life of canons and monks should not differ when it comes to avoiding vice and cultivating virtue', the *IC* intones.<sup>287</sup>

282 Augustine, *Epistola 157*, c. 40, cols. 692-693: 'Unde quia ex hac quidem occasione sed tamen iam breviter dixi, quid etiam de ecclesia Christi in hoc saeculo sentiam, id est quia usque ad huius saeculi finem necesse est portet bonos et malos'. This is, essentially, the *corpus permixtum* mentioned above.

283 Goetz, 'Idéologie (et anti-idéologie)'.

284 This is a line of reasoning also visible in Smaragdus, *Diadema Monachorum*, c. 67: accepting one's fate/faith (as a Christian) means breaking free of servitude from the law and attaining freedom to follow God's 'rules' by one's own volition.

285 Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, p. 7.

286 This was not a new issue either: Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, pp. 32-36.

287 *IC*, c. 115, p. 397: 'non tamen in cavendis vitiis et amplectendis virtutibus eorum a monachorum distare debet vita'.

This was a challenge more than an affirmation to canonical communities, who, unlike monks, were not shielded from secular affairs by their *regula* or the episcopal assistance they received managing the *res ecclesiae*.

Bishops – and the canonical clergy in general, ‘who can lawfully draw on their own resources as well as on those of the Church’ – were more vulnerable to temptation than monks.<sup>288</sup> Their lives were not set in a monastic reflection of paradise, but in a world that harbours good and evil next to one another. Carolingian canons were not supposed to be monks.<sup>289</sup> Their communities were not as shielded as monastic communities were, and the clergy living there was more prone to sin.<sup>290</sup> To keep the members of those communities from erring was added to the task of their pastor.

These and similar problems were mostly addressed in the first two sections of the *IC*, which was not a comprehensive set of rules per se, but a series of elaborations on the patristic and canonical precepts contained in the *florilegium*. It was shown how these rules worked in practice, for communities that lived behind walls – hence the importance of porters – but which remained ‘open to the world outside’ all the same.<sup>291</sup> These were precepts for a good Christian life, meant to shield those who heeded them even when they ventured outside to perform their pastoral duties.<sup>292</sup> Within the confines of the *IC*, maintaining these ‘internal cloisters’ was one of the main functions of the *praepositus*. As much as Benedict of Nursia warned against having the episcopacy enmeshed in monastic affairs, for the composers of the *IC*, bishops were tasked not only with caring for the physical enclosure of canonical communities, but also with ‘strengthening the minds of his subordinates [...] lest the invisible wolf find a passage to enter the Lord’s sheepfold’.<sup>293</sup> He was to do so both ‘in a spiritual sense’ and with ‘strong walls all around’. Failure to take proper care of his flock made him liable to be punished by God. For transgressions against worldly rules, however, bishops would also face the judgement of a synod.<sup>294</sup> Again, it shows how bishops who were responsible for their flock were also tasked with policing their peers.

288 *IC*, c. 115, p. 397. See also *IC*, c. 116, p. 398.

289 Oexle, ‘Les moines d’occident’; Heitz, ‘De Chrodegang à Cluny II’.

290 Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, pp. 58–59 and p. 70.

291 De Jong, ‘Internal cloisters’, p. 221.

292 Cf. Smith, ‘*Aedificatio sancti loci*’, p. 389.

293 *IC*, c. 117, p. 398: ‘Praepositorum officii est, ut subditorum mentes sanctarum scripturarum lectionibus assidue muniant, ne lupus invisibilis aditum inveniatur, quo ovile Domini ingredi et aliquam ovium subripere valeat’.

294 *IC*, c. 117, p. 398.

By starting the final part of the *IC* with this distinction between monks and everybody else, the composers confirmed that maintaining the separate status of monasteries in the Carolingian empire remained a challenge. So was coming to terms with the existence of canonical communities. Both had their place within the existing order, neither was inherently superior to the other, and both had rules that they should adhere to. For monasteries, these would be documented, as anything from a 'Holy Rule' to an exemplary *vita* – both of which might also serve as commentaries on their position in the world.<sup>295</sup> Thus, in spite of the practical shortcomings of a written rule in reality, the idea underlying the *IC* was that the lives of monks would be regulated in absolute terms.<sup>296</sup> This was a luxury they could afford, the *IC* implies, because the virtues of their bishop shielded them from the dangers of the world. In return, monasteries not only wielded the power of prayer, but were also expected to share the knowledge gained during their 'perfect' lives, and radiate their holiness outwards.

The clergy around a bishop depended on him for guidance.<sup>297</sup> They were more visible than monks, especially since they were expected to perform their pastoral duties both inside their own city and in the wider context of their *civitas* or diocese.<sup>298</sup> Consequently, the move to institute canonical communities and to follow Chrodegang of Metz's lead in providing them with guidelines on how to live their lives may have been born from an increased desire to keep them close and disciplined: as the boundaries between the two types of community blurred, a more institutionalized distinction became necessary. As argued by Stephen Ling in his PhD dissertation, this was deemed necessary in part precisely because of the novelty of Chrodegang's text: his *Regula* needed to be firmly grounded in the authoritative canons of the past.<sup>299</sup> It is for this reason that the source material for both overlaps to such an extent, whereas the two texts do end up taking different approaches to the challenges laid before them.

Both canonical and monastic communities were defined by the learned men living there, held together by the *claustrum* at the centre. Now, the

295 Diem, 'Carolingians and the *Regula Benedicti*'.

296 Cf. Diem, 'Inventing the Holy Rule', pp. 68-69.

297 *IC*, c. 145, p. 420.

298 On the idea of cities in the Carolingian era, see Devroey, 'Economy', pp. 110-113; Verhaeghe, 'Urban developments'; McCormick, 'Where do trading towns come from?', pp. 57-58, and Theuws, 'Where is the eighth century'. See also Smith, *Europe after Rome*, pp. 52-59 and pp. 286-287, and Niermeyer et al., *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon*, pp. 183-184. On canonical clergy and their pastoral duties, see Ling, 'Interactions'.

299 Ling, *Cloister and Beyond*.

Carolingian drive to order society required that they be distinguished in a more official manner. The guiding principle was similar to that behind the local *correctio* that was applied to village priests: partly intended to ensure their loyalty to the regulations formulated by those above them, and partly to ensure that proper Christianity would trickle down to the general populace.<sup>300</sup> In both cases, these clerical regulations were not simply rules to follow or ignore. The aim of the *IC* was also to help canons internalize the Christianity that was supported by the court and to make these priests, lectors, exorcists and porters worthy of their tonsure. The remainder of the *IC* dealt with the amount of possessions (and food) canons were allowed to have, the dangers inherent in receiving them, and the challenge of allowing new members into the community, together presenting the 'system' the Aachen Council had set out to create.<sup>301</sup> It was an Augustinian system, and a Gregorian, but also a Carolingian one, in which everybody knew their place for the greater good, and in which the court and the emperor were doing what they could to prevent their subjects from committing sins.<sup>302</sup>

The key to all this was that cornerstone of Carolingian cultural policy: education. As was made clear throughout the *IC*, this was a two-way process. Bishops were teachers and students, subordinating themselves to the teachings of the Bible, while also conferring their knowledge to the clergy under them. This was the essence of the Carolingian episcopacy: the ability to provide the faithful with 'twofold nourishment', or the ability to 'know what you teach' while also teaching what they know.<sup>303</sup>

### Communicating *Correctio*

It is in this regard that the court's presence becomes most obvious, and where a link with the groundwork laid under Charlemagne is visible: it could not have escaped anyone present that the imperial court was acting

300 On the implementation of this more localized *correctio*, see Van Rhijn, *Shepherds*.

301 On the different approaches to communal life in the *Regula* of Chrodegang and this part of the *IC*, see Ling, *Cloister and Beyond*, pp. 159-198.

302 On whether or not there was anything like a programme of 'political Augustinianism' first proposed by Arquillère, *L'Augustinisme Politique*, see Contreni, 'Carolingian Era, early', p. 125: 'what Carolingian readers knew of Augustine provided the raw material they drew upon with surprising degrees of freedom to address issues that concerned their society'; cf. Close, 'O *insecabilis unitas?*'. *IC*, c. 114, pp. 396-397.

303 *IC*, c. 123, pp. 403-404. On *disce quod doceas*, see, for example, c. 94, pp. 370-371; c. 96, p. 389. Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, p. 120.



as the entity providing this ‘twofold nourishment’ to the bishops, teaching those who were to lead by example themselves.<sup>304</sup> This may be seen in the *Prologus* to the *IC*, where the organization of the synod and the role of Louis the Pious in its proceedings were described. Additionally, the letters sent to the archbishops Sicharius of Bordeaux and Arn of Salzburg shed light on the system behind these good intentions, and show the court in action once again. Both bishops were absent from the council, and both were sent a copy of the *IC* to inform them of the decisions made.

The *Prologus* begins by explaining the deplorable state of the Church by referring to the ignorance and/or laziness of neglectful *praepositi* – a clear sign that something was amiss at the meeting point between the *ecclesia* and the rest of the world.<sup>305</sup> More importantly, the text shows a ruler taking control. In an early indication that the emperor wanted to present himself as the one overseeing the overseers, it is detailed how it was he who ‘summoned a holy and general Council to the palace at Aachen’ in order to ‘initiate [...] many harmonious and necessary measures for the improvement of the Holy Church of God’.<sup>306</sup> Louis the Pious ‘consulted [*consuleret*] the said holy and venerable council [...] and admonished all by giving counsel [*consulendo admoneret*] it as well’, an interesting play on the verb *consulere* as indicating both the giving and the taking of advice. Furthermore, he also admonished them to make the very *florilegium* now known as the *IC* in order to educate ‘the simpleminded and less intelligent’ clerics, but also to explain what it meant to be a bishop, and to ensure that those ‘belong to the canonical profession’ would know which path to take.<sup>307</sup>

304 Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, pp. 123-124.

305 *IC*, Prologus, p. 312: ‘immo consulendo admoneret super quibusdam ecclesiarum praepositis, qui partim ignorantia, partim desidia subditorum curam parvipendebant et hospitalitatem minus iusto diligebant, quid facto opus esset’ (‘Among other matters it happened that he consulted the said holy and venerable council, which had met with the favour of God and decreed that all should so consult it, on what should be done about certain provosts of churches who were taking insufficient care over their subordinates, and were less than generous in their hospitality, partly through ignorance, partly through laziness’, trans. Bertram, *Chrodegang Rules*, p. 132).

306 *IC*, Prologus, p. 312: ‘Cum in nomine sanctae et individuae trinitatis christianissimus ac gloriosissimus Hludowicus superno munere victor augustus [...] Aquisgrani palatio generalem sanctumque convocasset conventum et coepisset secundum ardentissimam erga divinum cultum sibi caelitus inspiratam voluntatem multa congrua et necessaria de emendatione sanctae Dei ecclesiae’. Cf. Werner, ‘Gouverner l’empire’, pp. 101-102; Depreux, ‘Louis le Pieux réconsidéré?’, pp. 199-200.

307 *IC*, Prologus, p. 312: ‘quatenus omnes, qui canonica censentur professione, per viam propositi sui inoffenso gressu incederunt et in Christi militia devotius unanimes atque concordēs existerunt’.

The assembled prelates were happy to follow this admonition. In a passage rich in the vocabulary of empire, they rejoiced in their ‘pious and benevolent prince who was wise and devout in providing for all the needs of the Church’, and set about drawing a ‘description of that way of life as the emperor had instructed them’. It was even noted explicitly that many of them were already familiar with that canonical way of life, in order to emphasize that they were not reinventing the wheel.<sup>308</sup> Moreover, they were able to do so because Louis gave them:

Access to a great abundance of books, from which they could select authoritative canons and writings of the Fathers, as one might gather flowers from different meadows.<sup>309</sup>

Thanks to the imperial court, the bishops were not only admonished to do something about the education of their canonical clergy, but also put in a position to act accordingly. Given the compilatory nature of the *IC*, the insistence on the books made available by Louis the Pious is important. With this statement, the emperor was identified as the one providing the sources for the re-education of the clergy. This point was further developed in the narrative of how the canons were accepted:

Then the most victorious *princeps* and all who were present shouted, ‘Thanks be to God!’, and nor were they wrong to do so, for it was God himself who for his inscrutable purposes and by his gracious inspiration had persuaded the said emperor to promote it, and in his mercy had helped him bring it into effect.<sup>310</sup>

308 *IC*, Prologus, p. 312: ‘Ad quam etiam admonitionem sacer conventus intimo gaudio repletus, expansis in caelum manibus, creatori omnium gratias agens benedixit, quippe qui talem tam pium tamque benignum ecclesiae suae sanctae principem cunctisque eius necessitatibus sapientissimum ac devotissimum praetulerit procuratorem. Suscipientes ergo libentissime hilariterque eius saluberrimam multis Deo miserante profuturam admonitionem licet plerique auxiliante Christo devote ac relegiose cum sibi subiectis canonicam servent institutionem et in plerisque locis idem ordo plenissime servetur, omnium tamen id animis sedit, ut secundum eiusdem principis admonitionem’.

309 *IC*, Prologus, pp. 313: ‘una divino freti auxilio et eiusdem piissimi principis non modico adiuti iuvamine, eius videlicet liberalissima largitione copiam librorum prae manibus habentes, ex canonica auctoritate et sanctorum patrum dictis, veluti ex diversis pratis quosdam flosculos carpentes, hanc institutionis formam exciperent et canonicis observandam conferrunt’.

310 *IC*, Prologus, p. 313: ‘ab eodem victoriosissimo principe et ab omnibus, qui aderant, ‘Deo gratias’ adclamatum est. Nec inmerito: quippe qui et occulta sua dispensatione et gratissima inspiratione pefatum principem, ut id moveret fieri, compulset et, ut ad effectum perducatur, miserando adiuvit’.

While the inspiration may have come from God, the actual groundwork was done by the more erudite members of the council. The facilities and content of the court library had enabled their efforts.<sup>311</sup> This is indicated, for example, by the fact that the canons used in the *IC* all seem to stem from the canonical collection known as the *Dionysio-Hadriana*, given by pope Hadrian to Charlemagne upon the latter's visit to Rome in 774.<sup>312</sup> This text symbolized the connection between Rome and Aachen, which might therefore indicate that the bishops wanted to channel the authority of Rome into Aachen without being fully dependent upon it.<sup>313</sup> After all, the divine inspiration behind the *IC* had gone through the emperor. He, together with those who 'unanimously agreed' on the text, would be responsible for the implementation of the new order.<sup>314</sup>

It may be that the scribes were pandering to the emperor here, casting his role in the proceedings in a more positive light than reality would permit. Nevertheless, this was one of the goals of the text. This document presented the Frankish bishops with a chance to define their role in the world, but it was acknowledged that they needed to do so in relation to the empire and the court that enabled them to do so in the first place.<sup>315</sup> It was also a way for the new emperor to establish himself as a benevolent ruler of the *ecclesia*, and his court as the centre of his educational efforts.<sup>316</sup>

This also follows from the copies sent by Louis the Pious to two prelates who had not been to Aachen, archbishops Sicharius of Bordeaux and Arn of Salzburg. Their representatives, Adalhelm and Notho, respectively, were sent home with a full version of the text (including the *Institutio Sanctimonialum*), together with a letter from the emperor, containing his plans for the implementation of the ideas proposed at the council.<sup>317</sup>

311 On the contents of this library under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, see Bischoff, 'Hofbibliothek Karls des Großen', and Bischoff, 'Die Hofbibliothek unter Ludwig dem Frommen'; see also Bullough, 'Charlemagne's Court Library'.

312 Bertram, *Chrodegang Rules*, pp. 87-88. See also Ganshof, 'The Church'; Hen, *Royal Patronage*, pp. 65-68; De Jong, 'Charlemagne's Church', pp. 116-117; Schieffer, *Redeamus ad fontem*; Firey, 'Mutating monsters'.

313 Fried, 'Ludwig der Fromme', takes a very mechanistic view of the relation between the two, arguing that the Carolingian reforms an attempt to establish independence from papal primacy; this misrepresents the relation between Rome and Aachen, both of which profited equally from a strong religious identity north of the Alps: Noble, 'Papacy'.

314 *IC*, Prologus, p. 313.

315 Haberl, 'Hofbibliothek', overstates the role of the court in 'enforcing' these reforms, but convincingly assesses the importance of the library and the idea of authenticity it represented for the pursuit of reforms.

316 See also Contreni, 'Pursuit of knowledge'.

317 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*.

Archbishop Magnus of Sens, who had to leave early, was also sent a definitive version of the *IC*, with accompanying letter and two *missi* to assist him in the name of Louis. These letters form a great addition to the *IC* as a document of ecclesiastical policy. They supplement the image presented in the conciliar acts about the involvement of the court in the ongoing process of Church reform, and also illustrate in a practical sense how Louis dealt with the interdependence between court, canon and cloister outlined by the *IC*.

The letters are very similar, although a few noteworthy differences embellish the image they give when viewed together. They all start by referencing the ‘sacred and venerable Council assembled recently under the blessing of God and at our request in the palace at Aachen’, although it is clear immediately that Magnus of Sens had actually been present. He was personally involved in the decision to send a copy of the definitive text to Sens, whereas the other two bishops were reminded that a council had taken place with a terse: ‘We are confident that this has not escaped the notice of Your Holiness’.<sup>318</sup> The letters emphasize the importance of the *IC* as it had been established: in accordance with their *ministerium*, the recipients were to summon the bishops under them so that ‘the text of the Rule [...] may be read out to them, chapter by chapter’, so they could learn how ‘the sacred council produced it in order to promote the dignity of the leaders of the Church and the salvation of souls’.<sup>319</sup> Then, the bishops may copy the *IC* for themselves, but only, the emperor stresses, ‘in such a manner that it is not distorted by a careless writer, or in any way abbreviated by anyone’ – a warning that had apparently not been heeded by everybody.<sup>320</sup>

These last points are especially important, as they reminded the bishops where the text came from: the court. A definitive copy would be ‘stored in the archive of the palace’, and that copy should serve as the benchmark for all subsequent versions – not, as added in the letters sent to Magnus and Sicharius, an earlier redaction that had earlier been erroneously read to the council.<sup>321</sup> By insisting that the version of the *IC* in Aachen was the

318 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, p. 458.

319 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, p. 459.

320 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, p. 459: ‘ut ab his, qui eam transcripturi sunt, ita transcribatur, ut nec depravata vitio scriptoris nec detruncata ab aliquo fiat, sed, sicut a praedicto misso nostro eis demonstratum fuerit, absque aliqua depravatione vel detruncatione transcribatur’.

321 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, pp. 459-460: ‘Noveris etiam, quia ideo illius exemplum apud armarium palatii nostri detentum est, ut eo probari patenter possit, quis eam

definitive one, Louis effectively extended the importance of the court as established in the Prologue: at first the council was dependent on the books furnished by the emperor, and now, the court assumed responsibility over the purity of the end product, a text that has been made *sacrum* by virtue of the fact that it was composed by a council. The text had earned its place next to the venerable *RB*, of which a copy had allegedly been procured by Louis' father at Montecassino.<sup>322</sup> In that sense, it is noteworthy that this passage was omitted in its entirety from the letter sent to Arn; perhaps Louis did not feel the need to mention this to the experienced courtier, but it seems more probable that its omission follows from the observation that prelates from the dioceses of Bordeaux and Sens were present, whereas nobody from Salzburg attended, ensuring that only the definitive version had reached the Bavarian archdiocese. Participation was and remained the key to influence.

The letters warned the archbishops that 'next September' *missi* would be sent throughout the empire to check 'which of the prelates are performing the duties laid on him diligently; which ones have obeyed our commands about building enclosures and other closures for the canons', and 'which ones have been so avaricious as to deny the support they could reasonably have given to those who serve Christ'.<sup>323</sup> These envoys reported directly to the imperial court, so Louis would know who to reward, and who to 'make into an example to strike fear into others'.<sup>324</sup> Curiously, the instructions to the bishops (and the *missi*) may have differed slightly according to the recipient of the letters. Magnus, Arn and Sicharius were all notified that the imperial envoys had to oversee the copying and distribution of the text of the *IC* within their diocese. Whereas the latter two archbishops were told that the *missi* had to complete or take charge of this task, however, for Magnus, who had been present at the council and should therefore have realized the importance of this charge, the *missi* were there to assess the situation.<sup>325</sup> Similarly, when Louis forewarned

incuriose transcriperit vel quis aliquam eius partem detruncaverit'.

322 Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, pp. 136-137. Cf. Meyvaert, 'Problems'.

323 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, pp. 460-461: 'perquirere iubebimus, quis praelatorum iniunctum sibi officium strenue peragat vel quis in claustris canonicorum et ceteris habitationibus construendis [...] vel quis causa avaritiae eos, quos in Christi milicia rationabiliter alere poterat, propulerit'.

324 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, pp. 461: 'Proinde qui hoc anni tempore in hoc negotio nostrae admodum iussioni pro viribus obedire neglexerit ceteris sine dubio terrori erit, ne tale admittere praesumant'. This warning was only sent to Sicharius.

325 Compare Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, p. 462: 'cuncta procurans diligenterque perficiens, cum ad nos illum redire opere expleto tempus permiserit' ('after he has arranged

the recipients of his letters of the coming of the *missi*, he wrote to Arn and Sicharius that:

The space of one year is allowed for the performance of the things decreed above, so that where they have not yet been done, they can be easily carried out.<sup>326</sup>

Magnus, on the other hand, already knew of this one-year buffer period, so the emperor wrote him that he would assign people to clear away any remaining opposition if ‘those we sent ahead’ had not been able to suitably do so within the year.<sup>327</sup> This grace period is nowhere mentioned in the actual text of the *IC*, and when Louis writes ‘as you are aware’ in the letter to Magnus it appears that the bishops had already been instructed about this at the palace in Aachen. The versions sent to the archbishops of Salzburg and Bordeaux were accompanied by more than mere cover letters. The letters represented the synod and its decisions, but the *missi* who carried them had the full weight of imperial authority behind them.<sup>328</sup> As Louis made clear, this superseded the power of individual bishops.

### Channelling Authority

The *IC* was a moral treatise first and a set of rules for canons second. As a whole, it illustrates the interaction between imperial power and ecclesiastical elites at the start of the reign of Louis the Pious. The emperor, as rector, instigated this whole project and, by implication, took responsibility for its outcome. The bishops, on the other hand, were expected to teach what they had been taught at court, and thereby share the divine burden of the emperor to carry out the proposed ‘reforms’. The sentiment was elegantly

everything and brought it to a successful conclusion, and the work is finished, it will be time for him to return to us’) (to Arno and Sicharius) with ‘cuncta procurantes diligenterque taxantes, cum ad nos illos redire opere expleto tempus permiserit’ (‘after they have *assessed* everything, and the work is finished, it will be time for them to return to us’) (to Magnus); trans. based on Bertram, *Chrodegang Rules*, pp. 173-174; emphases added by the author.

326 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, p. 461: ‘quia unius anni spacium dedimus, ut ea, quae premissa sunt, absque ullius difficultatis excusatione perfici, ubi necdum facta erant, facillime possent’.

327 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, p. 461: ‘quia, ut haec, quae praemisimus, absque ullius difficultatis oppositione in locis, in quibus facta nondum erant, fieri opportunissime possent, unius anni spatium, sicut nosti, ad haec peragenda tribuimus’.

328 On the authority of letters and those bearing them, see McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 218-222.

summarized in the closing sentence of the emperor's letters to the absentee archbishops:

It is truly proper and just that, in the measure in which you are exalted above others by the dignity of your high priesthood, and are held by us in reverence and affection, all the more you shall show yourself prompt and dutiful in obeying the will of God, which is our own.<sup>329</sup>

Completing the circle of interdependence, Louis nevertheless still required the bishops to pray for him.<sup>330</sup>

The authors behind the *IC* sought to redefine the function of authority itself, and its role within an *ecclesia* in which everyone should have equal chances of receiving God's grace. In order to make this possible, it was important not only to establish everybody's place within the Carolingian order, but also to define the roles and responsibilities of everybody who was a part of the elite, who would be in a position to enable others to attain the heavenly Jerusalem. The *IC* should not be seen as merely a set of regulations for canonical communities under the *aegis* of those discussing said rules. It was a reflection on the authority of the prelates, formulated by these very same prelates as they composed their own *speculum*. They were not putting old wine into new skins. This was a text about the essence of episcopal power, embedded in a hierarchical model that relied as much on responsibility as on obedience, if not more so.<sup>331</sup> The story of its inception and its dissemination confirms that imperial and episcopal authority went hand in hand during the councils of Aachen, and continued to do so in the minds of its participants. In the course of this narrative, the authors justified their own position.

The place of monks and canons vis-à-vis their bishop, their abbot or their ruler was but one of many themes in the *IC*. Drawing lines between all types of 'living together' remained the subject of heavy debate.<sup>332</sup> It was not simply

329 Louis the Pious, *Epistolae ad Archiepiscopos*, p. 464: 'Dignum quippe iustumque est, ut, quanto sublimius sacerdotii dignitate aliis superemines et a nobis venerabiliter diligeris, tanto magis ad Dei nostramque voluntatem exequendam devotionem te atque promptiorem exhibeas. Vale in Domino et ora pro nobis'. The addition of *iustumque* is absent in the letter to Magnus.

330 Generally, see Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 131-160.

331 Compare Choy, 'Deposit of monastic faith', on what she calls the 'essence of monasticism' (p. 81) and how this was also described using a multitude of sources.

332 Noble, 'Monastic ideal', pp. 248-249; Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, pp. 115-134; the contributions to an upcoming volume (Kramer, Kurdziel and Ward, *Categorising the Church*) will focus specifically on the separation between monastic and canonical communities in the early ninth century.

a question of defining one single community in uniform surroundings, and neither did the prelates involved feel qualified to elevate one single ideal to a normative level. Instead, the councils of 813 and the *Institutio Canoniorum* should be seen as proposals on how to deal with the multiplicity of options available to the Carolingian *ecclesia*.

The preferential treatment of the *RB* was one way of coping with this diversity. Other than that, the massive compilation made in Aachen in 816 gives the impression that the bishops were not attempting to uniformize the Church, but to demonstrate how one might live in the best way possible in spite of persisting differences. After all, everybody bore some degree of responsibility for everyone else's salvation, but some were more heavily burdened than others.<sup>333</sup>

This flexibility was already implicit in the texts produced. The compilers of the *IC* compared their work to 'gathering little flowers from different meadows', and used the otherwise obscure Visigothic Bishop Taio's summary of Gregory's works instead of actually revisiting the works of the pope. The opening of the *IC*, detailing the different grades of the ecclesiastical order described by Isidore of Seville, are reminiscent of the beginning of the Council of Reims, where different functions within the *ecclesia* were likened to figures from the biblical past in words that also echo Isidore. Finally, although this chapter has mainly focused on the rhetoric supporting episcopal authority and the way those involved in creating these texts framed their own place in the greater social whole, it should be noted that many of the behavioural rules given in 813 were actually repeated in the *IC*. Often, this was done with the same concerns for the virtue of the clergy on the one hand, and the upholding of their reputation on the other; drunkenness, concubinage, corruption and the misuse of church buildings, among others, were abuses to be avoided not only because they were sinful, but also because they would tarnish the reputation of priests, the bishops who were responsible for them, etc. The rules were thus not exclusively aimed at forcing priests, monks and canons to act in a certain way, but also presented a way to explain how to maintain the moral high ground and thus their own authority.

Even with the limited number of sources tapped and the broad scope they nonetheless have, it seems clear that the ecclesiastical elites, centred on the palace in Aachen, wanted to present itself as a stable community, held together by a shared pool of texts and a common way of discussing them. These texts took on many different meanings depending on the context

333 Staubach, 'Populum Dei'.



within which they operated. Nonetheless, the letters, compilations, capitularies and conciliar acts cited were all products of that same community, and reflected concerns, hopes and anxieties shared among its members. As such, they represent a particular way of dealing with the challenges presented by the court. More importantly, they shared a willingness to develop this discourse by means of a perpetual debate within the community, and with those that were situated on – or just outside – the margins. The inheritance of Louis the Pious accelerated rather than dampened their willingness to reflect on the nature of the empire.<sup>334</sup> The first step towards resolving any challenge on the path of the Carolingians was to establish a conversation between the parties involved. The court, having established itself as the instigator of such dialogues in the course of the eighth century, arguably reached its zenith during the reign of Louis the Pious.<sup>335</sup> If the composition and promulgation of the *IC* marked a high point in this development, this should by no means be seen to imply that that particular chapter of the debate about the *ecclesia* had been closed. This was a debate that was opened when Jesus told his followers to ‘Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s’, that was continued in the age of Constantine, and that was still going strong at the turn of the ninth century. The use of the councils of 813 in tenth- and eleventh-century compilations on church reform, for instance, shows that these matters were still pressing centuries later. Moreover, the common core of texts shows that writing conciliar *acta* was a rhetorical device in itself. It showed how the ideas around which the Carolingian discourse community revolved were evolving with each debate.

No text is an island. Around the same time as the composition of the *Institutio Canonorum*, the palace in Aachen was buzzing with activity and productivity, and among the compositions features a whole corpus of longer and shorter normative texts pertaining to the daily life in monastic communities.<sup>336</sup> The many different reactions to the initiatives from Aachen reflect as many different attempts to make these measures palatable for local communities, most of which seemed to have been willing to attach themselves to the ideology of an imperial *ecclesia* as propagated from the court, but not at the cost of their own identities and traditions. To them, unity

334 Sassier, *Royauté et Idéologie*, pp. 131-135.

335 See, for example, Semmler, ‘Administration und Schriftlichkeit’, who, on p. 78 draws attention to the *IC* and the letters to Arno, Sicharius and Magnus. Moore, *Sacred Kingdom*, pp. 286-287.

336 A large number of these may be found in Hallinger, *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum* 1.

and diversity were not mutually exclusive.<sup>337</sup> From a courtly point of view, (moral) authority was vital, though, and it is important not to forget that matters of power and authority and the acceptance of imperial centrality set the agenda of many such debates. The work done in Aachen in the first five years of the reign of Louis the Pious neither marked the end of a development, nor the start of a new way of thinking. It was part of an ongoing story, an ongoing debate, and it was still far from over.

In order to showcase an influential strain of thought about the nature of rulership and its role within the *ecclesia* at the time, the next chapter will look at ideals of authority and Christian living formulated by one of the most prominent intellectuals operating at the Carolingian court. This was Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, who had taken it upon himself to educate his peers about the correct way of living. In doing so, he presented a more theoretical, lucid approach to the issues treated in the *IC*. Distilling the many visions of empire he encountered at court, Smaragdus' goal was to instil upon his audience a clear sense of right and wrong, a sense of the responsibilities they had to bear, and, most importantly, a clear sense of direction on the *via regia* that would lead them towards salvation.

337 Kottje, 'Einheit und Vielfalt', pp. 341-342.



### 3. Monks on the *Via Regia*: The World of Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel

The *IC* and the 813 councils show a debate in full swing. The *acta* composed in their wake reveal an idealized world in which both the emperor and his bishops accepted each other's advice, and were willing to act upon it. It was a world which accepted the imperial court as an instigator and arbiter, but only on the condition that the emperor would accept the role of the episcopate as shepherds, guides and, ultimately, as expert authors.<sup>1</sup> The relation between ruler and adviser was not always self-evident and was easily strained as criticism of the ruler could easily be construed as a critique of his entourage, and vice versa.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the development of Carolingian authority at the time influenced – and was influenced by – the way members of the extended court translated criticism of the ruler into reflections on kingship itself. Commenting on rulership became part of the paradoxical relation between the king, who stood at the undisputed top of the hierarchy, and his entourage, without whom his power would not be supported.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, any attempt to aid a ruler in his attempts at improving the *ecclesia* ran the risk of being construed as a critique, as it was impossible to construct ideas about *correctio* without holding a mirror up to the audience.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the very existence of texts advising the court on which ecclesiastical policies to implement implies a discourse community that agreed on an end point, but which was all but forced to recognize that there were many ways that led there.<sup>5</sup>

In the early ninth century, it was clear to contemporary observers that the relation between ruler and court was still in full development. Under the weight of far-reaching political processes and exacerbated by internal strife, the goals, aims and ideals of the participants in this competition for favour and influence were continuously shifting.<sup>6</sup> These phenomena have

1 Suchan, 'Kirchenpolitik', pp. 8-9.

2 For example, the chamberlain Bernard of Septimania bore the brunt of the initial wave of criticism about the policies of Louis the Pious: De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 185-213, and Hummer, *Politics and Power*, pp. 160-163.

3 Innes, *State and Society*, pp. 188-189.

4 Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 259-284; Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, esp. pp. 80-131. Cf. also Rouche, 'Miroirs'.

5 Dutton, *Politics of Dreaming*, p. 83.

6 On the role of poetry in the Carolingian competition for royal favour and intellectual standing, see Tigolet, 'Jeux poétiques'.

been researched from many different perspectives, allowing for an image of the Carolingian court that is as nuanced as it is complicated.<sup>7</sup> Instead of attempting a broad generalization, this chapter will focus on one specific author and his place in the greater scheme of things. Doing this will allow us to regard one individual's advice of dealing with the complications of everyday life for the elites of the empire as he took his own role as one of the leading intellectual of the *ecclesia* to heart. While not a *pars pro toto* for the entire elite culture of the early ninth century, his views of the interdependence between individual and society and between worldly and heavenly concerns allow us to relate the reform attempts described in the preceding chapter to the concerns one person would have for the world around him.

This author was Smaragdus, abbot of Saint-Mihiel (r. 805-827/840).<sup>8</sup> Straddling the line between cloister and court in a way few of his contemporaries could emulate, Smaragdus was an astute observer and commentator on the burdens of power and the wages of *correctio*. He proposed a combination of monastic and imperial ideologies in terms of the image of the *via regia* – the metaphorical 'king's highway' that all good Christians walk on their way to salvation.<sup>9</sup> This image guided Smaragdus' own thoughts. He develops it in the course of three of his major works, namely his commentary on the *RB* and two moral treatises known as the *Via Regia* and the *Diadema Monachorum*. In what follows, it will be shown how monastic and imperial ideals did not simply occur side by side in his mind, but actually overlapped to a large extent. This chapter works from the assumption that the ideas contained within the works of Smaragdus are reflective of a particular discourse community centred on the court. They were a contemplation on the interaction between ruler and subject while simultaneously remaining the product of one author's individual mind-set and his views on the world around him.<sup>10</sup>

7 Among the many works devoted to this subject, Fleckenstein, 'Karl der Große und sein Hof', and the collection by the same author, *Ordnungen und formende Kräfte des Mittelalters* deserve mention; the collected works of Airlie, *Power and Its Problems*, and Nelson, *Courts, Elites, and Gendered Power*, present important insights as well. McKitterick, *Charlemagne*; De Jong, *Penitential State*; and Nelson, *Charles the Bald* give a comprehensive overview of three generations of Carolingian rulers, while MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, and Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, analyse the reigns of Charles the Fat and Louis the German. Most recently, West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*, shows how the Carolingian system continued to make its presence felt after the dynasty had disappeared from the political scene.

8 We know next to nothing about Smaragdus' time of death, save for some oblique references in a later chronicle and the sources that mention him: Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 13-14 and pp. 19-20.

9 Generally, see Wallace-Hadrill, 'Via regia'.

10 Pohl, 'Introduction: ego trouble?', pp. 16-20.

## A Life in Context

As with many of his contemporaries, what biographical details we have on Smaragdus are few and far between. It is unclear when he was born or when he died, and although it was highly likely that he was a Visigoth whose roots lay in either Iberia or Septimania, even his provenance has been the subject of intense historiographical debate.<sup>11</sup> From these obscure origins, Smaragdus had a distinguished career that we can follow through his extant writings. His initial claim to fame came in 805, when he composed a commentary on the *Ars Grammatica* by Donatus, establishing his name as a *magister* and demonstrating his active involvement in the cultural reforms going on at the time.<sup>12</sup> He next appears in 809, as one of the *missi* sent to Rome to explain the Carolingian position in the *filioque* controversy as decided at a Council in Aachen in that same year.<sup>13</sup> For the occasion, he also composed a short treatise, *De Processu Spiritus Sancti*.<sup>14</sup>

The issue at stake was a deeply theological one, which had everything to do with the nature of Christ, and by extension, of the Church.<sup>15</sup> For Smaragdus, apart from being able to showcase his mastery of theological issues, being involved in this controversy during the reign of Charlemagne allowed him to play a role in the interaction between the imperial court and intellectuals across the empire.<sup>16</sup> It also, essentially, allowed him to make a name for himself at court. Given its importance for Smaragdus' profile as a scholar, it is thus worthwhile to briefly look at the controversy in order to better understand his later vision of the *ecclesia*.

Central to the *filioque* controversy was the question whether the Spirit proceeded from just the Father or from both the Father *and* the Son – hence the focus on *filioque*, which according to some needed to be added to the

11 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 15-19; Riché, 'Réfugiés wisigoths', p. 181; Duhamel-Adamo, 'Poids de l'aristocratie d'origine wisigothique'.

12 Smaragdus, *Liber in Partibus Donati*; his Septimanian roots are clearly explained in the foreword, pp. ix-xi. Generally on the context of this work, see Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse*, pp. 222-245.

13 On this council, its participants and its impact, see the introduction to the edition of the relevant documents in *MGH Concilia 2 suppl. 2*, hereafter referred to as Willjung, *Konzil von Aachen*, pp. 1-232, esp. pp. 139-169; Gemeinhardt, 'The dynamics'.

14 Smaragdus, *Epistola de Processione Spiritus Sancti*; Willjung, 'Zur Überlieferung der *Epistola de Processione Spiritus Sancti*'; Herrin, *Formation of Christendom*, p. 363.

15 Close, *Uniformiser la Foi*, pp. 40-41 and pp. 144-154.

16 For a similar case of intellectual ambition, see Kramer, 'Agobard of Lyon'.

Creed, while others dismissed this notion as heretical.<sup>17</sup> In Frankish sources, descriptions of this debate go back as far as 767: the *ARF* and later Ado of Vienne's *Chronicon* mention that this was an issue discussed at the otherwise undocumented Council of Gentilly, which was organized as part of the Carolingian conquest and integration of Aquitaine.<sup>18</sup> However, as McCormick and Noble have suggested, this is probably a retroactive addition to the *ARF* when it was first composed in the 790s, and which was later used by Ado: it was most likely 'designed to add historical precedent to the theological concerns of a later time'.<sup>19</sup> Similar concerns may have been present, for example, during the composition of the *Libri Carolini*, written in the early 790s in response to the allegedly iconodule position taken by the Second Council of Nicaea (787).<sup>20</sup> The Christological content of the *filioque* debate would certainly have reminded those involved of the discussions surrounding the Adoptionist heresy of Felix of Urgell.<sup>21</sup> Both theological issues ultimately served to strengthen the *ecclesia* through the simple virtue of being addressed at court, and they were also used to provide a basis for further Frankish expansion, be it territorially or ideologically.<sup>22</sup> Things did evolve into a full-blown controversy, however, when in the first decade of the ninth century a certain John of Saint-Saba accused the Frankish monks, 'and the books they have', in the community of Mount Olivet near Jerusalem, of being heretical – on Christmas Day, no less.<sup>23</sup>

The Frankish monks in Jerusalem had not written to Charlemagne directly about this accusation. Instead, they wrote to Pope Leo III, to tell him the whole story, while also mentioning some more differences between the Greek and Latin liturgies. Their story culminated in the accusation, in a public court, that the *symbolum fidei* used by the Franks was heretical in

17 Pochoshajew, 'Theologische Argumentation'; Herrin, *Formation of Christendom*, pp. 463-466; Sicienski, *Filioque*.

18 *ARF* 767, pp. 25-26; Ado of Vienne, *Chronicon*, p. 319; Hartmann, *Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, pp. 81-82.

19 Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm*, pp. 142-145; McCormick, 'Textes, images et iconoclasm', pp. 116-144. See also Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse*, pp. 76-81.

20 Freeman and Meyvaert, '*Opus Caroli regis contra synodum*'; Van Espelo, 'A testimony of Carolingian rule?', pp. 255-256.

21 Willjung, *Konzil von Aachen*, pp. 12-23. On Adoptionism, see especially, Cavadini, *Last Christology*; Chazelle, *Crucified God*, pp. 38-80.

22 Kramer, 'Adopt, adapt and improve'; Chandler, 'Heresy and empire'.

23 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, pp. 64-65: 'Johannes, qui fuit de monasterio sancti Sabae [...] dixit nobis: "Quia omnes Franci haeretici estis" [...] dicendo: "Quod haeretici estis; et libri, quos habetis, haeretici sunt"'. See Borgolte, 'Papst Leo III.', pp. 407-409.

the eyes of their Greek peers.<sup>24</sup> However, the monks added, their creed, including the *filioque*, was consistent with the writings of Gregory the Great, the *RB*, and other authoritative works. Both texts had been given to them by Charlemagne himself, so whatever was in there must be correct.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the author justified this liturgical anomaly by stating that he had in fact heard the *filioque* sung in the chapel of Charlemagne himself.<sup>26</sup> The monks then asked the pope to intervene on their behalf.<sup>27</sup>

This had the makings of an international incident, and the monks may have knowingly aimed to open this can of worms by appealing to Rome and not to the local patriarch Thomas, with whom Charlemagne had been in touch.<sup>28</sup> Even so, it is indicative of the attraction of the Frankish *ecclesia* and the connection felt by the community to their sponsor, Charlemagne, that they automatically assumed the version of the Creed they claimed to have heard in Aachen was the one that the pope, whom they perhaps knew to be an ally of the Frankish emperor, would defend.<sup>29</sup> Their main reason to appeal to the pope may have been that he was better equipped to defend their (and by implication, the Carolingian) point of view. Leo, on the other hand, *did* feel he should inform Charlemagne, and forwarded the letter from Jerusalem to Aachen. Charlemagne responded in 809, by convening a council at the palace to settle this question once and for all.<sup>30</sup>

How this report reached the Frankish court is telling. The monks had not appealed to Charlemagne directly because, as they explained, the papal see remained 'exalted above all the sees of the Christians', and they saw Rome as the exclusive arbiter in such cases.<sup>31</sup> Even so, they attempted to convince the pope using the influence and customs of the imperial court as a benchmark. Why Leo III informed Charlemagne about the matter is more ambiguous. He may have wanted to acknowledge the emperor as his equal, or perhaps he

24 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, p. 65.

25 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, p. 65: 'Et in homilia sancti Gregorii, quam nobis filius vester domnus Karolus imperator dedit [...]. Et in regula sancti Benedicti, quam nobis dedit filius vester domnus Karolus, quae habet fidem scriptam de sancta et inseparabili Trinitate, dicit: 'Credo Spiritum sanctum deum verum, ex Patre procedentem et Filio'.

26 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, p. 66.

27 This was not the first nor would it be the last time that the pope was called upon to settle a score with his peers in Byzantium: Gantner, 'The label "Greeks"'.  
28 Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm*, pp. 246-247.

29 On the history of the monasteries involved, see Bieberstein, 'Sancta Maria latina'; Patrich, 'The Sabaite heritage'.

30 *Annales Regni Francorum*, 809, p. 129; Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse*, pp. 146-160; Hartmann, *Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, p. 127.

31 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, p. 64. Cf. Willjung, *Konzil von Aachen*, p. 28.



appreciated this situation for the diplomatic powder keg it was and wanted to get imperial backing before continuing. In short, he may have seen that this was not just a matter of theology but also of politics.<sup>32</sup> The fact that the pope referred to the case as a ‘struggle of the Faith, which the monks residing there have had amongst themselves’ may be another reason for this decision.<sup>33</sup> If indeed he thought that it was a matter between different monastic communities, the emperor’s intervention should count for more than his own, as it was Charlemagne who had established the enclave in Jerusalem in the first place. It was more likely that the emperor would have more success interfering. Whatever the case, Leo III wrote to Charlemagne, informing him that he sent an approved version of the Creed to Jerusalem. For the papal see this seemed to represent an end to this dispute.<sup>34</sup> The Frankish court, however, sprang into action, sensing that this matter required their attention – both for the benefit of the *ecclesia* and to enhance its status.

The resulting documents, especially the ‘official’ version carried to Rome by Adalhard of Corbie, Jesse of Amiens and Bernhar of Worms, demonstrated the capability of Carolingian intellectuals to peruse patristic documents and turn them into new theological treatises.<sup>35</sup> However, it is through the other documents composed to prepare the *Decretum Aquisgranensis* and the papal response to it, known as the *Ratio Romana de Symbolo Fidei*, that we may further explore the growing awareness that the emperor functioned as the leader of a Frankish *ecclesia*, and thus also address the question why the monks in Jerusalem referred to his guidance when explaining the situation to the pope. In his contribution to the dossier, Arn of Salzburg referred to the peace and tranquillity that the emperor had wrought in the Church, telling him unequivocally that ‘Christ, who possesses your heart, has triumphed through you’ over the various pagans and enemies of the Church, and praising

32 De Jong, ‘Charlemagne’s Church’, pp. 115–118.

33 Leo III, *Epistola* 8, p. 66: ‘Praesenti siquidem anno direxerunt nobis epistolam monachi, qui in sancto monte Oliveti monte morantur, fidei contentionem continentem, quam inter se habebant’.

34 Leo III, *Epistola* 8, p. 66: ‘Nos vero symbolum orthodoxae fidei illis misimus’.

35 The members of the mission to Rome are described in the *Ratio Romana de Symbolo Fidei*, p. 287. Bernhar should not be confused with Adalhard’s brother, a monk in Corbie at the time: Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie*, p. 51, and Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 133–134. Jesse of Amiens would later be implicated in the ‘palace revolt’ of 830: Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici*, c. 36; Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 172–173 and pp. 408–409, which may be a reason he was left out of the description of the mission in the *Annales Regni Francorum*, 809, p. 129. It is not clear if Smaragdus was part of the group: Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, p. 27, or if only his treatise was brought to Rome, similar to a letter by Richulf of Mainz to the pope carried by the *missi*: Leo III, *Epistola* 9, pp. 67–68.

his leadership over the 'holy crowd of Christians'.<sup>36</sup> As was only proper, he composed his book at the emperor's order.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Theodulf, who characteristically started his own *Libellus* with a poem, ordered his 'booklet' to go to the doorstep of Charlemagne to address the emperor directly.<sup>38</sup> In the ensuing dialogue between book and ruler, the emperor is called 'a wall and a weapon for the catholic [religion] and faith', and Theodulf assured him that he had obeyed Charles' *imperium* in composing this work.<sup>39</sup>

These two men of God, who had witnessed the rise of Charlemagne and who had everything to gain by supporting its centralizing tendencies, had wasted no time assuring Charlemagne that it was to him, and to the court, that they looked for leadership in such matters. It was rhetoric they had honed during previous controversies, as it was felt that the integrity of the Frankish church had been at stake, and the court had felt compelled to safeguard its unity.<sup>40</sup> In 809, this role had been accepted by the bishops and by the ruler himself, as Charlemagne's reputation spread across the Mediterranean.

The *filioque*-controversy therefore must have impressed upon Smaragdus the full scope and importance of the *ecclesia*. Although it is unclear if he was appointed abbot of the monastery of Saint-Mihiel, close to the imperial city of Metz, in recognition of his contribution, or if he already was abbot at the time, it seems that he channelled his experiences into his activities as a leader of his community.<sup>41</sup> If the *Chronicle of Saint-Mihiel*, composed about two centuries later, is any indication, Smaragdus wasted no time bringing the community up to speed with the latest monastic developments in the empire, most visibly by moving the main monastery away from the secluded hilltop sanctuary it had occupied until then, and re-founding Saint-Mihiel in the Meuse valley.<sup>42</sup>

36 Arn of Salzburg, *Testimonia*, Praefatio, pp. 253-254.

37 Arn of Salzburg, *Testimonia*, p. 254.

38 Theodulf, *Libellus*, Praefatio: 'Perge, libelle, celer Caroli ad vestigia celsi / Regis et 'O pie', die 'induperator, ave!', p. 315.

39 Theodulf, *Libellus*, Praefatio, pp. 316-317: 'Qui decus es mundi, lux regni, tutor et aequi / Catholicae et fidei murus et arma simul'.

40 On this attitude, see generally Close, *Uniformiser la Foi*.

41 That Smaragdus received this abbacy in response to his role in 809 is conjectural: the earliest source that places him in Saint-Mihiel is an immunity charter dated to 816: *Cartularium Sancti Michaelis*, p. 320. On the importance of Metz for the Carolingians, see Oexle, 'Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf'; Parisse, 'Metz: une capitale médiévale'; Kempf, 'Paul the Deacon's *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*'.

42 *Chronicon Sancti Michaelis in pago Viridunensi*, c. 5, pp. 80-81. For the comparable case of the nunnery of Remiremont, Hlawitschka, 'Zur Klosterverlegung', argues that there exists a

His epitaph, cited by the same eleventh-century chronicler, credited him with making the place more 'suitable for humans'.<sup>43</sup> Without fully realizing it, the author of the epitaph thereby also touched a recurring theme in the works written by Smaragdus during his tenure as abbot. These themes were particularly addressed within the *Via Regia*, a commentary on the Christian *vita activa* commonly seen as an early example of a *speculum principum*; his *Commentary* on the *Regula Benedicti*, intended to show how the regular life ought to be lived in individual monasteries faced with the Carolingian *correctio* movement; and, finally, within his crowning effort, the *Diadema Monachorum*, a treatise on the contemplative life of monks.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to these monastic works Smaragdus composed grammatical and exegetical works, including his grammatical commentary on Donatus, a *Liber Comitit*, a *florilegium* of readings and comments on the gospels and letters from the New Testament, and an as yet understudied commentary on the Psalms. Treated separately, Smaragdus' writings represent different aspects of the Carolingian cultural reform movement, and they have been studied as such over the past decades.<sup>45</sup> Still, the focus in these studies has been on the place of these texts within their respective genres, and less on the works as a product of their time. One noteworthy approach is an article by Jasmijn Bovendeert, who set out to demonstrate how the *Via Regia* and the *Diadema Monachorum* propagated 'two different ethical programmes, defining two different concepts of identity, one royal and the other monastic'.<sup>46</sup> Thus, she argues, it follows that Smaragdus was aware that not everybody had to live according to the same guidelines, and that the virtues and vices highlighted in each text reflected the different roles rulers and monks should have in the greater scheme of things.<sup>47</sup>

There certainly is truth to this assessment. Smaragdus' choice to write two distinct works was born from his desire to address a problem from several angles, and one is clearly addressed at monks and the other at worldly rulers.

connection between the reforms of Louis the Pious and this type of monastic relocation, but this idea still merits further research.

43 *Chronicon Sancti Michaelis*, c. 5, p. 81: 'Smaragdus vigit istius abba loci / Qui locus humanis quod erat minus usibus aptus / Haud procul hinc sedem transtulit ille suam'. Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 51-78 and pp. 97-143.

44 Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 376-378.

45 The *Liber Comitit* stood at the centre of Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, whereas the *Via Regia* was the subject of the study by Eberhardt, *Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds*. Of particular importance are three articles by Ponesse, 'Smaragdus of St. Mihiel'; 'Editorial practice'; and 'Standing distant from the Fathers'.

46 Bovendeert, 'Royal or monastic identity?', p. 251.

47 Bovendeert, 'Royal or monastic identity?', p. 250.

However, a more nuanced picture emerges if we treat the work of Smaragdus as the result of the mental productivity of a single member of the court hoping to provide advice to his colleagues, who came from many different backgrounds but who should all be pursuing the same goal. Smaragdus' idea was never to impose a monastic way of thinking on kings, for example, but to present different ways of being a good Christian, tailor-made for people from all walks of life.

The wish to educate is visible throughout Smaragdus' entire oeuvre. In some instances, the advice he provided was quite direct. The *Liber Comitum*, for instance, was essentially a collection of liturgical readings and their commentaries. Primarily meant to elucidate the unity between the Gospel and the Letters in the New Testament, it had the added advantage already of showing how the 'apparent contradictions in the Fathers' were actually reflections of the many different paths that led to salvation.<sup>48</sup> His *Liber in Partibus Donati*, meanwhile, was meant to make the grammar by Donatus accessible and acceptable to a Christian audience; it addressed the need for a proper knowledge of language already expressed in such capitularies as the *Epistola de Litteris Colendis*, but ensured that its students would gain a wholesome moral education in the process.<sup>49</sup>

The remainder of this chapter will further blur the line between the ethical programs contained in Smaragdus' three other main works, the *Via Regia* (VR), the *Expositio in Regulam Sancti Benedicti* (*Expositio*), and the *Diadema Monachorum* (DM). In doing so, it will show how Smaragdus, an intellectual between cloister and court, was aware of the interplay between these two worlds, and the influence this dynamic exerted over Carolingian society. Instead of separating monastic and secular ideals, the fact that a single person felt at home in a discourse community that encompassed both shows how these were two sides of the same coin, integral parts of the big world he lived in.

### Directions for a King: The *Via Regia*

Sometime in the early 810s, Smaragdus decided to help the rulers of the Frankish *ecclesia* on the way, and sat down to describe the 'king's highway' (*via regia*) in a comprehensive attempt to formulate the responsibilities of a typical Carolingian ruler. Even though it is accepted that the VR was

48 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 132-137; Ponesse, 'Standing distant from the Fathers', p. 80.

49 *Epistola de Litteris Colendis*, Löfstedt et al., CCCMLXVIII, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii and pp. l-lviii.

composed in the years immediately following the *filioque* controversy, we are in murkier waters when it comes to the intended audience and its primary recipient.<sup>50</sup> The *VR* has been seen as a work meant for Charlemagne, for Louis the Pious when he was still king of Aquitaine, or even for Pippin I of Aquitaine.<sup>51</sup> Of these three, Louis seems the most likely option. Smaragdus was a central member of the Carolingian court circle at the time and the fact that he represented Charlemagne's point of view on a contentious Christological issue indicates that he must have been more than an up-and-comer in the early 810s.<sup>52</sup> It would make perfect sense for someone like him to compose a moral treatise for an apparent heir to the *imperium*. Combined with the repeated insistence that his *rex* would justly inherit his throne from his father, who had also been a good king, it seems obvious that the *VR* was meant for Louis the Pious first and foremost: the 'son of an earthly king who would be confirmed as the son of the King of Heaven' who would inherit an earthly kingdom in preparation for his place in the heavenly realm.<sup>53</sup> This was, after all, an obvious occasion to consolidate current thoughts on the imperial authority built by Charlemagne, and to impart some wisdom on the next ruler. A letter by Alcuin, written to Charlemagne between 793 and 800, shows that Louis had already expressed interest in receiving such teachings while he was king of Aquitaine.<sup>54</sup> Smaragdus rose to the occasion, even if he and Louis had not (yet) met in person.<sup>55</sup>

Searching for the specific recipient of the *VR* may prove to be a fruitless task in any case. Perhaps the decision not to reveal who was the *clarissime rex* was a deliberate choice, enabling Smaragdus to speak to a wider audience, regardless of whether he had Louis or even Charlemagne in mind. Even the two instances where he addresses his reader as *parvulus*, an infant or small

50 Eberhardt, *Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds*, pp. 262-263.

51 The dating, authorship and intended audience of this text have been demonstrated in Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, pp. 161-168, and confirmed by Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, p. 21, reacting against Scharf, 'Studien zu Smaragdus und Jonas', who thought the *VR* was composed in the 820s, for Louis' son, Pippin of Aquitaine. Eberhardt, *Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds*, pp. 195-263, also disagreed with Scharf, but argued that the work was written for Charlemagne around 810.

52 See Dubreucq, 'Smaragde de Saint-Mihiel et son temps'.

53 *Via Regia (VR)*, c. 9, col. 950A: 'hic regis diademata portat, illic gaudio exsultationis resultat; hic terreni regius filius vocatur, illic coelestis Regis filius confirmatur; hic terreni regni decenter magnam capit haereditatem, illic coelestis regni felicem feliciter accipit portionem'. Anton, 'Gesellschaftsiegel und Gesellschaftstheorie', pp. 51-52.

54 Alcuin, *Epistola* 188, p. 316. See Hammer, 'Christmas Day 800', pp. 3-4.

55 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 18-19. Eberhardt argues that the personal nature of the *VR* implies the author knew the recipient. He suggests that Louis the Pious could not have been the intended subject of the text as Smaragdus and Louis did not meet prior to the imperial coronation of 813. Eberhardt, *Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds*, pp. 219-220.

child, could refer to the fact that the one about to receive his teaching was still inexperienced or unenlightened.<sup>56</sup> Thus, while it is possible that Louis was aware of the contents of the *VR*, it is equally likely that Smaragdus' intention was to instruct anyone in a position of authority: as far as he was concerned, one did not need to be an actual child to receive his wisdom, and one did not need an actual crown to take this road map of the 'king's highway' seriously.<sup>57</sup> Regardless of whether Smaragdus had any individual ruler in mind for his *VR*, what he composed was much more than a mere summary of the *status quaestionis* of kingship at the start of Louis' reign. It is a work in its own right, containing not only Smaragdus' advice for someone about to take the reins of a kingdom, but also a handbook for the practice of virtues for who felt responsible for the *ecclesia*.<sup>58</sup>

In spite of its universal appeal, the *VR* gives the impression of being highly personal, composed as if it were an admonitory letter directed at one specific person. In 32 short chapters, and an introduction, Smaragdus presents us with the most important tenets of early-ninth-century Christian life. Relying heavily on Scripture and his experience with monastic thought, he presented a coherent work that incorporated, most prominently, Gregory the Great's thoughts, both straight from the horse's mouth and as filtered through the *Sententiae* by the Visigothic bishops Taio and Isidore.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, he used pseudo-Basilus' *Admonitio ad Filium Spiritualem*, itself a collection of early Christian ascetic thought, including the works of Paulinus of Nola and the *Vita Antonii*.<sup>60</sup> Together, the sources for the *VR* covered everything from the need for peace and the exercise of *iustitia*, to the treasures to be collected in Heaven if all had been done properly.<sup>61</sup>

56 Scharf, 'Studien zu Smaragdus und Jonas', pp. 333-353. A clear example of this meaning of *parvulus* is given in 1 Cor. 13:11: 'Fratres, nolite pueri effici sensibus, sed malitia parvuli estote: sensibus autem perfecti estote', as also recalled by Hincmar of Reims in his first letter against Gottschalk: *Epistola* 37, p. 14. Another quotation, 1 Cor. 14:20, 'Cum essem parvulus, loquebar ut parvulus, sapiebam ut parvulus, cogitabam ut parvulus. Quando autem factus sum vir, evacuavi quæ erant parvuli', is used to a similar effect by Lupus of Ferrières in an 843 letter to Charles the Bald: *Epistola* 64, p. 63.

57 On the term 'via regia', see Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, p. 172; cf. Talliez, 'ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ ΟΔΟΣ'.

58 Leclercq, 'Smaragdus', pp. 38-39.

59 Wood, 'Family affair', pp. 45-47. A convincing case for influence from Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis* is made by Floryszczak, *Die Regula pastoralis*, pp. 359-364; see also chapter 2 of the present work.

60 LePree, 'Pseudo-Basil'. On the influence of Paulinus of Nola in the ascetic movement in the West, see Wieser, "Like a thief in the night".

61 Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, pp. 175-176, and Booz, *Fürstenspiegel des Mittelalters*, p. 17; cf. Anton, 'Gesellschaftspiegel und Gesellschaftstheorie', p. 80.

Smaragdus started by reminding his king that it was God who put him on the throne. His work would describe the *via regia*, knowledge of which enabled the king to not displease God and safely follow it into the heavenly *patria*.<sup>62</sup> After all, it is the same path walked by kings Joshua, David and Solomon, as well as by Hezekiah and Uzziah, all of whom had played a part in the rise of the people of Israel.<sup>63</sup> Even more, as made clear in the opening paragraph, the addressee of the *VR* could be considered an heir, an adopted son of Christ on account of his consecration with chrism.<sup>64</sup> God has given him his ministry through the chrism, and conferred a number of gifts upon the king – including faith, prosperity, and healthy offspring – symbolized by the *diadema* ('diadem' or 'crown') that adorns his head.<sup>65</sup> All this would be maintained as long as he maintained a steady course on the *via regia*, 'called holy by the prophet [Isaiah]', with Smaragdus' book as a guide.<sup>66</sup>

Then, the *VR* goes on to list the steps the *rex* must take and the things he should avoid while ruling the *ecclesia*. Smaragdus does not refer to the *ecclesia* as such, preferring to use the word *regnum* throughout, with the notable exception of the chapter 'On Peace'. There, he not only acknowledges both meanings of the word, i.e. 'church building' and 'the Church', but also underlines the unity of the king's function as a member of the divine body that is the Church.<sup>67</sup> It would be his *ministerium* to zealously 'perform his function in the place of Christ', to protect the House of God, and to maintain the peace in the world.<sup>68</sup> This idea had already been taking shape under Charlemagne, and was visible both in the documents issued from the court and in the reception of said proposals in episcopal capitularies further down the ladder.<sup>69</sup> Those cases, however, were based in a reality where church

62 *VR*, Epistola Nuncupatoria, c. 934B, 'Et tibi ergo, nobilissime rex, si vis ad supernam felicitate promissionis tendere patriam, diligenter regia quaerenda est via, quia cum sis rex in terra, ad coelorum properans regna per regiam debes currere viam'.

63 *VR*, Epistola Nuncupatoria, c. 934C. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, pp. 51-59, pp. 75-76 and pp. 109-111; Garrison, 'The social world of Alcuin'.

64 *VR*, Epistola nuncupatoria, col. 933B: 'Caput tuum oleo sacri chrisomatis linivit, et dignanter in filium adoptavit. Constituit te regem populi terrae et proprii Filii sui in coelo fieri iussit haeredem'.

65 *VR*, Epistola nuncupatoria, col. 933B.

66 *VR*, Epistola nuncupatoria, col. 934D: 'Via etenim regia est, quae per prophetam vocatur sancta [Isa. 35:8]'.

67 *VR*, c. 17, c. 958B: 'Si videris aliquem in domo Dei, quae est Ecclesia, currere ad luxuriam, ad ebrietatem, prohibe, veta, terre, si zelus domus Dei comedit te'.

68 *VR*, c. 17, c. 958C: 'Fac quidquid potes pro persona quam gestas, pro ministerio regali quod portas, pro nomine Christiani quod habes, pro vice Christi qua fungeris. [...] Iste enim zelus salutem tribuit [...] et Ecclesiam Dei gloriosa vivacitate custodit'.

69 Czock, *Gottes Haus*, pp. 208-231.

buildings imposed their meaning on the Church as an institution, whereas Smaragdus extrapolated ideas about the moral obligations of those in a position of authority from the existence of the Church in its many forms. To people walking the *via regia*, the whole (Christian) world should be seen as a sacred space that needed to be ordered and protected.<sup>70</sup>

The *VR* starts, interestingly, with the ‘Love of God and kin’. This love, Smaragdus argues, citing 1 Pet. 4:8, may prevent ‘a multitude of sins’ and helps maintain harmony within the court.<sup>71</sup> Only then is the king exhorted to observe the mandates of the Lord: invoking Lev. 26:3-17, he is reminded that if he ‘walks in God’s precepts, and keeps [his] commandments’, the rains will fall regularly, the harvest will be plentiful, enemies will be defeated, and the salvation of all will be ensured, while the opposite will happen if he refuses to heed the word of God.<sup>72</sup> These are no uncertain terms. Smaragdus goes beyond the effects of iniquity sketched out in such moral treatises as pseudo-Cyprian’s *De Duodecim Abusivis*, composed in the seventh century, for example, and instead goes straight to the source: Leviticus, that most lawful of Old Testament books.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, and perhaps more notably, Smaragdus warns his *rex* that he should be performing his duties out of love for God (*dilectione Dei*), and not (only) out of fear for the consequences. Smaragdus’ emphasis on the love for God marks a personal approach to the ruler. While the *De Duodecim Abusivis* famously spelled out the cosmological consequences of a ruler’s bad behaviour, only the ‘argumentative Christian’ was exhorted not to let his love for the world stand in the way of his love for God.<sup>74</sup> Smaragdus went one step further and told the king that this love should be what keeps him from breaking God’s laws. The ruler’s fear of God should be mitigated by his love and thus be coupled with a willingness to do right that came from the heart instead of being born out of fear. The ruler was, in short, held responsible for the well-being of his subjects not only through his conduct, but also through his personal piety and the strength of his beliefs.<sup>75</sup> His love for God should be translated into love for the world, and not the other way around.

70 Czock, *Gottes Haus*, pp. 265-270 and pp. 280-283.

71 *VR*, c. 1, cols. 936B and 937C.

72 *VR*, c. 2, cols. 938D-939A. See also Meens, ‘Politics, mirrors of princes and the Bible’, p. 356; Blattmann, “Ein Unglück für sein Volk”.

73 Meens, ‘Politics, mirrors of princes and the Bible’; Anton, ‘Pseudo-Cyprian’; Breen, ‘Pseudo-Cyprian’.

74 Pseudo-Cyprian, *De XII Abusivis*, c. 7, p. 47: ‘Mundi enim amor et Dei pariter in uno corde cohabitare non possunt’, invoking 1 John 2:15.

75 Depreux, ‘La *pietas*’; Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 148-150.



Then follows an enumeration of personal qualities required for rulers, presented in a somewhat logical sequence: one should fear the Lord in order to gain the wisdom of Solomon.<sup>76</sup> Having acquired this wisdom, 'it is proper to present him who wishes to happily walk the king's way, if God bestows it, with *prudentia* ('prudence'), as long as it is tempered by *simplicitas* ('candor') and patience, 'if you wish to control your soul in a sweet manner'.<sup>77</sup> This was necessary, so that 'he who is to perform the royal office may be just and pass judgement' without being needlessly cruel, and so that he may protect the *pauperes* in order to reap the fruits of his labours in the afterlife.<sup>78</sup> The key to all this was mercy towards his people, which showed honour to the Lord and thus ensured his 'temporal happiness' would be exchanged for the promised 'eternal bliss'.<sup>79</sup> Smaragdus thus completes the circle as he returns to the necessity to love one's neighbour and honour the Lord. By systematically outlining the qualities a king should possess, the abbot attempted to instil the audience with a sense of personal responsibility, with the idea that his conduct impacted the life of his subjects.

The next part of the *VR* is more practical. In a series of exhortations, geared towards the outward appearance, policy, and behaviour of the ruler, which parallel those listed above, Smaragdus explains how to apply the lessons learned in practice. First, he argues for the importance of tithes for the upkeep of the Church and warns the *rex* to concentrate on the treasures to be gained in heaven rather than worldly riches.<sup>80</sup> Most importantly, he tells the king to remain humble in spite of such riches:

Humble yourself, king, in your eyes, so that you are exalted in the eyes of the Lord; because the more humble you are in your behaviour, the more glorious you will be in the appearance of the Highest.<sup>81</sup>

76 *VR*, c. 3, col. 940C: 'Ipse quippe Salomon de laude boni timoris ait: "Timor Domini fons vitae" [Prov. 14:27]; c. 4, col. 942C: 'Oramus ergo te, sanctissime rex, diligenter attende quid de se Salomon, quid de laude sapientiae loquatur'.

77 *VR*, c. 5, col. 945B: 'Post illuminationem ergo sapientiae thesaurosque scientiae, oportet illum qui cupit regiam feliciter currere viam, Domino donante, impleri prudentia'; c. 6; c. 7, cols. 946D-947A: 'Posside patientiam si vis tuam dulciter possidere animam'.

78 *VR*, c. 8, cols. 947A-949A; c. 9, col. 947A: 'Quod regale sit officium facere justitiam et iudicium'.

79 *VR*, c. 10, cols. 950B-952A; c. 11, col. 952D: 'Hic tibi gaudium temporale concessit, illic gaudium aeternum promisit'.

80 *VR*, c. 12, cols. 953A-953D; c. 13, cols. 953D-954D; c. 14, cols. 954D-955B; c. 15, cols. 955B-956B.

81 *VR*, c. 16, col. 957B: 'Humilia te ergo, rex, in oculis tuis, ut exalteris in oculis Domini; quia quantum humilior fueris in conspectu tuo, tantum gloriosior eris in conspectu Altissimi'.

Collecting tithes thus mirrors the admonition to humbly observe the precepts of the Lord, whereas the insistence that worldly treasures are unimportant may be coupled with Smaragdus' ideas on *prudentialia*. Patience can be linked with peace, and justice, judgement and mercy with 'the love of correctness', clemency, and the ability to accept good advice when it is offered, 'a royal virtue of which the Bible preaches that it is above gold and silver'.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, leading into the final part of the *VR*, the king is warned against *superbia*, pride:

Which cast the Devil out of heaven, and men out of paradise; which every day pushes the wretched from a righteous state into infirmity, and which leads to Hell after death.<sup>83</sup>

Pride, Smaragdus warns, would subvert everything the king stood for. Next there follows a series of short chapters detailing things to be avoided by anyone in a ruling position. It starts with jealousy, which is 'the source of all sins' (c. 22).<sup>84</sup> Revenge, which follows from jealousy and may lead to discord and end the peace is next, followed by anger, which the king should especially avoid given his exemplary functions because, as Smaragdus writes, 'through anger, wisdom is lost'.<sup>85</sup> Then, flatterers are mentioned, who should be avoided because it is better to have people tell the truth than to lead one off the straight path by deceiving you (c. 25). Their bad advice may lead to avarice (c. 26) and make the king dependent on others whereas he should only depend on the guidance of God and his parents' inheritance. Smaragdus reminds the king that his parents should have left him plenty to build his own palace instead of relying on somebody else (c. 27). This practice extended towards others as well: bribery of judges was to be avoided, as the judges should do their job not in order to gain riches, but to ensure that everyone, including the poorest, may have justice.

In the world according to Smaragdus, all members of the *ecclesia* were equally responsible for all others. The king, the representative of God,

82 *VR*, c. 17, cols. 957C-957D; c. 18, cols. 957D-958C; c. 19, cols. 958C-959A; c. 20, col. 959C: 'Vides ergo, rex, quam regia virtus est consilium, quam super aurum et argentum esse praedicat Scriptura, quam sicut fontem clamitat affluenter manantem'.

83 *VR*, c. 21, col. 961B: 'Grande malum est superbia, quae diabolus de coelo deposuit, et hominem de paradiso projecit; quae et quotidie de statu rectitudinis miseros ad infama premit, et post obitum ad inferna demergit'.

84 *VR*, c. 22, col. 962B: 'De zeli livore fons omnium vitiorum consurgit'.

85 *VR*, c. 23, cols. 962C-963A; c. 24, col. 963D: 'per iram sapientia perditur'.

was tasked with maintaining the natural balance in the world, and if he did his job, gain or loss of status or freedom would reflect the sinfulness of men. A true king, wise, prudent, magnanimous, patient, a father to the poor, a defender of widows, a lover of orphans – Smaragdus repeats the virtues he previously enumerated – supersedes this sinful state, enabling him to teach his subjects to avoid sin and them towards a new Israel.<sup>86</sup> It is a very abbatial vision of rulership. Inasmuch as a monastic community could be seen as a microcosm for the *ecclesia* at large, it functioned on the basis the idea that monks were servants to the extent that they lived by a holy *regula*, under the discretion of an abbot, but were otherwise responsible for their own salvation as well as that of their brethren.<sup>87</sup> Smaragdus' world view was steeped in such monastic ideals, and he used what he knew best when formulating his words of wisdom for a man who would be Christ's representative on earth.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, he was also aware that the rules for proper living applied to all within the *ecclesia*. Many of his admonitions thus address everybody living a virtuous life, and not just their rulers.

This explains the title of his work. The *Via Regia* is not merely a way (of life) for kings, but, according to a story in Num. 21:21-22, also the 'king's highway' through the territory of the Ammorhites, which the Israelites wished to use. It is not a road of their own making, so they need permission to traverse it, beseeching the enemy king that they:

May have leave to pass through your land: we will not go aside into the fields or the vineyards, we will not drink waters of the wells, we will go the king's highway, until we cross your borders.<sup>89</sup>

In this, and similar, stories, they would usually be refused, and ended up fighting for their right to take this route anyway. In late antique and early medieval exegesis, this tale was used to denote the difficulties faced by every believer trying not to wander, not to succumb to temptations, not to be defeated by enemies along the way. In the early fifth century, the monastic theologian John Cassian described 'the perfect man' in his *Conferences*.

86 See also Hen, 'Christianisation of kingship'.

87 Noble, 'Monastic ideal', pp. 214-242.

88 Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, p. 355. *VR*, c. 17, 958B.

89 *VR*, *Epistola nuncupatoria*, col. 634B: 'Misit autem Israël nuntios ad Sehon regem Amorrhæorum, dicens: "Obsecro ut transire mihi liceat per terram tuam; non declinabimus in agros et vineas; non bibemus aquas ex puteis: *via regia* gradiemur, donec transeamus terminos tuos".

This man was clad in ‘the armour of righteousness’, having secured ‘the advantage of his patience and goodness’, and obtaining:

A grand triumph of steadfastness by means of those very weapons of his enemies which are hurled against him to kill him [as long as] he is not elated by success or cast down by failure, but ever marches straightforward on the king’s highway, and does not swerve from that state of tranquillity [...] when joy overcomes him, nor [...] when misfortunes overwhelm him.<sup>90</sup>

Less martial but equally powerful, Jerome described the *Via Regia* in terms similar to Benedict’s principle of doing nothing in excess, invoking Eccl. 7:17 (‘Be not over just: and be not more wise than is necessary, lest thou become stupid’) in a letter chiding the recipients not to feel superior about chastity or marriage, and ‘not to be diverted to the left or the right, but to ascend the *via regia*’.<sup>91</sup> Finally, the pseudo-Cyprianic *De Duodecim Abusivis* – using the same biblical imagery – compared the ‘royal way’ (*via regalis*) to the law of God, which was abandoned by the *negligentia* of a ‘*populus* without laws’.<sup>92</sup> Ultimately, the author wrote, people should aspire to follow the ‘way, truth and life’ represented by Christ, and not allow their private desires to influence their behaviour and ultimately, their authority.<sup>93</sup>

In the ninth century, this understanding of *via regia* as a metaphor for Christian life remained prevalent, as shown by its frequent occurrence in the corpus of Carolingian letters. Hrabanus Maurus put it succinctly in a letter to Eberhard of Friuli, writing that ‘he who ascends the *via regia* is one who aspires to the eternal life’.<sup>94</sup> In this, he may have followed his teacher Alcuin, who had a special fondness for the image.<sup>95</sup> Alcuin had admonished the monks of Murbach in 796, stating:

90 John Cassian, *Conlationes XXIII*, collatio 6, cap. 9, cols. 655B-657A, ‘sed itinere plano ac via regia semper incedens’. A similar image is used in the *Liber Comitis*, col. 336D, quoting Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, lib. III, c. 21.

91 Jerome, *Epistola* 48, c. 8, col. 498C: ‘ut nec ad sinistram nec ad dextram diuertet, sed via regia graderetur et illud inpleret: “ne sis multum iustus”’. Cf. Kardong, *Benedict’s Rule*, p. 98.

92 Pseudo-Cyprian, *De XII Abusivis*, c. 12, p. 59: ‘Quae utique multae perditionis viae tunc inceduntur, cum una regalis via lex Dei videlicet, quae neque ad dexteram neque ad sinistram declinat, per negligentiam deseritur’.

93 Nelson, ‘Public histories’, p. 485.

94 Hrabanus Maurus, *Epistola* 42, p. 486: ‘via regia gradiendum est his, qui ad vitam pervenire volunt aeternam’.

95 Fleckenstein, ‘Über Hrabanus’, pp. 205-210.

Nothing is more damning for the sheep of Christ than an erring pastor, for if a leader strays from the flock through deceit, how can a traveller ever advance on the *via regia*?<sup>96</sup>

The pastoral duty of keeping the faithful on the straight and narrow is emphasized more acutely in his admonitory letter to the Adoptionist bishops Elipandus and Felix, who caused a major controversy through their errant preaching on the Iberian Peninsula in the late eighth century:

Learn that which pertains to the salvation of your souls, and ascend with wholly catholic feet the *via regia* that was trodden upon by the apostles, frequented by the Fathers, and elected by the whole world.<sup>97</sup>

At the same time, Charlemagne was lauded by him for having done exactly that. He was a ruler who studied the true faith, and inspired his followers to follow in the footsteps of the apostles and to follow the *via regia*.<sup>98</sup>

Against this background, it is clear that while Smaragdus wrote for an unspecified *rex*, his primary concern was to guide his audience along the *via regia*. His text was not a prescription of royal duties, but a description of a way of life that should be accessible to all Christians. The idealized ruler in his work should be an exemplary proponent of a good, Christian life. This was, according to Smaragdus, the ultimate responsibility. Earning the crown, the right to be adopted by Christ, was a matter not just of living under God's watchful eye, but also of being observed by everyone in the *ecclesia*. The burden of the Christian faith weighed equally on the shoulders of all who partook in it, and everybody still expected to clear a path for those behind them. The king, who stood in front of all, had quite a job ahead of him.

### Explaining a Way: The *Expositio in Regulam Sancti Benedicti*

If the *VR* was written for a (imagined) king with a view towards teaching all Christians, the *Expositio in Regulam Sancti Benedicti* was undoubtedly

96 Alcuin, *Epistola* 117, p. 172: 'Nulla est ovibus Christi maior damnatio quam pastor errabundus. Et si ductor per devia orbitat, quomodo sequens viator viam incedit regiam?'

97 Alcuin, *Epistola* 23, p. 64: 'Discite quae ad salutem animarum vestrarum pertinent, et regiam viam ab apostolis tritam, a patribus frequentatam, a mundi latitudine electam, pleno catholicae fidei pede inceditis.'

98 Alcuin, *Epistola* 41, p. 84.

composed with monastic communities in mind.<sup>99</sup> It is an impressive work, divided into three books of roughly equal length, although the number of chapters of the *RB* treated in each part varies greatly. The first book contains a commentary on the Prologue to the *RB* as well as on its first three chapters.<sup>100</sup> The second focuses on the moralistic opening of the *RB*, dealing with chapters 4 to 7 and culminating in the ‘exultation and joy’ attained when completing the twelve steps of humility.<sup>101</sup> Meanwhile the third treats the remaining 66 chapters, starting with the divine office, and ending with Benedict’s own famous remark that this is only a ‘little rule for beginners’, a starting point for those who ‘while still positioned in the present life will be able to climb to the heights of the virtues’ – an image with which he also opens the metric prologue, bringing his commentary full circle.<sup>102</sup>

Judging by two chapters where Smaragdus explicitly mentions ‘the synod [or council] in the kingdom of the Franks’, the *Expositio* was a product of the deliberations on the state of the *ecclesia* held at Aachen between 816 and 819.<sup>103</sup> Even so, the *Expositio* is highly theoretical in nature, to the extent that doubts have been cast about its applicability for the daily life of monks.<sup>104</sup> Still, Smaragdus claimed to have composed this work to aid ‘simple’ monks in their understanding of the ‘many judgements in the Rule concerning faults’ while deferring to the expertise of the learned or of the abbot whenever anything remained unclear.<sup>105</sup> This was, in other words, a teaching tool: not an attempt to impose a uniform *consuetudo*, but an explanation to monks how they could maintain their own traditions in the

99 Ponesse, ‘Editorial practice’, p. 72.

100 *Expositio*, Praefatio and cc. 1-3, pp. 3-85. The English quotations are based on the translation by Barry, *Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel*.

101 *Expositio*, cc. 4-7, pp. 86-193 and p. 193: ‘Ibunt enim de virtute in virtutem, id est de uno virtutis gradu ascendunt in alium; et sic Deum deorum videbant in Sion et Jerusalem coelestium exultatione et gaudio’.

102 *Expositio*, cc. 8-73, pp. 194-337 and p. 337: ‘si ad coelestem volumus conscendere patriam, hanc minimam prius festinamus inchoationis perficere regulam’ and ‘felix qui in praesenti adhuc positus vita, ad virtutum potitur ascendere culmina’. In the Praefatio, it is formulated differently, p. 3: ‘Quisquis ad aeternum mavult conscendere renem / Debet ad astrigerum mente subire polum / Religione pia vitae perquirere callem / Scandere quo valeat aurea regna celer’. Cf. *RB*, c. 73, pp. 296-297.

103 *Expositio*, c. 15, pp. 203-204: ‘placuit tamen synodo in Francorum regno congregatae’; c. 53, p. 283: ‘Sed modo ab episcoporum, abbatum, et caeterorum Francorum magno concilio salubre inventum est concilium’. On these councils, see Gaillard, *D’Une Réforme à l’Autre*, pp. 133-134 and p. 142.

104 Semmler, ‘Benedictus II’, p. 25.

105 *Expositio*, Prooemium, p. 6.

face of the reform efforts propagated from the court; it was the *Nachleben* of the *Expositio* which shows that Smaragdus' approach appealed to a broader audience.<sup>106</sup> The work was not intended to provide a definitive design for monastic living, but proposed how to channel Carolingian ecclesiastical diversity onto the best possible highway to Heaven.

Smaragdus carefully navigated a course amidst the discrepancies arising from his support for a central court and his concern to allow monastic communities a certain degree of autonomy. Thus, of the two times he explicitly mentioned the councils of Aachen, he was careful to frame the second time, a decision on the rules governing guests and abbots in the refectory as a *concilium* (counsel) agreed upon by a *concilium* (council).<sup>107</sup> On the other hand, the rule to refrain from singing the *Alleluia* during the pre-Lenten season – contradicting the *RB* – is defended as being the custom of the 'Roman *principes* of the Church', and then specified as pertaining only to those monks 'who are stationed [*constituti*] in that kingdom'.<sup>108</sup> These instances reflect the persisting diversity within the Carolingian Church, on the Roman influence on Frankish liturgical practice, and on the *RB* as a 'Roman rule', all of which requires more in-depth analyses than possible in this study.<sup>109</sup> This is the most explicit case where the author made his concern for the well-being of a *regnum* known, by touching on the liturgical exigencies of the *ecclesia*.<sup>110</sup> Despite his insistence, in the spirit of Benedict of Nursia, that communities should be able to make their own decisions regarding their *consuetudines*, he saw this liturgical ruling as a way to bind cloister and court together.<sup>111</sup> If anything, this remark demonstrates that to Smaragdus, monasteries were not operating in a vacuum.

The *Expositio* is a complex work, which required a lot of preparation by its author – something about which we may learn more by looking at the *Glosae in Regula Sancti Benedicti*, which were recently edited, and show us a glimpse of the compiler at work.<sup>112</sup> Interestingly, the *Expositio* is held

106 Ponesse, 'Smaragdus of St. Mihiel', pp. 373-378.

107 On these concepts, see Quillet, 'Community, counsel and representation', pp. 545-554. (albeit from the perspective of high medieval England).

108 *Expositio*, c. 15, p. 204.

109 Ponesse, 'Smaragdus of St. Mihiel', pp. 374-375. On the *Regula Benedicti* as a 'Roman rule' and its role in shaping Carolingian ecclesiastical thought, see Wollasch, '*Benedictus abbas Romensis*'; Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, pp. 114-165.

110 Cf. Nelson, 'Liturgy or law', p. 441.

111 A formulation borrowed from Nelson, 'Liturgy or law', p. 446.

112 The edition of the *Glosae in regula Sancti Benedicti abbatis ad usum Smaragdi Sancti Michaelis abbatis* (CCCM 282) by Matthieu van der Meer unfortunately appeared too late for me to take into account in this book.

together as much by Smaragdus' mastery of the *RB* itself as by the image of the *via regia*, the idea of life as a road towards a higher learning, among other motifs. The imagery can be found already in the metric prologue, when Smaragdus compared the *RB* to the 'narrow path to life' that enabled monks 'to climb swiftly to the golden realms'.<sup>113</sup> It is a 'holy way' – 'harsh and narrow' to beginners, but 'even, pleasant and broad' to seasoned monks.<sup>114</sup> The *RB*, Smaragdus writes, would be 'showing its friends how to attain heavenly things', while being 'oppressive to the oppressive'.<sup>115</sup> Echoing Cassian, he then described how the Rule, a 'norm for salvation', would equip the devout with 'bow and weapons' enabling them to defend themselves against the wicked with 'piercing darts'.<sup>116</sup> 'For those who walk righteously', he concludes, 'our fathers call this way a *via regia*' which shall 'regulate the monk's mind' and 'lead him by the middle path'.<sup>117</sup>

Although it becomes less explicit as the *Expositio* starts in earnest, this royal way remains in the background throughout the entire text, an indication of how it should guide the monks for whom Smaragdus wrote his commentary. Commenting on a passage in the Prologue to the *RB*, which reads 'See, in his loving *pietas*, the Lord has shown us the way of life', the abbot comments that thus 'the Lord himself [...] has become for us the way, the truth and the life. That is to say: it is a *via regia*'.<sup>118</sup> Smaragdus wanted his audience to realize not only that the achievement of happiness was a journey in itself, but also that their journey has an ultimate destination, and that they should do their utmost to get it right on their first and only try. This went doubly so for novices wanting to enter into a monastery: before they were allowed to perform their *professio*, the *RB* already insisted that novices should be made aware of their charges. Smaragdus adds to this in terms well-known

113 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Relligione pia vitae perquirere callem / Scandere quo valeat aurea regna celer'.

114 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Est monachis sancti Benedicti Regula Patris / Perfectis palma suavis et ampla via / Aspera sed pueris nec non tironibus arcta / Quos aluit gremio lactea vita diu. / Haec est sancta via praelucida semita coeli / Carpere quam cupiunt castra beata Dei'.

115 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Esto gravis gravibus, suavis et apta bonis' and 'Pandit iter nostris, coelestia pandit amicus / Currere ne pigeat, sed patienter eant'.

116 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Haec est vita bonis, nec non et norma salutis / Arcus et arma piis, fulgida tela malis'. These lines seem to echo the sentiment and metaphors visible in Cassian's *Conlationes XXIII*, coll. 6, cap. 9: see above.

117 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 4: 'Patribus a nostris in sacro carmine legis / Regia rectegradis dicitur ista via'. And: 'Temperet interea monachi discretio mentem / Et via per medium regia ducat eum'.

118 *Expositio*, c. 1, p. 35: 'Ipse ergo Dominus, ut praedictum est, factus est nobis via, veritas, et vita. Via scilicet regia, ut per eum gradientes non declinemus ad dexteram aut ad sinistram, sed ad vitam quae ipse est petveniamus aeternam'. This passage is reminiscent of Jerome, *Epistola* 48, c. 8 (above) and Hrabanus, *Epistola* 42 (above).



to him. When Benedict insists that new monks 'be clearly told all the hard and harsh things by which the journey to God is made', Smaragdus expands this by explaining that the 'way' represented by Christ was 'straight and narrow' indeed.<sup>119</sup> Before even attempting to enter the community, novices had better be aware that to be a monk was a permanent profession:

This is a holy way, a pellucid pathway to Heaven  
 On which the blessed ranks of God long to enter  
 This sublime Rule admonishes all monks  
 To do without things, and seek the supernal realms,  
 To let go of what is theirs, so that they may have as theirs  
 With all their companions, the abiding kingdom of Heaven  
 In the sacred song of the law our fathers call this way  
 'A royal way' for those who walk uprightly.<sup>120</sup>

This insistence on the *RB* as a means to ascend the *via regia* is characteristic of the way Smaragdus intended his works to be understood. The *Expositio* could even be seen as an extension of the *VR*, in which the author specified how the *RB* would help people on the path to life.

The place of the abbot in the monastery is explained in similar terms. It is emphasized by Smaragdus that an abbot's duty goes beyond the merely pastoral. He was the father of the entire community, who acted 'in the place of Christ'.<sup>121</sup> By virtue of that position, he was supposed to put limitations on the lives of his flock, lest they be ensnared by the Devil. It was a balancing act. The abbot's task was

To fix their [the monks'] steps straight and firm in the *via regia*, so that he may not suffer their loss by defection through overdriving his flock. On the other hand, if he should nurture it with less strictness than is fitting, it may through riotous living slide into hell.<sup>122</sup>

119 *Expositio*, c. 58, p. 293: 'Praedicentur ei omnia dura et aspera, per quae itur ad Deum'. This particular quotation is from the *RB* directly.

120 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Haec est sancta via praelucida semita coeli / Carpere quam cupiunt castra beata Dei / Admonet haec monachos sublimis Regula cunctos / Ut rebus careant, regna superna petant / Propria dimittant, habeant ut propria cuncta / Prospera quae sociis coelica regna manent / Patribus a nostris in sacro carmine legis / Regia rectegradis dicitur ista via'. Cf. De Vogüé, 'Les conseils évangéliques', pp. 528-529.

121 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 61: 'Tunc enim abbas in monasterio vicem Christi agit'.

122 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 62: 'Abbatis ergo constitutio in via regia rectum facere debet gressum; ne si plus fecerit, gregem suum laborare in ambulando defectionis sustineat detrimentum. Et si remissius quam decet nutriverit eum, luxuriose vivens labatur in tartarum'.

Abbatial leadership was therefore subject to the Golden Rule of doing nothing in excess, not even discipline. His discretion was only limited by the Lord's precepts.<sup>123</sup> Like kings, abbots would be held responsible for all the failings of their flock at the Last Judgement, unless they had done their best to keep disobedience in check. The monks, for their part, were expected to actually be obedient, in order to prevent 'the penalty of eternal death', which, according to Smaragdus, 'prevailed in paradise over the first disobedient humans'.<sup>124</sup> This key passage serves as a prelude to Smaragdus' treatment of the interaction between leadership, pastoral duty, and the responsibilities of the flock. The ensuing dynamic forms one of the main narrative strands in the first book of the *Expositio*, if not in the work in its entirety.<sup>125</sup> Coupled with the *VR*, explanations such as these show that for the author, the main task of those in a position of authority was to enable others to walk the *via regia*. To a large extent, this was made possible by a regulated life, by boundaries, and by strict limits to excessive behaviour. Inextricably bound up with these rules was the acknowledgment that those who took this charge should also lead by example. The abbot, for Smaragdus, should be 'a model for the flock', able to adapt to each of the monks' specific character.<sup>126</sup> Continuing the idea of the abbot, or any leader, as a guide on the path to life, Smaragdus explained that true leadership consisted of 'a twofold teaching' that comprised both good deeds and good communication.<sup>127</sup>

These terms are similar to those used in the *VR* when Smaragdus explained to his *rex* how to lead the kingdom. Still, while the *VR* hardly touches upon the relation between ruler and ruled, the *Expositio* makes up for this. Although this does not necessarily mean that the text should be read as a political tract, it seems that to Smaragdus, the pastoral duties of an abbot and the responsibilities of a king came from the same place.<sup>128</sup> Both were leaders, and as such, both acted *vice Christi* whilst following their path on the *via regia*.<sup>129</sup> Both should provide the best possible example to their respective flocks. After all, his *rex* had received his 'gifts' from God,

123 On the virtue of discretion, see Scholl, 'The mother of virtues'.

124 *Expositio*, c. 2, pp. 64-65: 'Quae primis inobedientibus hominibus praevaluit in paradiso, ipsa nunc demum inobedientibus monachis quotidie praevallet in mundo. Reliquerunt enim in paradiso per inobedientiam Adam et Eva Domini praecepta; et tunc primum praevaluit illis fortiter mortis aeternae poena'.

125 Especially considering that the next chapter, *Expositio*, c. 3, pp. 80-85, details this interaction in the chapter house.

126 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 75: 'Quando forma factus gregi'.

127 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 62.

128 Noble, 'Monastic ideal', pp. 243-246.

129 Cf. Born, '*Specula principis*', pp. 593-595.

and ruled his kingdom together with Christ, whom he also should aspire to imitate. Christ was the ‘preacher and the teacher, the example and the pattern, the creator, the governor and the guide’, as Smaragdus explained while telling the king to restrain his *ira regis*.<sup>130</sup> Following His example, the king should rule with patience rather than with anger – just like an abbot.<sup>131</sup>

In the words of the *Expositio*, abbots should heed the counsel of the members of the community, as:

It is becoming for [the abbot] to dispose all things with foresight and justice. For the abbot must always, by means of a subtle scrutiny, distinguish good and evil, think carefully of what is fitting for whom, when, and in what way, and thus arrange all things with foresight and justice; and therefore it is fitting for him to be obeyed by all his disciples as a reasonable father.<sup>132</sup>

More strikingly, this passage is immediately followed by a quotation from Gregory the Great’s *Moralia in Iob*, commenting on Job 34:18.<sup>133</sup> It is from the speech by Eliu, the last of Job’s four friends and the one who comes closest to rebuking Job for having the *hubris* of thinking he understood God’s plan.<sup>134</sup> In Gregory’s view, Eliu argues that God stands above all, and even ‘crowned kings’ can betray and apostatize from His rulings if they ‘lead by their example those under them to impiety’.<sup>135</sup> Someone who has authority over others, in short, should take care to ‘live both for himself and for his subjects’.<sup>136</sup> It was a powerful sentiment, and one that would come back to haunt Louis the Pious during his penance in Compiègne in 833, when the bishops overseeing his penance also assumed the role of Eliu, ‘rebuking Job (or Louis) against any further such attempts to provoke the almighty’.<sup>137</sup> Conversely, however, it meant that both abbots and emperors were only as good as the counsellors around them – the ones they were in turn leading by example.

130 VR, c. 24, col. 963C. See also Althoff, ‘*Ira Regis*’.

131 VR, c. 24, col. 964A; *Expositio*, c. 3.

132 *Expositio*, c. 3, p. 82: ‘Debet enim abbas subtili semper examinatione bona malaque discernere, et quae, quibus, quando vel qualiter congruant studiose cogitare, et sic provide et juste cuncta disponere; et properea a cunctis illi discipulis, ut pote rationali Patri, convenit obediri’. See De Vogüé, ‘Règle de Saint Benoît’, pp. 485–486.

133 Cf. Greschat, *Die Moralia in Job*, pp. 232–241.

134 On Eliu in the Book of Job, see Vermeylen, “Pour justifier mon créateur”.

135 Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 24.xxv.54.

136 *Expositio*, c. 3, p. 82.

137 Booker, *Past Convictions*, p. 164; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 238–241.

Smaragdus' ideal of interdependent rulership was suffused with monastic ideas. One person decided on important matters, but did so based on the counsel by his community.<sup>138</sup> In this community,

There is one faith, one baptism, one heart and one soul [Eph. 4:5] in all monks who are living good and upright lives, just as there was earlier in the religion of those who believed rightly and lived good lives.

Even if this particular idea was attached to a *monasterium* and not to a *regnum* or the world at large, Smaragdus seemed to have considered this the ultimate goal of individual *correctio* for everybody.<sup>139</sup> As argued in the *acta* from the 813 Council of Tours, it became important for monks to ensure that those living around them would follow their example and follow them on the *via regia*. This became a grave responsibility for the abbot, and even more so for the ruler, if he would aspire to live up to this ideal. Abbatial authority depended on his monks' unconditional surrender of their own free will, and their readiness to share responsibilities.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, the ability of a king to guide people on the *via regia* depended on the willingness of everyone in the *ecclesia* to acquire a crown of their own: the *diadema monachorum*.

### A Crowning Achievement: The *Diadema Monachorum*

When he composed his educational trilogy, Smaragdus was abbot of Saint-Mihiel. Assuming he was indeed willing to practice what he preached, training his monks to become 'perfect' would have been his primary goal. Still, as the overlap between the *VR* and the *Expositio* demonstrates, he cast his net wider. This becomes obvious when we look at the third of his treatises, the highly popular *Diadema Monachorum*, also composed in the context of 816-819.<sup>141</sup> While its popularity and manuscript transmission throughout the Middle Ages mirror that of the *Expositio*, the contents of the text echo many of the ideas espoused in the *VR*, albeit more ostentatiously tailored to suit the needs of a monastic audience; the work was intended

138 Cf. Blecker, 'Roman law and *consilium*'.

139 *Expositio*, c. 3, p. 81: 'cur multorum habitatio in uno positorum monasterium dicatur, nisi forte, ut arbitror, propterea quia una fides, unum baptisma, cor unum et anima una est in omnibus bene et juste viventibus monachis, sicut prius in religione recte credentium et bene viventium fuit'.

140 De Vogüé, 'Les conseils évangéliques', pp. 536-537.

141 See Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 68-75.

to provide *lectiones* during the evening meal in communities.<sup>142</sup> Here also, the abbot may have had all of Christendom in mind rather than just monks, or, more likely, he wanted to impress upon his monks that they were an intrinsic part of Christendom. More specifically, monks, as paragons of Christian virtue, had the collective duty to show the right way of living to the people around them: above all, to be temperate and do nothing in excess. This is perhaps nowhere more visible than in a chapter dealing with love and its connection to mutual control within a community, which closes with a passage from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, a collection of early Christian sayings by a multitude of Desert Fathers (and Mothers), in which a certain Poimen concludes his explanation of the virtues of temperance to one of his overly zealous colleagues by saying ‘those famous elders have [...] thus shown us the *via regia*, which is more pleasant and easier to walk’.<sup>143</sup>

Even if the recurrent use of the *via regia* is no definite proof that Smaragdus intended these treatises to function as a triptych, the universality of his moral exhortations and the endless possibilities for overlaps between monastic and courtly lifestyles are already visible in the titles given to the treatises. If travelling on the king’s highway and wearing a king’s crown meant temperance and virtue, the highly controlled life of monks ensure that they were deserving of similar regalia. Quoting a sermon of Caesarius of Arles in the penultimate chapter of the *DM*, Smaragdus states that everybody who continuously strives to protect and perpetuate ‘peace, truth, justice and chastity’ would receive a crown from the hand of the Lord, equal to that of the martyrs of old.<sup>144</sup>

If nothing else, this once again shows how different interpretations of *ministerium* within the Frankish *ecclesia* could be conflated, how everyone living together should be working towards the same goal, and be content to do so within the order established by the Lord. In the chapter of the *DM* dealing with negligent monks, Smaragdus explains how such a *ministerium* could only be exercised by those who had fully internalized the ‘journey down the holy road’, in whom the ‘right kind of longing’ had grown strong enough to withstand temptations caused by ‘good fortune of the present world’.<sup>145</sup> Those monks would be capable of fulfilling the *ministerium* of

142 *DM*, Prologus, c. 593D.

143 *DM*, c. 41, col. 638C: ‘Sed haec omnia probaverunt senes magni [...] et ostenderunt nobis viam hanc regalem, quia leavior est et facilis’.

144 *DM*, c. 99, col. 689D: ‘martyrii coronam Domino remunerante percipiet’. Caesarius, *Sermo* 41 is quoted; note the use of *corona* instead of *diadema*.

145 *DM*, c. 26, col. 622A.

guarding their own vineyard – an image borrowed from Songs 1:6 through the *Homiliae in Evangeliae* of Gregory the Great, which in turn was filtered through the works of Taio of Zaragoza.<sup>146</sup> In doing so, the community as a whole came to serve as an example.<sup>147</sup> Add to this the use of this particular vineyard by Gregory both in the *Homeliae* and the *Expositio in Canticum Cantorum*, to designate not only worldly challenges facing everyone who wanted to care for one's own soul, but also the soul itself, and the importance of achieving peace through mutual self-reflection within the *ecclesia* is made even clearer.<sup>148</sup>

Smaragdus used his knowledge to teach his flock, both the good and the bad sheep: in chapter 65, he explicitly explained that those who have the best interest of all in mind should not expect to be liked by everyone equally, as the *ecclesia* on earth would always be a *corpus permixtum* populated by a mixture of good and bad people, or, as Paul saw it, by vessels of gold, silver, wood and clay, all of whom would eventually be tested by the Lord.<sup>149</sup> This metaphor goes back to Sir. 27:6 ('The furnace trieth the potter's vessels, and the trial of affliction just men'), and its use here indicates that Smaragdus regarded the Church as a *corpus permixtum* as pioneered by such Church Fathers as Origen, Augustine and Gregory the Great.<sup>150</sup> For the monks in his audience, however, this did not mean that they should avoid bad people. Instead, they should simply persist in doing what was 'advantageous' or useful to them, as well as to those around them as if they were their superiors: they served the common interest by being obedient.<sup>151</sup> In his *Expositio*, even more concerned with the practicalities of the internal life of a monastery, Smaragdus extended this philosophy to disagreements between the monks themselves, allowing for contentions between brethren as long as they arose over a concern for mutual advantage, and not out of sheer pride.<sup>152</sup> It was for this reason that Smaragdus composed the *DM* as 'a handy bouquet of sweet-smelling flowers' that he plucked from the flowering meadows of the Church Fathers:

146 On the influence of Taio, see chapter 2 of this book.

147 *DM*, c. 26, col. 622D. See Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangeliae* 17, c. 14, p. 128. On the vineyard as a metaphor for the *ecclesia* or the *populus Christianus*, see Dassmann, *Die eine Kirche*, pp. 74-77 and pp. 87-90; Heydemann, 'Biblical Israel', pp. 157-159.

148 Gregory the Great, *Expositio in Canticis Cantorum*, cc. 35-40, pp. 120-131.

149 *DM*, c. 65, col. 661B, invoking 2 Tim. 2:20.

150 Roloff, *Die Kirche im Neuen Testament*, pp. 160-162; Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, pp. 101-103 and pp. 124-126; Greschat, *Die Moralia in Job*, pp. 110-116.

151 *DM*, c. 65, col. 661A.

152 Ponesse, 'Editorial practice', pp. 86-90.

For this reason: that the hearts of perfect monks may be soothed, and that they may be roused towards the heavenly fatherland; whereas the hearts of infirm monks may be strengthened and frightened, so that they may be brought to an improved regular life.<sup>153</sup>

This quotation touches upon another feature of the *DM*, one which illustrates the importance of cooperation in a less obvious, but no less potent way. Smaragdus himself admitted that his *florilegium* should be read as an extension of the *RB* itself. With the *DM*, he put into practice the final exhortation of Benedict to not merely follow his rules, but to peruse ‘the teachings of the holy Fathers, the observance of which leads to the height of perfection’.<sup>154</sup> Smaragdus stood in a long tradition when he followed this advice, but nevertheless managed to put his own spin to it. He did so by presenting choice lectures from the works of, among others, Caesarius of Arles, Isidore of Seville and Gregory the Great, to make his most important points for him – many of which he knew through the anonymous *Glosae in Regula Sancti Benedicti*.<sup>155</sup> Smaragdus did not even shy away from using his own *VR* – itself mostly a collection of patristic texts – thus implying that certain virtues were monkish and kingly at the same time. Like many of his peers, Smaragdus had not merely copied his sources: he hand-picked and edited his quotations, and put them in a different order to make the points he wanted to make, effectively turning what seems like yet another collection of ancient texts into a composition that was ‘original’ in its own right.<sup>156</sup> The *DM* thus presents a number of diverse viewpoints under the guise of a single work: a microcosm of Benedictine communal thinking, for a community that extended beyond the physical walls of the cloister.

Unlike the relatively clear tripartite scheme of the *VR*, the structure of the much longer *DM* is less apparent.<sup>157</sup> Nonetheless, there seems to be a progression towards ever more advanced studies within its hundred chapters, going from the basics of being a monk to essential questions

153 *DM*, Prologus, c. 593C: ‘Ea videlicet, quae perfectorum monachorum corda demulceant, et ad desiderium patriae coelestis avidius sublimiusque erigant: infirmorum quoque monachorum corda confirmet et terreant, ad regularemque perducant emendationem’.

154 *RB*, c. 73.2.

155 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 71–74 lists all sources used in this text. See also Van der Meer, *Glosae*, pp. lxiii–lxxxii.

156 On this method, see Heil, ‘Labourers in the Lord’s quarry’; Contreni, ‘Carolingian biblical studies’, pp. 84–88; Le Maître, ‘Les méthodes exégétiques de Raban Maur’.

157 Peltier, ‘Art.: Smaragde’, col. 2248, calls the *DM* ‘sans suite bien logique et un peu au hasard’ (‘without a logical sequence and a bit haphazard’).

concerning the relation between body and soul or between Heaven and Earth. In a demonstration of Smaragdus' priorities, the work starts with three chapters on prayer, the correct liturgy, and the importance of reading, before arriving where the *VR* started, the chapter on the love for God and one's neighbour.<sup>158</sup> The function of the work as an attempt to deepen the understanding of the *RB* becomes clear almost immediately in this opening gambit. Chapter 2, which shares its title with *RB* chapter 19 (*De disciplina psallendi*), provides a rather different explanation than the one given in the original Rule for the inclusion of Ps. 47:8, an exhortation to 'sing psalms wisely'.<sup>159</sup> This is the only biblical invocation Benedict and Smaragdus have in common on this particular subject, and it is all the more notable that their interpretations are somewhat different.<sup>160</sup> Whereas the sixth-century abbot invoked this verse as a reminder that God kept a careful eye on his assistants, his ninth-century successor continued where Benedict left off, explaining the many ways 'our mind may be in harmony with our voice', both during the liturgy and elsewhere. To Smaragdus, not only the fact that the monks were singing 'in sight of the Divine and of His Angels' was important, but also that singing 'more with the mind than with the voice' could move many to bewail their faults.<sup>161</sup> To sing wisely was to sing in such a way that the power of the psalms would be felt and remembered by all within earshot.<sup>162</sup>

Although the *RB* reverberates throughout the *DM*, Smaragdus went beyond its relatively narrow confines in this book for seasoned monks. The remainder of this loosely defined section of the *DM* therefore lists all virtues a good Christian ought to possess, including fear, patience, prudence, humility and an understanding that wisdom is a gift from Christ. It contains the most echoes of the *VR*, with the notable exception of the chapter on obedience, which is not listed among the kingly virtues.<sup>163</sup> The next section (cc. 20-43) expands the horizons by detailing the monks' relation with the outside world, again focusing mainly on proving how a well-developed

158 *DM*, cc. 1-4, cols. 594C-601A.

159 *DM*, c. 2, col. 596C: 'Oportet enim nisibus totis obedire illi, qui nos per Prophetam admonet dicens: "Psallite sapienter" [Ps. 47:8]'.  
 160 *RB*, c. 19.3-6, pp. 156-159: 'Ideo semper memores simus, quod ait propheta [...] "Psallite sapienter"'.  
 161 *DM*, c. 2, c. 596D: 'Nihil est sola voce canere, sine cordis intentione'; col. 597B: 'Et canere igitur, et psallere, et laudare Dominum magis animo quam voce debemus'. See Leyser, 'Angels, monks and demons'.

162 Mayr-Harting, 'Praying the psalter'.

163 *DM*, c. 611 cols. 602B-608D.



self-discipline is the best defence against threats from without and within, including sins, weakness of the flesh, and talking too much.<sup>164</sup> The section culminates in a series of chapters on the relationship between God, His creation, and the believers that inhabit it (cc. 44-64). He compares the way this relationship is ordered to a wall in which each stone is placed in such a way that the structure comes out strongest, just like the faithful, 'through their teaching' support those that follow them. It was a powerful vision of a community building the *domus Dei* together, with each person working according to his or her own strength, based on the image of 'living stones' (*lapides vivi*) presented in 1 Pet. 2:5 and adapted into an image of togetherness by, among others, Augustine.<sup>165</sup> Finally, in the longest and most complicated section, the author attempts to bring all four elements – God, the right order of things, the world, and the monks – together, by telling his audience who they are and how they are supposed to act with the knowledge they now have. They are the heirs of God, his children, for whom Christ has sacrificed himself just as they should sacrifice themselves for him.<sup>166</sup>

This image is reminiscent of that used in the prologue to the *VR*, where, in the opening paragraph, the king is reminded that his authority is a gift from God, and that he 'enriched by these sacred gifts, may bear the king's *diadema* with due reverence'.<sup>167</sup> Interestingly, Smaragdus used *diadema* for this passage, just as he did in chapter 9 of the *VR*.<sup>168</sup> He noticeably eschews the word in the *DM* where, when mentioning headgear at all, prefers to use *corona*. Usually, this invoked the 'crown of wisdom' from Sir. 1:22, but in one instance, the image was of a martyr's crown, signifying the reward the righteous Christians were to receive after a virtuous death and a life during which they had never wavered from the true faith.<sup>169</sup> Earning that

164 *DM*, c. 31, col. 626; cc. 33-34, cols. 627D-630C; cc. 38-39, cols. 633D-636A.

165 *DM*, c. 60, cols. 656D-657C: 'Portant et ipsi per doctrinam et tolerantiam sequentes, et hoc ordine alii ab aliis portantur iusti usque ad ultimum iustum'. On this metaphor, see Clancy, 'Augustine's sermons for the dedication of a church', pp. 49-50; Meyer, *Soziales Handeln*, pp. 221-223. See also Czock, *Gottes Haus*, pp. 244-264.

166 *DM*, c. 67, col. 663; c. 81, cols. 675C-676B; *DM*, c. 71, cols. 666D-667C; c. 83, cols. 676D-677C; c. 100, cols. 689A-690A.

167 *VR*, Epistola nuncupatoria, c. 933B: 'His etenim sacris ditatus muneribus rite portas diademata regis'.

168 *VR*, c. 9, col. 950A: 'hic diademata portat, illic gaudio exultationis refulget'.

169 *DM*, c. 6, col. 602D; c. 7, col. 604A; c. 61, cols. 657D, 657D-658A and 658B; c. 76, col. 672A; c. 89, col. 682B. The biblical link is made explicit in the first two instances 'Solomon ait: 'Corona sapientiae timor Domini, replens pacem et salutis fructum: utraque autem sunt dona Dei'; *DM*, c. 99, col. 688D. De Rubeis, 'La corona del martire'; Costambeys, 'Transmission of tradition', pp. 94-96.

crown meant exerting constant vigilance, against hate, vice, and other human weaknesses so that they may earn their rightful place in Heaven, in God's 'eternal mansion'.<sup>170</sup>

It had already been noted by the fifth-century priest Julianus Pomerius that true martyrdom, as happened during the Roman persecutions, had become very difficult in a world where Christianity had become commonplace.<sup>171</sup> He therefore explained that there was a different, more attainable goal, namely that people should develop a deep-seated love for the rules imposed upon them by their religion.<sup>172</sup> As noted in the *Institutio Canoniconum*, living well remained the best defence.<sup>173</sup> If nothing else, this ending to the *DM* reminded the monks of the paradoxical reciprocity inherent in their special relation with the Lord: for Smaragdus, every aspect of a monk's life served to thank Christ for the sacrifices He had made. The best way to express this gratitude was to serve as a sacrifice themselves.

While there appears to be a narrative arc to the *DM*, most chapters can actually be enjoyed and explained separately, as *lectiones* to be read during the chapter and the communal meals which were key aspects of communal life. This is perhaps most clear from the fact that Smaragdus invoked either the *Apophthegmata Patrum* or *Vitae Patrum* in almost every chapter, using these collections of sayings from and stories about the Desert Fathers to serve as reminders of what it takes to aspire to their excellence.<sup>174</sup> More than his commentary on the *RB*, which was primarily intended to clarify the Rule itself in the light of the many changes set in motion under the Carolingians, the *DM* was written to reach out and improve the hearts and minds of monks. Thus, it serves as an extension of the *RB*, meant to put the crowning touch to a proper monastic education.

This is how the title of the work should be understood. Going back to the differences between *corona* and *diadema*, the conceptual 'Diadem for Monks' denoted more than mere headgear, in spite (or even: because) of

170 See, for example, Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*, lib. 3, c. 28, on the importance of chastity to be able to reach God's 'eternal mansion'.

171 See, for example, Kinnard, 'Imitatio Christi in Christian martyrdom', or more generally on the changing role of holiness and asceticism in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, Brown, 'Rise and function', but also, by the same author, 'The decline of the empire of God'.

172 On the role of Pomerius in the development of European monastic thought, cf. among others, Devisse, 'Influence de Julien Pomère'; Diem, *Das monastische Experiment*, pp. 156-158; Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, pp. 184-203; Timmermann, 'Sharers'.

173 This did not stop hagiographers from extolling the virtues of achieving 'red martyrdom' – which in turn may have influenced such missionaries as Boniface: Cubitt, 'Memory and narrative', pp. 37-39.

174 *Vitae Patrum*, ed. J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 73 (Paris 1849); trans. Ward, *Desert Fathers*.

the fact that Smaragdus never used the term in the text itself. He preferred to leave the *corona* mentioned in his sources intact. This shows the intent behind the title of the work, and helps us further understand the author's reasoning. By all accounts, the title had been deliberately chosen and was not given by a later editor. In addition to many manuscripts containing the work which give the title, several medieval catalogues, mention it as *liber ille, quem Diadema monachorum intitulavit*.<sup>175</sup> It was not lost on other medieval commentators, either. According to the eleventh-century *Chronicle of Saint-Mihiel*, for example, the *DM* was Smaragdus' most important intellectual legacy for the community.<sup>176</sup> The early-twelfth-century *Chronicon* by Sigebert of Gembloux, explained that this title was appropriate 'because, like the gemstones in a diadem, so shines this book with virtues'.<sup>177</sup> Clearly, the title was not considered to refer to Isidore's 'ornament for women's heads'.<sup>178</sup> Neither would it be worthwhile to look for an explanation in the many early medieval commentaries on the Book of Revelation, where authors struggled to explain the seven crowned heads of the beast from the sea.<sup>179</sup> Instead, an explanation of Smaragdus' use of *diadema* may be found in the Old Testament, where it confers on its bearer a measure of authority that was divinely approved and religious in nature rather than strictly secular. For example, as told in 1 Chron. 20:1-2 when David seized the *corona* of the Ammonite king, Melchom, following the conquest of Rabba, 'he made himself a diadem of it'. Alternatively, Wis. 18:24 identifies the diadem as the headgear of Aaron, who, according to Isidore, was the first bishop. It was part of the priestly *regalia*, conferring some of the majesty of God on its bearer, but also emphasizing their subordinate status.<sup>180</sup>

A similar distinction was made in the *Regula Magistri*, a monastic rule closely related to the *RB*.<sup>181</sup> In this text, the author concludes a passage on the usefulness of perseverance by writing that:

175 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 22-23 and p. 22, n. 3.

176 *Chronicon Sancti Michaelis*, c. 5, p. 81.

177 Sigebert of Gembloux, *Liber de Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*, c. 188, col. 572B: 'Smaragdus scripsit de vitandis vitiis et tenendis virtutibus librum, quem intitulavit Diadema monachorum, quia sicut diadema gemmis, ita hic liber refulget virtutibus'.

178 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 19.31.1: 'Diadema est ornamentum capitis matronarum ex auro et gemmis contextum'.

179 Rev. 12:3-4; See McGinn, 'Turning points', pp. 94-104.

180 *DEO*, lib. 2, c. 5.1-2.

181 Although many scholars now accept that the *RB* has been modelled on the *Regula Magistri*, others argue that the order is reversed or even that they developed in wholly different contexts. For the onset of this controversy, see Jaspert, *Die Regula Benedicti/Regula Magistri-Kontroverse*. For the continuation of the debate, see Dunn, 'Mastering Benedict'; De Vogüé, 'The Master

As gold is tried by the file and the hammer and the fire of the furnace, this is useful for the *diadema* of God and the *corona* of the ruler, because if someone does not act [according to] his own will, he is compelled to do that which we say in our daily prayer: 'Your will be done in Heaven and on Earth'.<sup>182</sup>

A similar interpretation may be found in the *Moralia in Iob*. In the passage commenting on Job 29:14, Gregory the Great, a main source of inspiration for Smaragdus, compares the diadem to the 'judgements of the righteous', noting how those wearing it do not 'covet to find their reward by it in things below and of this Earth, but up above'.<sup>183</sup> Interestingly, this is a motif we also find in the *De Institutione Regia* by Jonas of Orléans, a contemporary of Smaragdus, who quoted the same chapter 29 from the Book of Job, and interpreted the *diadema* as a reflection 'on the *ministerium* of kings' as exercised by the grace of God.<sup>184</sup> This again drew attention to the diadem as simultaneously conferring authority and responsibility – or even authority *through* responsibility.

It seems a logical conclusion that this implies the monks who had to listen to the admonitions contained in the *DM* during mealtimes should strive for a responsibility akin to that of a secular ruler. Smaragdus encouraged his audience to proclaim the good works of God, and that those who are 'perfect on the Lord's highway' combined all the virtues of the evangelists.<sup>185</sup> However, it should not be forgotten that one of Benedict of Nursia's prime concerns was the internalization of his teachings, rather than limiting them to outward appearances inside monastery walls. The appearance

and S. Benedict: a response'; Dunn, 'The Master and St. Benedict'. See also Dunn, *Emergence of Monasticism*, pp. 128-130 and pp. 182-184. For the purposes of this study, the precise relation between the two Rules, while interesting, is of lesser importance.

182 *Regula Magistri*, c. 90.47-49, p. 389: 'Et tamquam aurum lima et malleis et igne fornacis probetur, ad diadema Dei et coronam dominicam profuturus, quia cum propriam non fecerit alius voluntatem, cogitur facere cui cottidie in oratione dicimus: "Fiat uoluntas tua sicut in caelo et in terra" [Mat. 6:10]; cf. Benedict of Aniane, *Concordia Regularum*, c. 65, which gives a slightly different version: 'Ergo omnia debet pro Domino sustinere qui ejus cupit militare scholae; et tamquam aurum lima, et malleis, et igne fornacis probetur ad diadema Dei, et coronam Dominicam profuturus. Quia cum propriam non fecerit voluntatem aliquis, cogitur facere, cui quotidie dicimus dicimus in oratione: "Fiat voluntas tua sicut in caelo et in terra".'

183 Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 19.xxi.34-35: 'Iustorum ergo iudicium diadema dicitur, quia per hoc non in terrenis et infimis, sed sursum remunerari concupiscunt'.

184 Jonas of Orléans, *De Institutione Regia*, c. 4 (Quid sit proprie ministerium regis), pp. 200-201.

185 *DM*, c. 69, cols. 664D-665C (De eo quod Domini semper a monachis annuntiantur virtutes); c. 93, col. 684 (De eo quod omnis electus atque perfectus monachus et homo, et vitulus, et leo, et aquila figuraliter sit).

of monastic perfection was just the first step. A true, fully trained monk could never be stripped of his *habitus*.<sup>186</sup> As Smaragdus writes at the end of his exposition of chapter 7 of the *RB*, in which the gradual acquisition of true humility is explained:

When all these steps of humility have been climbed, the monk will happily come to the vision of the Almighty, where he may enjoy with his Lord a happiness and joy that can never be taken away from him.<sup>187</sup>

Instead of devoting a whole new *florilegium* to this particular issue, Smaragdus could have presented many of the teachings in the *DM* in the context of his *Expositio*. If his goal was to further deepen the understanding of what it meant to be a monk to his students, he could have stressed that point even more emphatically in his *Expositio* – something that happened in the *Commentarium in Regulam s. Benedicti* composed by Hildemar of Corbie a generation later.<sup>188</sup> However, at the time Smaragdus was active, the general acceptance of the *RB* and the Carolingian *correctio* movement in the monastic landscape on the one hand, and the integral education of all people within the *ecclesia* on the other, were still two distinct, if parallel, issues. This apparently necessitated separate compositions: one to explain life within the walls of the cloister, and one reflecting on the consequences of pursuing those same aspirations in the world at large.<sup>189</sup> While this would imply that Smaragdus hoped (or even intended) that his *DM* would also be read by laypeople, perhaps a more immediate goal was to make his monastic audience aware that they were not operating in a vacuum and that the ideal of monastic isolation should not be taken as an exemption from their responsibilities as exemplary Christians. If the *Expositio* was composed by Smaragdus to show how the (re)implementation of the ‘original’ *RB* might be incorporated into the local traditions of individual monasteries, his *DM* aimed directly at what he perceived to be the heart of Christianity

186 The sense of *habitus* developed by Bourdieu in his *Esquisse d'une Théorie de la Pratique* is useful here: Gorski, ‘Conclusion’, pp. 348–349.

187 *Expositio*, c. 7, p. 193: ‘His enim omnibus humilitatis ascensis gradibus, ad visionem Omnipotentis feliciter veniet monachus, ubi cum suo Domino felici fruatur gaudio, quod in sempiternum non auferetur ab eo’.

188 On Hildemar, see De Jong, *In Samuel's Image*, pp. 68–73; De Jong, ‘Growing up’; Zelzer, ‘Von Benedikt zu Hildemar: zu Textgestalt und Textgeschichte’. The best-known version of Hildemar’s commentary has been edited by Mittermüller, *Expositio Regulae ab Hildemaro tradita*; a cooperative online translation project, coordinated by Albrecht Diem, Julian Hendrix et al., may be found at <http://www.hildemar.org>.

189 Contreni, ‘Inharmonious harmony’; Ganz, ‘Conclusion’, p. 271.

itself: anyone aspiring to become the most outstanding examples of the contemplative life. If the *diadema* fits, wear it, regardless of whether you are a monk, a bishop, or a king.

According to a chapter entitled *De vita contemplativa* in the *DM*, becoming a monk and achieving a perfect contemplative life was merely a logical conclusion of taking that particular road, if only because they have the best teachers and thus the know-how on how to achieve the peace and quiet to be able to properly reflect on oneself and one's relation to God.<sup>190</sup> As such, the responsibilities that came with wearing the monk's diadem should not be a monastic privilege: all good Christians should strive to become examples for one another. Not because Smaragdus was an advocate for a monastic model for the *ecclesia*, but because to him, things like prayer and brotherly love were necessary to safeguard the future of Christendom. As was made clear in the *RB*, as well as in the many commentaries and *consuetudines* based on its implementation in the early medieval West, it was not merely the thought that counted. The model provided by those inside the cloister to those living beyond it should never be forgotten.

One of the narrative arcs of the *VR* held that if everybody within the *ecclesia* were comfortable with their place in the greater scheme and would act to the best of their ability, the divinely inspired rules would not feel as such and the teachers explaining them were shepherds, not masters.<sup>191</sup> This ethical ideal is present in the *DM* to the extent that Smaragdus hardly dwells on the subject of hierarchy or the function of the abbot. Even though these abbots are present throughout the composition as the protagonists of the *Vitae Patrum* that Smaragdus uses as *exempla*, their function as teachers, 'namely, by words and by deeds', was regarded as a given.<sup>192</sup> In the *Expositio*, Smaragdus dwelt extensively on the position of the abbot, emphasizing his many responsibilities and his exemplary function, as well as the fact that, in guarding others, he is also working on his own excellence. 'The abbot's orders and teaching should spread around the leaven of charity in the minds of the monks', Smaragdus wrote.<sup>193</sup> He was the example. He helped his monks 'subject [themselves] more than everyone else to obedience and exercise [themselves] in all good works' and thus earn his – and therefore Christ's – approval, which in turn is his

190 *DM*, c. 24, cols. 619C-620B.

191 Suchan, *Mahnen und Regieren*, pp. 271-304.

192 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 62: 'Omnis enim doctrina duobus modis consistit, verbis videlicet et exemplis'.

193 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 63: 'Ergo iussio vel doctrina abbatis in monachorum mentibus fermentum debet conspergere charitatis'.

own salvation.<sup>194</sup> In the *DM*, on the other hand, the closest he gets to an explanation of the position of the abbot is in an exegetical chapter based around Gal. 4:6, where Smaragdus used Paul's writings to show that, by calling Christ *Abba* – father – they had effectively become God's heirs instead of his servants, and should therefore follow his commands not out of a feeling of subservience, but because it was their fate to become 'fit to share the light which saints inherit'.<sup>195</sup> In a paradoxical statement, Smaragdus tells his audience that:

As we have received the Spirit of the Son of God, and have been made sons, we have thus changed from servitude to freedom, we will become heirs of God the Father, and also co-heirs of Jesus Christ his son.<sup>196</sup>

For Smaragdus, the choice to put one's self under the supervision of an *abba* was the ultimate way of stepping into the light. Following rules simply because one had to would be supplanted by the freedom of becoming a son of God and accepting guidance from an abbot, who 'takes the place of Christ in the monastery when he rules the flock entrusted to him providently and justly', according to the *RB*.<sup>197</sup> Just like the *VR*'s ideal king, good leadership would lead to a good following.

How this would work to strengthen the community is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in chapter 13 of the *DM*, on obedience – the one chapter that does not also occur in the *VR*. As the final *exemplum*, Smaragdus tells the story of a man who entered into a monastery together with his son. The abbot ordered him to throw his son into a burning oven, which the man does without hesitation. The fire then promptly turned to dew, and the man was subsequently revered like the patriarch Abraham, for it is through such obedience that a community may attain perfection.<sup>198</sup> It is not just the man's obedience that accomplished this, however: it also was the abbot's order, as well as their unquestioning trust in God.

194 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 68: 'Pro Dei amore se talis monachus prae omnibus obedientiae subdit, et in bonis omnibus actibus exercet; et ideo ab abbate prae omnibus merito diligitur et amatur'.

195 *DM*, c. 67, col. 663D: 'ut pars et sors et haereditas Domini esse mercamur, [...] in aeternum felices permaneamus'.

196 *DM*, c. 67, col. 663C: 'Ut quomodo Spiritum Filii Dei accipientes, facti sumus filii, ita in libertatem de servitute mutati, haeredes simus Dei Patris, cohaeredes autem Jesu Christi filii eius'.

197 *RB*, c. 2.

198 *DM*, c. 13, cols. 608C-609D, col. 609C.

The connection between these elements forms the core of the *DM*, as is made perhaps most clear when looking at the interplay between the chapters 44 ('On the Gifts of God'), 45 ('On the Grace of God') and 46 ('On Good Subjects').<sup>199</sup> In the last of these three, the reciprocal relation between leader and underling is treated once more, with the thrust of the argument being that a good subject should not just follow blindly, but also keep a close eye on his *praepositi*. They should not be afraid to speak out against any wrongdoings perceived: 'If they do not do this, they are just like idle spectators, and remain without a prize after the contest, in that they toiled not in the contest'.<sup>200</sup> This proactive stance may, in turn, be achieved through the benevolence of God, as Smaragdus states: 'As grace comes first and good will follows, that which is the gift of God becomes our merit'.<sup>201</sup>

Cooperation among the faithful is elevated to a manifestation of grace in this world. Cooperation, in turn, may only be achieved if everybody is content to act according to the gifts he received. 'The Holy Church is the body of its own heavenly head', Smaragdus states, before quoting a metaphor of the body from Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*, who in turn echoes Paul's famous statement about the Church as the body of Christ in 1 Cor 12:12-14.<sup>202</sup> With the help of Isidore of Seville, the metaphor is then brought to its logical conclusion:

When someone receives some good, let him not desire any more than what he deserved, lest, while he tries to appropriate the task of another member, he loses what he deserved. For the entire *ordo* of the body is upset when someone is not content with his office and seizes another.<sup>203</sup>

Invoking Paul's letter to the Corinthians once more, Smaragdus reminded his audience that God acts in mysterious ways, including when it comes

<sup>199</sup> *DM*, cc. 44-46, cols. 641A-644A.

<sup>200</sup> *DM*, c. 46, col. 643B, quoting *Regula Pastoralis*, lib. 4, c. 10, which in turn invokes 2 Tim. 2:5: 'Non coronabitur nisi legitime certaverit'.

<sup>201</sup> *DM*, c. 45, col. 642B: 'Praeveniente gratia, et bona voluntate subsequente, hoc quod omnipotentis Dei donum est fit meritum nostrum'.

<sup>202</sup> *DM*, c. 44, col. 641C: 'Sancta Ecclesia superni sui capitis corpus est'; cf. Gregorius, *Moralia in Iob*, 28.x.22-24.

<sup>203</sup> *DM*, c. 45, col. 642D: 'Dum quisque aliquod bonum accipit, non appetat amplius quam quod meruit, ne dum alterius membri officium arripere tentat, id quod meruit perdat. Conturbat enim corporis ordinem totum, qui non suo contentus officio, subripit alienum'. Cf. Isidorus, *Sententiae*, lib. 2, cc. 5-10, pp. 99-102. Many thanks to Matthieu van der Meer for his help translating this passage.



to giving people their talents.<sup>204</sup> Consequently, he ‘who regards not the limits of his own measures’ also subverts God’s grace, and causes the body to function improperly.<sup>205</sup>

This is the world of Smaragdus, his organic vision of the order approved and designed by God.<sup>206</sup> As already hinted at in the *VR*, the best way to live together in a society was for everyone to be content with one’s station in life. It was an ideal suitable for Benedictine communities, where seniority should be the only criterion for imposing any sort of hierarchy. Moreover, while it was not a model that could be expected to function within the entirety of the Carolingian Church, it did impress upon everybody the idea that order did not imply uniformity. This may be why Smaragdus tried to keep the audience for his *DM* and *VR* as broad as possible. Monasteries, chief among them Saint-Mihiel itself, may have been shining examples to their surroundings, but for the whole *ecclesia* to function as God intended, Smaragdus needed to address the entirety of the *populus*: all those who wished to travel along the *via regia* into the Promised Land.<sup>207</sup> The Carolingian elites should be prepared and willing to carry the responsibility of rulership conferred upon them by their *ministerium* – which was symbolized, according to Smaragdus, by a diadem that was both a burden and a mark of authority. Receiving the monk’s diadem would be akin to bearing the cross that Christ himself carried, suffer with him, and fully forsake one’s self in the process.<sup>208</sup> This was not an easy task by any stretch of the imagination.

To Smaragdus, the primary tool to achieve this mentality was prayer. Proper prayer, which was, according to the *RB* and the *Expositio*, determined by the ‘purity of heart’ and the ‘attentiveness of the mind’ of the one praying, so that it ‘may quickly penetrate heaven.’<sup>209</sup> Prayer was the alpha and omega of the *DM*, in that the first chapter instructs the audience, using the words of Isidore and Gregory the Great, to achieve an all but perpetual state of prayer where words would no longer be necessary, because God would be able to perceive the prayer in their hearts. This ‘tension between the outward and the inward’ was palpable throughout the *DM*, as well as being a recurring

204 *DM*, c. 44, c. 641B.

205 *DM*, c. 44, c. 641C; cf. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* 28.x.22-24.

206 Cf. Struve, *Entwicklung der organologischen Staatsauffassung*, pp. 87-91.

207 *VR*, *Epistola nuncupatoria*, c. 934B: ‘Nam et Israeliticus populus cum, per aliena transiens regna, ad repromissionis tenderet patriam’.

208 *DM*, c. 83, cols. 676D-677C, col. 677C.

209 *RB*, c. 20; *Expositio*, c. 20, pp. 210-211, and c. 38, p. 253: ‘Oratio enim bonorum monachorum cito penetrat coelum’.

theme in the works of Gregory the Great, one of Smaragdus' examples.<sup>210</sup> The very last chapter emphasized this point once more, using a Sermon by Caesarius: the dual sacrifice required of all Christians is that they not only do good works by acting in a way 'pleasing to God', but also, that their 'pious thoughts would present a pleasant offering to the Lord'. Only if the two were acting in perfect concord would the 'two altars of men' be combined into one on the day of reckoning. As Smaragdus writes:

As we rejoice externally about the consecration of an Altar in a house of God, so should we also deem it worthy to feel invisible, spiritual joy about the chastity of the body and the cleanliness of the heart.<sup>211</sup>

To him, this was the perfection expected of those on the *via regia*. Put differently, once all the 'living stones' had built the house of God, they could joyfully consecrate the altars set up within it.

Just as the *VR* had a more general audience than a single king, the *DM* was not aimed exclusively at monks. If we accept that the *DM* provided a series of readings for monastic communities over dinner, Smaragdus' goal was not to explain to monks how they should behave *within* their respective communities – that writing goal had already been fulfilled with his *Expositio*. The idea behind the *DM* was to impress upon its audience the importance of monks in the world, the reason why they should strive to build their internal cloisters as sturdy as possible. After all, monks were to be the foundation of the *ecclesia*, strengthening the walls for others and thus protecting it from the rains and storms that might destroy its splendour.<sup>212</sup> They should not look down upon the outside world, but rather look upward and realize they were as much a part of it as everybody else.

## The Lives of Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel

Sometime in the second half of the 820s, Smaragdus, together with Bishop Frothar of Toul, wrote a letter to Louis the Pious to report on their mission to the monastery of Moyencourt, where they had been sent to investigate

<sup>210</sup> *DM*, c. 1, cols. 594C-596C, c. 594D: 'Si vero desideramus ex corde, etiam cum ore conticescimus, tacentes clamamus'; Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 22.xvii.43. Meens, 'Ritual purity'.

<sup>211</sup> *DM*, c. 100, cols. 690A: 'Et quomodo visibiliter de templi altaris consecratione gaudemus, sic invisibiliter de corporis castita e vel animi puritate spirituale gaudium habere mereamur'. The Sermon of Caesarius quoted is *Sermo* 228, c. 2, p. 902.

<sup>212</sup> *Expositio*, Prologus, p. 43.

a dispute between the community of monks and their abbot, Ismundus.<sup>213</sup> The abbot was accused of preventing the monks to live the way they felt they ought to. The unsatisfactory leadership of the abbot was identified as a cause of discontent particularly as he refused to give the monks access to the part of the possessions of the abbatial revenues that, 'Smaragdus, at your [the emperor's] orders, has given [...] to the monks of this monastery, so that they may live a regular life'.<sup>214</sup> This had hampered their well-being to such an extent that they lodged an official complaint with the emperor.<sup>215</sup> Smaragdus and Frothar determined that this controversy was due 'in part to the negligence of these monks, and in part due to the negligence of their abbot', but stated that both parties were willing to make amends.<sup>216</sup> However, the letter continues, the trust between them had been broken to such a degree that 'without your [that is, Louis'] judgement, nothing would be done', and that the monks 'would rather be expelled from the monastery and live like beggars on the road' than to be thwarted by false promises.<sup>217</sup> For this reason, the bishop and the abbot decided to give the monks permission to travel to the palace in Aachen, and to present their grievances directly.

This was the Carolingian experiment in action. This affair highlighted how the role of the court was understood, both by the monks and by the *missi* sent to placate them. Louis had apparently decided to grant the monks a degree of self-sufficiency, evidently with the goal of enabling Moyenmoutier to manage its possessions without outside influence. This in turn had led to friction with their abbot, exacerbated by accusations of negligence on both sides.<sup>218</sup> There was no one guilty party, and there was no need for there to be one in order for the court to become involved. It was only at the insistence of the monks that the *missi* allowed them to approach the court, not to get rid of their rightfully elected abbot, but to have the emperor help them restore unity in a way that only the ruler of the *ecclesia*

213 On Frothar of Toul, see Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 204-205, and on his letters, see Stratmann, 'Schriftlichkeit'.

214 Frothar of Toul, *Epistola* 3, pp. 94-97.

215 A similar case is visible in an 840 charter from Flavigny, in which Modoin of Autun was sent to arbitrate: Bouchard, *Cartulary of Flavigny*, pp. 50-52.

216 Frothar of Toul, *Epistola* 3, p. 96: 'et cognovimus ex parte neglegentiam ipsorum monachorum, ex parte neglegentiam abbatis eorum'.

217 Frothar of Toul, *Epistola* 3, p. 96: 'postulaverunt, ut illis licentiam daremus ad vestrae pietatis praesenciam recurrenti et vestram misericordiam implorandi, dicentes se magis velle de eodem monasterio expelli et in peregrinatione et mendicitate vivere, quam falsis promissionibus ulterius credere et sub falso monachorum nomine militare'.

218 On *negligentia*, see De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 121-122.

would be able to do.<sup>219</sup> The case did not exist in isolation, either. Around the same time, the monks of Fulda petitioned the court about what they perceived as misconduct by their abbot, Ratgar. It was an affair that also involved a delegation of monks in Aachen, and which, according to one hagiographical account, only ended when the emperor personally delivered a sermon to the community.<sup>220</sup> Another well-known case is the attempt to 'reform' the community of Saint-Denis, which saw monastic rights, abbatial autonomy, episcopal authority, and imperial power clash over many years before anything was resolved.<sup>221</sup>

We do not know how the conflict in Moyennoutier played out exactly, but it is tempting to think that Smaragdus thought of his *Via Regia* as he sent the monks on their way to the king. It was his model of authority in action, a practical application of his visions of community, which seemed to either reflect or be accepted in the discourse of the 820s. Smaragdus' life and works were grounded in a monastic milieu, but his ideals were not shaped by and for monks exclusively. Like many of his contemporaries, Smaragdus was someone who occupied both worlds. For him, it was important to demonstrate how monasteries could, would, and should function in the Carolingian *ecclesia*.

In the first paragraph of the *Epistola Nuncupatoria* that precedes the *VR*, Smaragdus called the king a son of God, and reminded him that his crown (*diadema*) was a symbol of the authority conferred upon him by Christ. In these opening lines, it was suggested that the *Via Regia* and the *Diadema Monachorum* were sides of the same coin, the product of one mind with a consistent if complicated world view. Whether or not the abbot intended for these two works to function as companion pieces, the mutual influence between the two is undeniable and gives rise to the suspicion that these works were not simply a mirror for princes and a series of moral vignettes for monks, respectively. Although the many identities of Smaragdus – theologian, imperial emissary, abbot, political actor, courtier – become visible depending on the specific context of what he was doing, he remained one individual with a clear view on the responsibilities and resources of rulership and the burdens of holding a *ministerium*. Regardless of his intended

219 Cf. Noble, 'Monastic ideal', pp. 242-243.

220 As described in Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda*, pp. 119-130; Semmler, 'Studien zum *Supplex Libellus*'; Kramer, 'Teaching emperors', pp. 318-322; Gaillard, 'De l'interaction entre crise et réforme', pp. 319-323.

221 Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 250-256, esp. p. 255; Semmler, 'Saint-Denis'; Berkhofer, *Day of Reckoning*, pp. 11-14; Rembold, 'The "apostates" of Saint-Denis'.

audience, the overlap between his works demonstrated that to Smaragdus, there also existed a connection between the lives they had to lead.

This unitary sentiment was reflected in sources issued from the court as well. The so-called *Ordinatio ad omnes regni ordines*, a capitulary issued sometime between 823 and 825 paints the picture of a community of elites bound by the fact that they all partook of a single *ministerium*.<sup>222</sup> According to this vision, the hierarchy was led by the ruler, but supported by bishops and aristocracy alike, in an interdependent relation that allowed everyone to build the *ecclesia* and work towards the greater good.<sup>223</sup> According to Louis the Pious, the 'sum of this *ministerium* came together in his person', and he would be 'the admonisher of all' while everybody else should support him. The capitulary thus created the ideal of 'an empire as a communal, functional body, in which the ruler, the secular elites and the religious authorities depended on one another to fulfil their *ministeria*'.<sup>224</sup> With ideas such as these floating around, it is worth contemplating that Smaragdus was not thinking of two different *ministeria*, but rather the two lives of those sharing in that all-encompassing *ministerium*, had to be aware of: the *vita activa* and its counterpart, the *vita contemplativa*.

In the *De Vita Contemplativa* (*DVC*), a moral treatise by the fifth-century priest and teacher Julianus Pomerius, the latter of these two lives is defined as 'that life in which God can be seen', before writing that 'in the present life, replete as it is with woes and mistakes, there is no doubt that God cannot be seen'.<sup>225</sup> This led to the inevitable conclusion that the contemplative life, for Pomerius, was the life after this one – the life in the City of God.<sup>226</sup> For him, the active life was 'the journeying [which] makes a man holy', whereas the contemplative life was only reached the moment perfection was attained:

<sup>222</sup> Guillot, 'Une *ordinatio* méconnue'.

<sup>223</sup> Zotz, 'In Amt und Würden', pp. 14-16.

<sup>224</sup> *Admonitio ad Omnes Regni Ordines*, c. 3, p. 303: 'Sed quamquam summa huius ministerii in nostra persona consistere videatur, tamen et divina auctoritate et humana ordinatione ita per partes divisum esse cognoscitur'; see Hannig, *Consensus fidelium*, p. 269: 'eines gemeinschaftlichen Funktionskörpers des Reiches, in dem König und weltliche wie geistliche Große in der Erfüllung ihrer *ministeria* aufeinander angewiesen sind' ('a common functional body within the empire, within which the king, the lay elites and the high clergy depended on one another for the exercise of their *ministeria*'). Hannig, however, worked from the idea that *minister* and *ministerium* were essentially the same: cf. Zotz, 'In Amt und Würden', p. 14, n. 69.

<sup>225</sup> *DVC*, lib. 1, c. 1, col. 419A: 'Quod si ita est, illa vita ubi Deus videri potest ipsa contemplativa credenda est. In praesenti autem vita miseris, erroribusque plenissima, Deum, sicuti est, videri non posse, dubium non est. In futura igitur vita, quae ob hoc appellatur contemplativa, videndus est, nec immerito'.

<sup>226</sup> Fick, 'Traces', pp. 189-191; Leyser, 'Augustine in the early medieval West'.

in Heaven, or in those extreme cases where holy men really cast off all ties with society around them.<sup>227</sup> His treatise on the *vita contemplativa* thus turned into a depiction of the active life instead, the virtuous life which would enable people to live amongst peers and still attain Paradise, instead of living in isolation.<sup>228</sup> It was a rather uncompromising thesis, but a highly popular one nonetheless.<sup>229</sup> So popular even, that in most of the Middle Ages, the work was ascribed to the more famous Prosper of Aquitaine, as for example in the *Institutio Canonicorum*.<sup>230</sup> Even so, Pomerius also latched on to an existing tradition. The distinction may be traced back to the Gospels, where an episode in which Martha was serving Jesus while her sister Mary was sitting down and listening to his teachings was interpreted to be a reflection of these two ways of life.<sup>231</sup> This idea, first visible in the works of Origen, proved to be influential in the ninth century still, and would prove to be a fertile ground for biblical exegesis throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>232</sup>

Smaragdus knew the *DVC*: it must have been discussed at Aachen while the *IC* was composed, and he used it while composing the *DM* and the *Expositio*.<sup>233</sup> However, this is never made explicit in either the *DM* or the *VR*. In the *DM*, Smaragdus hints at Pomerius' two lives, comparing, in the words of Gregory the Great, the active life to:

A grave, which shields the dead from evil deeds; but the contemplative life buries even more completely, as it separates one wholly from the affairs of this world.<sup>234</sup>

However, he did not take this to Pomerius' logical extreme, but stuck to Isidore's more lenient interpretation:

The active life represents the innocence of good works, the contemplative the vision of a higher world. The former is a community of many, but the

227 *DVC*, lib. 1, c. 12, col. 423A: 'Habet activa profectum, contemplativa fastigium; haec facit hominem sanctum, illa perfectum'.

228 Firey, *A Contrite Heart*, pp. 181-182.

229 Laistner, 'Influence'.

230 Laistner, 'Influence', pp. 347-349.

231 Ernst, *Martha from the Margins*.

232 Constable, *Three Studies*, pp. 28-32.

233 For instance, *DM*, c. 23, c. 618D; for an overview of his use in the *Expositio*, see the English translation, pp. 563-564.

234 *DM*, c. 24, c. 620A: 'Activa quasi sepulcrum est, quia a pravis operibus mortuos tegit; sed contemplativa perfectius sepelit, quia a cunctis mundi actionibus funditus dividit': Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 9.xxxii.48.

latter of only a few. The active life makes good use of worldly goods; the contemplative life, however, renounces the world and chooses to live for God alone.<sup>235</sup>

According to these two authors, and by extension, to Smaragdus, one needed not actually be dead after having lived a virtuous life. It was enough to acquire the mental discipline to serve God without being distracted by the outside world. For Smaragdus, it was important to show that this could be done during this lifetime, even if it would take a monk's discipline.

In this sense, the *VR* and the *DM* should be regarded as companion pieces. Written around the same time, *VR* focused on the *vita activa*, whereas in the *DM* the *vita contemplativa*, the life focused on prayer and contemplation, was central.<sup>236</sup> Many passages from the *VR* have been incorporated in the *DM*, showing how, to Smaragdus, many of life's rules were the same for those wielding authority in this world and those whose goals were set higher. The *VR* and the *DM*, between the two of them, presented the life to which all Christians should aspire. This was a life in which the active and the contemplative modes were not mutually exclusive; rather, the ethical programme they present should allow the 'act of prayer' to become 'a permanent disposition, [...] a constituent element of one's being'.<sup>237</sup> By highlighting the importance of the internalization of prayer over the more regulated aspects of monastic life, Smaragdus thus indicated that the ideological models proposed by the *imperium* and the *ecclesia* both led to the same end result. This explains the pragmatism implicit in the *Expositio*, the third part of Smaragdus' reflections: it described not simply life in a monastery, but life in the monastic world created within the Carolingian *ecclesia*. Like all Carolingian intellectuals, Smaragdus was aware that court and cloister coexisted in an interdependent relation, as did all other essential parts of the *ecclesia* for that matter. Both were meant to support one another. This is why the imperial court was all but forced to interfere in Moyennoutier: the ideal of claustrality could and should be breached when a situation called for it.<sup>238</sup>

235 *DM*, c. 24, c. 619C: 'Activa vita innocentia est operum bonorum, contemplativa speculatio supernorum. Illa communis multorum est, ista vero paucorum. Activa vita mundanis rebus bene utitur, contemplativa vero mundo renuntians, soli Deo vivere delectatur': Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, lib. 3, c. 15.

236 Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, pp. 157-161.

237 Leclercq, 'Smaragdus', p. 40.

238 De Jong, 'Internal cloisters', pp. 213-217 describes two such instances of the way court and cloister intertwined as described in Ekkehard IV's *Casus Sancti Galli*.

In these three works, Smaragdus brought together his background as a teacher of grammar, his knowledge as an abbot, his experience as a *missus* and his role as a defender of ecclesiastical integrity. He wanted to impress upon his extended network of friends, colleagues and countrymen the awesome responsibilities that came with the newly created context of the Christian empire.<sup>239</sup> The ideals described in his works, the traditions evoked and the spin added all show how Smaragdus was very much a part of the ongoing development of the ideology of empire between Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. He was not reacting against old habits, nor criticizing whatever new style Louis brought to the throne. He was, in his own way, throwing his weight behind a further improvement of the state of the *ecclesia*. He did this by showing rulers the path they should walk, and assuring them how they would be able to reach the Kingdom of Heaven even though they were not monks. A decade or so later, he added to this by teaching his monks – and by extension, all who aspired the perfection of the contemplative life – how and why they should internalize their ideals to the point where walking the ‘king’s highway’ had become a way of life.

One characteristic that stands out in all this is the interaction between self-discipline and mutual control, which further explains his views on the function of monasteries in the *ecclesia*: those who lived exemplary lives would almost automatically elevate the world around them, but also inspire others to regard them with the utmost scrutiny.<sup>240</sup> This was the abbot who quells conflicts by allowing them to be played out peacefully; the emperor who strove to live an exemplary life, thereby helping others; but also the monks who expected their superiors to aid them in living a regular life. There is optimism here, but also caution. Smaragdus was aware that the higher you come, the harder you might fall.

In this one author’s view, the ideal was to inspire a Christian ideology in everybody within the Frankish empire. That was his responsibility, his *ministerium*. He would do his part by inspiring monks, who would – by their very existence – bring inspiration to the rest. Smaragdus regarded the existing divisions between monks and canons, clergy and laity as born from necessity, not as a true reflection of the ideal order he propagated, in which they were all subject to the same Divine father by virtue of having all accepted the Christian religion. Thus, the virtues he described in his VR

239 Meens, ‘Politics, mirrors of princes and the Bible’, p. 357; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 112-114; Nelson, ‘Kingship and royal government’, pp. 422-430.

240 As noted, for example, for the monastery of Fulda by Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda*, pp. 53-54.



and *DM* were not a royal or monastic prerogative: in the end, it was up to all of the virtuous to help everybody else. It therefore seems paradoxical that Smaragdus was working at a point in time that was characterized by an ongoing re-appraisal of the institutions of the *ecclesia*, a movement that he and his close companions took an active part in, no less. As he was composing his ideological tracts on life in the *ecclesia*, the rulers that he so actively admonished were busy fighting heterodoxy, asking bishops for advice on matters liturgical, and calling together councils to identify and solve any and all problems that the *ecclesia* was faced with: they were devising their own ways of living up to the responsibilities that were set by the expectations of their court – and themselves.

If Smaragdus could have been granted one vast and naive wish, it would have been that he could make the world safe. If he could convince people to walk the *via regia* according to a *regula*, if they could attain the *diadema monachorum*, those looking for guidance would be better able to give others a sense of direction, too. This would be a vast undertaking, and impossible to accomplish by one single person, no matter how idealistic. Luckily, Smaragdus was not alone, and neither was he the only one to advocate such all-encompassing ideals of authority through responsibility. The lessons he sought to impart were as much a consequence of his own philosophies as they were a product of his social and intellectual environment: the court culture around Charlemagne and his heirs from the late eighth century onwards.<sup>241</sup> The next chapter will therefore focus on one of Smaragdus' colleagues, and one who is usually thought to have had a much greater hand in changing both the court and the empire than Smaragdus ever had. This was Benedict of Aniane, abbot, monastic reformer, and a trusted member of the inner court circle around Louis the Pious.

241 Noble, 'Louis the Pious and the frontiers', pp. 344-346; Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire', pp. 96-99; De Jong, 'From *scolastici* to *scioi*', pp. 53-54.

## 4. *Caesar et abba simul*: Monastic Reforms between Aachen and Aniane

It seems paradoxical to start a chapter on Benedict of Aniane by stating that not much is known about his life.<sup>1</sup> At least, not much is known that has not been subjected to the expert manipulation by Ardo, the author of his *vita*, composed in 822, soon after the abbot's death. Like many of his fellow biographers and hagiographers in the Carolingian age, Ardo managed to weave several narrative and biographical strands together to form a portrait that seems as realistic as it was idealized. The resulting *vita* reveals much about the perceived relation between his monastery and the imperial court, but is sparse on biographical data about the saint himself. In that respect, it is almost ironic to note that Ardo himself has been the subject of a misunderstanding as to his own identity: due to a mix-up of nicknames and a gloss in one of the manuscripts of the enigmatic *Chronicon Moissiacense*, it has long been thought that Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel and Ardo were the same person.<sup>2</sup>

The confusion partially stems from the fact that not much is known about Ardo himself, apart from what little autobiographical data is embedded in his hagiographical output.<sup>3</sup> He was a monk of Aniane, and probably from that region, if his name is any indication. It is generally assumed that he entered the monastery at a young age and never left. The assertion that he died, age 60, in 843, was first made by the seventeenth-century Maurist Dom Claude Chantelou in the preface to his transcription of a late-twelfth-century sermon attributed to Ardo, and is impossible to corroborate.<sup>4</sup> However, Ardo never claims to have known Benedict before the foundation of Aniane, which lends credence to the assumption that he was born in the late 770s or early 780s, making him eligible for oblation around the time of Aniane's

1 Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 123-129.

2 The record was only set straight by Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 86-96. The entry in question occurs in *CM*, a. 794, and is also the source for Benedict's 'actual' name, Witiza: *CM*, p. 136, n.f: 'Inter quos etiam venerabilis ac sanctissimus abbas Benedictus qui vocatur vitiza. [...] Hoc tempore floruit ardo magister qui et smaragdus'; Kettemann, "'Provocatively'?", pp. 55-57; Lifshitz, *Name of the Saint*, pp. 57-72.

3 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 79-96, gathers what little biographical data we have.

4 The so-called *Sermo Sancti Ardonis*. Chantelou states the following on fol. 5r of his edition: 'Obijt Sanctus Ardo Smaragdus sexagenarius anno ab Incarnatione dominj DCCXLIII Nonis Martij. Indictione VI. anno quarto post obitum Ludouicj pijssimj Imperatoris'.

foundation.<sup>5</sup> He was a highly regarded *magister* within the community and the monastic network around Benedict; the mere fact that the monks of Inda asked him to write the *vita* of Benedict of Aniane confirms his reputation.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the dearth of information on Ardo himself, his work has left an undeniable mark on subsequent ideas about the monastic reforms taking place under Louis the Pious, for the simple reason that Ardo's *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* presents a narrative in which Benedict becomes almost singlehandedly responsible for the way monastic life was managed from the court. While his influence was undeniable, it should not be overstated, either. As Dieter Geuenich has pointed out, the focus on Benedict's reform efforts and Aniane undermines the Carolingian collective achievement by giving the credit to one individual and his one foundation instead of allowing the collective to exist.<sup>7</sup> As will be shown, Ardo was perfectly aware that reforms arose from an interdependent relation between abbots and emperors, and that the spread of new ideas depended on the support of an elite network rather than the initiative of one charismatic individual. He was part of this same network, after all.<sup>8</sup>

The complications arising from Ardo's *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* (VBA) are not limited to this one text. They are paradigmatic for many hagiographical narratives composed in the Carolingian age. They would have been primarily written for one single monastic community as a reflection of the perfect monastic life within that one monastery, but that of course did not preclude the possibility of reaching a wider audience.<sup>9</sup> As they were written and re-written, and read and re-read within a community, feelings of belonging would develop, and the identity of the monastery in the world became more defined.<sup>10</sup> The further they looked back in time, the more such *vitae*, as well as the closely related *gesta abbatum*, ended up 'in the realm of what was believed to be true, rather than what was seen to be fiction', thus aiding the (re)invention of traditions or even in the (re)imagination of the community for which they had been written.<sup>11</sup> However, there were

5 De Jong, *In Samuel's Image*, pp. 56-72.

6 They do so in the so-called *Epistola Indensium*, c. 6: 'tibi Ardoni magistro nostro salutem in Domino optamus'. This letter, together with the letters by Benedict of Aniane himself, is appended to all editions and translations of the *Vita Sancti Benedicti Abbatis Anianensis*.

7 Geuenich, 'Kritische Anmerkungen'.

8 Cubitt, 'Monastic memory and identity'.

9 Wood, 'Use and abuse'; Heene, '*Audire, legere, vulgo*'.

10 Goullet, *Écriture et Réécriture*; for similar ideas about the role of texts in the consolidation of monastic networks and identities, see Cubitt, 'Memory and narrative'.

11 Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, pp. 2-3, calls this 'imaginative memory'. Cf. Otter, 'Functions of fiction'; Foot, 'Remembering, forgetting and inventing'; On *gesta*, see Sot, *Gesta Episcoporum*.

also those saints' lives that were written in reaction to current events, and which may be seen as 'troubled and sometimes desperate attempts to make ends meet in the light of adversity and controversial debate'.<sup>12</sup> The *VBA* itself was not immune to this phenomenon either: as already noted in 1899 by Wilhelm Pückert, and later re-assessed by Walter Kettemann, the text had been subject to interpolation and rewriting as well, especially as Aniane itself had to contend with the emergence of the neighbouring monastery of Gellone, founded by Benedict's student, William.<sup>13</sup>

This is reflected in the sparse manuscript transmission of the *VBA*. It is extant in a single twelfth-century manuscript, which also contains the Cartulary of Aniane, and which currently resides in Montpellier.<sup>14</sup> The decision to compile this cartulary was made in response to a conflict with the bishop of Maguelonne, who wished to assert his dominance over the monastery.<sup>15</sup> Aniane, in turn, had opted for the Cluniac idea of putting itself directly under Rome, which would have given them a greater degree of freedom on a local level. To assert and prove their independence, the monks created a narrative reaching back to the days of Charlemagne, and while doing so they occasionally took some liberties with the authenticity of their materials.<sup>16</sup> These wilful forgeries are mostly found in the eleventh-century papal charters of the collection, however, and most of the ninth-century charters have either been lightly interpolated or copied as faithfully as can be expected from a cartulary. Similarly, Ardo's text and the intentions behind it remain mostly intact, as Walter Kettemann has demonstrated in his analysis of the *VBA* and its transmission. Following his conclusions, the most obvious alterations to Ardo's work concerned interpolations to a chapter on the life of William of Gellone in the early twelfth century as a way of establishing supremacy over the neighbouring community, currently

12 Pohl, 'History in fragments', p. 353.

13 Pückert, *Aniane und Gellone*; Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensis*, pp. 70-138.

14 The manuscript is Archives départementales de l'Hérault, 1H1; *Cartularium Anianensis*, pp. 39-450; the first nineteen charters, pp. 41-77, were issued by Carolingian rulers, followed by 52 papal privileges (up to Pope Alexander III (1160-1181) at pp. 78-132. The remainder consists of private charters.

15 As described in Pückert, *Aniane und Gellone*.

16 Cf. Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensis*, pp. 56-63 and pp. 127-129. The *VBA* moreover was interpolated by subsequent generations as well, with the most notable changes being the addition of Charlemagne's foundation charter in c. 18, and small yet significant edits being made to c. 30 on the life of William of Gellone, which was altered as part of the ongoing conflict between Aniane and Gellone in the twelfth century: Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensis*, pp. 97-106; Gaillard, 'De l'interaction entre crise et réforme', p. 315, n. 13.

known as Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert.<sup>17</sup> While this means that the *VBA* as a whole should be handled with care, the parts under scrutiny in this chapter do reflect Ardo's ninth-century intentions as well as the vision of the empire that forms the background to his narrative.

Several other *vitae* composed at the same time reflect similar imperial concerns and attempts at ecclesiastical reforms – but rather than presenting a uniform vision, these are once again ‘discordant voices’.<sup>18</sup> They were discordant in that they were local reactions to centralized impulses, each coming from a community that was finding its own voice.<sup>19</sup> The *Vita Alcuini* is one, written by an anonymous monk of Ferrières sometime before 829. Even though Alcuin was not a monk, this *vita* portrayed the deacon and courtier as living in the most ecclesiastically perfect way possible, an exemplary monastic life in spite of his worldly concerns.<sup>20</sup> In the *Vita Adalhardi*, on the other hand, written by Paschasius Radbertus shortly after the year 826, the court was presented as an impediment to living a perfect life, an agent in the trials and tribulations that those who aspire to true perfection have to overcome.<sup>21</sup> The *VBA* also belongs to this group of texts.<sup>22</sup> According to its prologue, the earliest version was composed in Aniane around 822, shortly after Benedict's death, and was intended to be sent to Aachen so that it might ensure the continued memory and veneration of Benedict.<sup>23</sup> In doing so, Ardo also attempted to secure continued imperial sponsorship for his own monastery, which would then remain tied into a network centred on the palace now that their direct link had passed away.<sup>24</sup> As such,

17 Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 130-136; Chastang, ‘La fabrication d'un saint’; Saxer, ‘Le culte et la légende’, pp. 570-572, still assumed the *vita* was by Ardo himself, but already noted ‘une différence fondamentale entre la notice biographique de Guillaume et la *Vie de Benoît d'Aniane* dans laquelle la notice est insérée’ (‘a fundamental difference between the biographical note on William and the *Life of Benedict of Aniane*, where this description had been inserted’). On William himself, see Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 224-225.

18 De Jong et al., ‘Introduction’, p. 12.

19 Cf. Wood, ‘Use and abuse’, p. 93: ‘Hagiography is not one genre, but a multiplicity’.

20 *Vita Alcuini*, c. 5, pp. 187-188: ‘O vere monachum monachi sine voto, cuius exempli sequax perraro reperitur monachus ex debito’; Bullough, ‘Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven’, pp. 5-9; this may be a reflection of Alcuin's own ideas about monasticism: Ling, ‘Monks, canons’.

21 Kramer, “ut normam salutiferam cunctis ostenderet”, pp. 111-115; Kramer, “quia cor regi in manu Dei est”, pp. 154-160.

22 On the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* (*VBA*), see Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 41-138 and pp. 224-240 as well as the (concurrent) reconstruction by Bonnerue in the introduction to his translation of the text, at pp. 22-36; Semmler, ‘Benedictus II’; Savigni, ‘L'immagine del santo fondatore’.

23 As explained by *VBA*, Praefatio, pp. 140-143.

24 Semmler, ‘Benediktinische Reform’, pp. 820-821.

it stands to reason that Ardo would try to remain on friendly terms with the court. However, despite its obvious pro-imperial slant, the *VBA*, like the hagiographies for Alcuin and Adalhard, remained a narrative shaped by the system developed under Charlemagne and his heirs. The narrative role of the court was to justify its protagonist's activities and reactions to imperial initiatives.<sup>25</sup> This meant that all three hagiographical narratives had been written for monks to cope with the developments around them. In coming to terms with the circumstances, these texts also propagated a distinct monastic identity, one that allowed them to remain a distinct Christian community within the *imperium Christianum* of Louis the Pious. While these hagiographies were implicitly wary and critical of imperial authority, they were not overtly hostile. Instead, they each reveal different ways to express a community's relation to the empire and the world.<sup>26</sup>

This world was shaped, in part, by Benedict of Aniane. More importantly, it was shaped by the monastic reforms that have been associated with his name in modern scholarship.<sup>27</sup> As noted, this association is due in part to the authorial strategy used by Ardo. It was he who emphasized the role played by Benedict of Aniane as architect of the monastic reforms, who reminded his audience of his importance as advisor at the court of Louis the Pious, and who equated the monastic life at Aniane with the perfect way towards salvation. In doing so, Ardo has bequeathed upon posterity the image of a monastery whose abbot's ideas trumped all others. It proved to be a persistent narrative. Only relatively recently, the idea that Benedict was solely responsible for the religious reforms of the empire has come under scrutiny, leading modern scholars to recognize that he was but one player – albeit a major one – in the collaborative reform project managed by the Carolingians.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, his long shadow is still cast over ideas about the court of Louis the Pious.<sup>29</sup> One persistent example of this would be the exile of Adalhard of Corbie in 814 and his subsequent return upon the death of Benedict in 822.<sup>30</sup> Although there could well have been a rivalry

25 Cf. De Jong, 'Becoming Jeremiah', p. 188.

26 Kramer, "ut normam salutiferam cunctis ostenderet".

27 Geuenich, 'Kritische Anmerkungen'.

28 De Jong, 'Charlemagne's Church' and 'Carolingian monasticism'. Kottje, 'Einleitung: monastische Reform oder Reformen?', pp. 9-13; Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 41-50.

29 For example, Semmler, 'Das Erbe'; Engelbert, 'Benedikt von Aniane'.

30 For example, Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie*, pp. 91-111, calls Adalhard 'ein Gegner Abt Benedikts von Aniane' ('an opponent of abbot Benedict of Aniane'), whereas Semmler, 'Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils', pp. 76-81, suggests that Corbie was reformed during Adalhard's exile; Ganz, *Corbie*, pp. 23-26 and p. 55, called Benedict 'Adalhard's enemy', but notes an overlap between

between the two concerning the extent of the monastic reforms, the assumption that the arrival of a new courtier would immediately lead to the banishment of a valued senior member of the court seems to overstate the influence of Benedict, and to underappreciate the role played by debate and competition in court circles. To chalk this up to Benedict's influence is to ignore Adalhard's reputation as an outspoken member of the court, prone to controversy and not afraid to speak his mind.<sup>31</sup> The overlap between the dates of Adalhard's exile and Benedict's active years in Aachen might be more than a mere coincidence, but to blame a personal rivalry underestimates the subtleties of Carolingian court culture, and the long tradition of discussing the life monastic at the highest level.<sup>32</sup>

In this chapter, the way the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* embeds Benedict of Aniane within the overarching Carolingian system will be analysed. Starting from the question to what extent the monastic reforms in the late eighth and early ninth centuries were carried by the court or were the product of local initiatives, I will begin by taking a closer look at the description of the interaction between Benedict and Louis the Pious in the works of Ermold the Black. Then, turning to the *VBA* itself, I will present two ways of reading the narrative: as a reflection of Aniane's place in the greater scheme of things, and as a depiction of Benedict as a political actor rather than the representative of a Carolingian monastic ideal. In doing so, we will see that Ardo, too, knew that the empire built by his saint was dependent on cooperation as much as on the initiative of local communities or the authority of individual actors.

## The Emperor and the Monks

Attempts to define the place of monasteries within the Carolingian order went hand in hand with the Carolingian rise to power. More often than not, the ostensible aim was to ensure that monastic communities were kept isolated as much as possible and that ecclesiastical possessions were controlled by those who had a right to do so.<sup>33</sup> Already in 755, for example, the Council of Ver made a distinction between various religious communities

texts present in Corbie and those used in the *Institutio Sanctimonialium*. Semmler, 'Corvey und Herford', p. 295, and Semmler, 'Benedictus II', pp. 48-49.

31 Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 11 and pp. 277-278; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 122-129.

32 Nelson, *Opposition*, pp. 6-8; Brunner, *Oppositionelle Gruppen*; Dutton, *Politics of Dreaming*, p. 83.

33 Innes, 'Archives, documents and landowners', pp. 152-188; Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, pp. 99-134; Felten, 'Laienäbte', p. 408.

by stipulating that those who had taken the tonsure without giving up their property were to live 'either in a monastery under the order of a rule, or under the control of a bishop under the order of the canons'.<sup>34</sup> In the very same text, we read that 'those monasteries, where monks or nuns live according to a rule' were dependent on either the king or the bishop for their means to survive.<sup>35</sup> The livelihood of monastic communities was thus placed under the responsibility of the king or the bishop. In doing so, the *acta* of the Council of Ver also reaffirmed that it was part of the bishop's *ministerium* to ensure these communities continued to exist.

Ideas such as these were intended to keep monasteries safe from hostile neighbours, while simultaneously protecting monks from themselves by barring their access to the wealth their communities had at their disposal.<sup>36</sup> The wealthier a monastery, the greater the risk of corruption: the monks might end up coveting their communal possessions more than the charity for which their wealth should be employed.<sup>37</sup> The subtext of many narrative texts emanating from Carolingian monasteries therefore was to justify having wealth or power, and to demonstrate how the fact that monastic communities attained wealth served the greater good more than their poverty would otherwise. Given the importance of monastic communities for the empire, this generally became an accepted point of view, if sometimes only grudgingly so.<sup>38</sup> It remained a point of contention. If the ruler or the bishops limited the access monastic communities had to their own wealth, they reasoned, the monks could be more focused on performing their core duties. As such, they should also be seen as early attempts to enable monks throughout the empire to lead perfect Christian lives. Through this emphasis on life according to a (written) *regula*, monastic communities were set apart from the bulk of the *ecclesia* while simultaneously integrating them within the system as it was developed.<sup>39</sup> In order for them to fulfil their function, they needed to be insulated from all risks and all temptation.<sup>40</sup>

34 *Concilium Vernense*, c. 11, p. 35: 'De illis hominibus, qui se dicunt propter Deum quod se tonsorassent, et modo res eorum vel pecunias habent et nec sub manu episcopi sunt nec in monasterium regulariter vivunt, placuit ut in monasterio sint sub ordine regulari aut sub manu episcopi sub ordine canonica'.

35 *Concilium Vernense*, c. 20, p. 36.

36 Kéry, 'Kritik Karls des Großen', pp. 9-48.

37 Nelson, 'Making ends meet'.

38 See Wood, 'Entrusting'.

39 Diem, 'Inventing the Holy Rule', pp. 68-70.

40 Later, this would lead to the development of the office of *advocatus*: Semmler, 'Iussit'; West, 'The significance of the Carolingian advocate'. Cf. also Fichtenau, *Das karolingische Imperium*, pp. 140-142.



Although there are many references to the *regulariter vita* strewn throughout council reports and capitularies, it remains undefined exactly which rule monks in the Frankish *ecclesia* were to follow. The Carolingian preference for the *RB* seems to have been initiated by the way they used Rome as a point of reference.<sup>41</sup> This had happened through the efforts of Boniface as well as through the connections between Montecassino and the *Regula* composed there, defined by authoritative thinkers like Bede or Gregory the Great.<sup>42</sup> Still, the idea that communities could be defined by texts prescribing their way of life reached back a long way; it had roots in early Christian monastic experiments and also in the Irish influence on the continent.<sup>43</sup> As such, the act of writing down rules about the way communities should live together was considered an important action in itself, one that sanctified these regulations as they were being put to parchment.<sup>44</sup>

The paradoxical status of monasteries, exemplified by their regular lives, made them attractive places of power for the Carolingians. As institutions, they wielded the 'power of prayer'.<sup>45</sup> They were stable factors in a turbulent world, and often grew into regional educational centres as they were touted as beacons of the Carolingian achievement. As communities regulated by the *RB*, every one of its members would be humble to the point of being nothing more than a part of the greater whole.<sup>46</sup> Thus, as Charlemagne saw it when he sent his *missi* out to have his subjects renew their oaths of loyalty in 789, while bishops, abbots, counts, and all other vassals needed to swear in the appropriate manner, the monastic profession would suffice for those who live by the *RB*; their abbot would take the oath for his entire community.<sup>47</sup> It was especially valuable for the Carolingians to promote their version of monasticism. Not only would it be one step further towards everyone's salvation, it also enabled rulers to command the loyalty of a regional authority through the agency of just one person.<sup>48</sup>

41 Wollasch, '*Benedictus abbas Romensis*'.

42 Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*, pp. 101-159.

43 Diem, 'Inventing the Holy Rule'; Diem, *Das monastische Experiment*; Diem, 'Monks, kings'; Moyses, 'Monachisme et réglementation monastique'.

44 Diem, 'Inventing the Holy Rule', pp. 62-63; cf. Zelzer, 'Von Benedikt zu Hildemar: zu Textgestalt und Textgeschichte'.

45 De Jong, 'Carolingian monasticism'; but cf. Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 161-192.

46 De Vogüé, 'Les conseils évangéliques'; De Vogüé, 'Persévérer'.

47 *Capitulare missorum*, c. 3, pp. 66-68. On the dating of this capitulary, see Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft*, pp. 79-85.

48 Shown for the Middle Rhine valley by Innes, *State and Society*, pp. 187-188.

There was another side to monastic integrity. Any attempt to alter anything about the internal life of the cloister could be met with various unpredictable reactions, ranging from acceptance to distrust and hostility, which could occur even within single communities.<sup>49</sup> When the courts of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious instigated their version of the reforms, some of which could lead to alterations of the *consuetudines* within the cloisters throughout the realm, this was exactly what happened. Individual monastic traditions clashed with courtly initiatives. Even if the court did not conceive of the monastic world as an integrated whole, the hope that communities might allow their boundaries to be breached for the sake of allowing in a centrally coordinated reform effort was palpable, if a bit optimistic.<sup>50</sup> It was an idea that may have been born from the experience of rulership that Louis had acquired in Aquitaine, and which was expressed through the provisions in the immunity charters confirmed in the first few years of his imperial reign.<sup>51</sup> This was one of the clearest examples of Louis taking over his father's authority, by issuing some 140 (slightly less than half the total for his reign) monastic and episcopal charters to renew those of his forebears.<sup>52</sup> However, Louis also introduced a new immunity that was directly dependent on the protection of rulers, not bishops.<sup>53</sup> Combined with the increasingly prevalent right of monastic communities to choose their own abbot – another 'Carolingian' innovation – this bound monasteries to the imperial court more directly than had hitherto been the case. It harnessed not only their power of prayer, but also their economic attainments for the court. This is evidenced by the *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum*, an administrative document from around 819, in which the dues owed by some 86 monasteries to the court were listed, ranging from *dona et militia* and *dona* to the cheaper (but equally important) *orationes pro salute imperatoris vel filiorum eius et stabilitate imperii*.<sup>54</sup> Although the normative status of this document remains unclear, the combination of such a text with the other administrative measures by Louis the Pious show not only how he continued his forefather's policies, but also how he went further in binding the existence of monasteries to the general state of the empire.

49 Erhart, 'Contentiones inter monachos'.

50 Kéry, 'Kritik Karls des Großen'.

51 Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire', p. 27; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 16-19, p. 22 and pp. 25-28.

52 Kölzer, *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen*, pp. 16-17.

53 Kölzer, *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen*, pp. 27-29, sees this as an early instance of the so-called *Königsklöster*.

54 *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum*, p. 493. Wagner, 'Zur Notitia'.

A clear illustration of how this connection was forged over time may be found in an epic poem composed in the late 820s by Ermold the Black, an exiled cleric who hoped to get back into the good graces of the court by addressing a panegyric to the emperor and his court. The second book in his series culminates with Louis' ascent to Aachen following Charlemagne's death, and relates how the new emperor ordered the foundation of the monastery of Inda [Kornelimünster] close to the palace in Aachen.<sup>55</sup> The placement of the foundation of Inda within the narrative is significant. Book II of the *Carmen* detailed Louis' first steps as an emperor. Starting with a description of how Louis 'put the boundaries of the kingdom in order and settled the frontiers of the empire', the centrepiece of this book is the confirmation of his *imperium* by Pope Stephen IV in 816, a passage rich in symbolism which provides an unequivocal picture of Ermold's sense of order in the court.<sup>56</sup> While the bulk of the encounter takes the shape of a public dialogue between the pope and the emperor, Ermold carefully presented the emperor as the essential leader of the *ecclesia*. In a sermon-like speech to his '*proceres* and the most holy prelate', Louis is shown taking the initiative in the church reforms that would characterize his early years. Louis became the 'king of the Christians' who invited the pope (*sacer antestis*) to 'serve the people in dogma, law and faith' and to 'be an example for the clergy and a standard for the people'.<sup>57</sup> In return Louis would act as a protector of Rome.<sup>58</sup> Stephen had no choice but to respond in kind, and did so by anointing and blessing Louis, and giving him a crown which, according to Ermold, once belonged to Constantine the Great.<sup>59</sup>

Ermold deftly wove together biblical, antique, and contemporary motifs to demonstrate the ordering principle embodied by the emperor he was trying to woo. One of the writing goals of Ermold was to demonstrate not only that the Carolingians had provided the best possible rulers for the *imperium*,

55 On the history of the monastery, see Kühn, *Die Reichsabtei Kornelimünster*; Kühn, 'Kornelimünster'

56 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 790-809 and ll. 847-1147. Bobrycki, 'Nigellus, Ausulus', p. 165; or, in a wider chronological context, see Le Jan, 'Continuity and change', p. 64.

57 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1028-1031: 'Ergo, sacer, plebem nostri est curare subactam / Nobis quam Dominus pascere constituit / Tu sacer antestis; ego rex sum christicolarum / Servemus populum dogmate, lege, fide'.

58 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1034-1039. Noble, *Republic*, pp. 148-153 and pp. 303-323, considers this one of the sources corroborating the so-called *Ludovicianum* of 817, in which Louis the Pious reconfirmed the pope's leadership of Rome while also strengthening his own position as co-coordinator of the *ecclesia*. See also Costambeys, *Power and Patronage*, pp. 315-322.

59 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1074-1076.

but also that they were constantly reminded (and reminding themselves) of their position as well as of the risks and responsibilities this entailed. It is no coincidence that Ermold placed these initiatives in the context of the papal visit to the palace. In his idealized portrait of Louis' first years on the throne, it was vital to first present Louis as a capable ruler, before being sanctified by the pope. This gave Louis the clout to send out *missi* to 'renew the realms', and 'give the subjects suitable rules' now that the wars waged by his fathers had rendered the borders inviolate.<sup>60</sup> Monks were not forgotten, of course, and Ermold had Louis proclaim the following as part of his programmatic sermon delivered in 816:

May the Holy Rule of the Fathers regulate the life of the clergy, and may the venerable law of our fathers bring our people together. May the order of monks increase in the teachings of Benedict; may it seek by the character of its life the holy and heavenly pasture.<sup>61</sup>

Later, the poet showed how Louis did more than merely send *missi* to ensure that this would really happen.

It is at that point that Ermold tells the story of Inda's foundation as the eye in the storm of Louis' reforms. While his *missi* investigated 'the canonical flock, both men and women, who live in holy fortresses', the emperor also established a monastery close to the palace.<sup>62</sup> According to Ermold, the reasons for this were threefold. The new emperor wished for a sanctuary to rest from 'the burden of empire [...] once in a while, and address my prayers and pleas privately to God'.<sup>63</sup> Also, it was his wish that he would be buried there, so that after his death Inda might serve as a permanent reminder to 'those who have converted' that they should 'quickly take up Christ's work and willingly accept the plan [*consilium*] we have agreed upon'.<sup>64</sup> Last

60 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1138-1143. Cf. Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire', pp. 70-72.

61 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 954-957: 'Regula sancta patrum constringat in ordine clerum / Et populum societ lex veneranda patrum / Et monachorum ordo Benedicti dogmate crescat / Moribus et vita pascua sancta petat'.

62 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1162-1163: 'Canonicumque gregem sexumque probate virilem / Feminum necnon, quae pia castra colunt'.

63 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1216-1219: 'Cernis ut imperii gravitas mea pectora pressat / Mole sua; rerum grandia jura nimis / Illuc nam poteram requiescere forte parumper / Votaque praeplicata ferre secreta Deo'.

64 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1230-1233: 'Si subito finis humani corporis esset / Hoc mandarentur membra sepulta loco / Illuc conversi cape rent mox munia Christi / Atque volens placitum consilium acciperet'. This plan never came to fruition – Louis was buried in Metz: cf. Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 64, p. 554; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 56-58.

but not least, Inda would be the new headquarters of his chief monastic adviser, Benedict of Aniane, whom he had summoned to Aachen from his community in the south.<sup>65</sup> Here, Louis explained, monks could dwell who 'should not mix themselves up too much in civil affairs or participate too freely in palace concerns', but who nonetheless needed to stay close to the centre.<sup>66</sup> In Ermold's world, Louis figured that the only way to fully profit from the abbot's counsel was to ensure that his monastic lifestyle would not clash with the worldly preoccupations of the palace. In his narrative, he thus links the monastery to the palace complex (albeit still at a respectable distance).<sup>67</sup> This would allow Benedict some necessary seclusion, so that, 'having renewed [himself] once again', he should only return to the palace 'to represent [his] brethren'.<sup>68</sup>

This would be a place free from secular influence. Louis even removed all the wildlife in the area, which not only made the place 'pleasing to God', taming the wildness of the forest, but also rendered it unsuitable for hunting, the favourite pastime of the ruler and his courtiers.<sup>69</sup> Benedict of Nursia's *Regula* flourished here, and Benedict of Aniane, 'who was everything to everyone', became the 'father' of the community.<sup>70</sup> The emperor, however, was never far away. 'He stayed there often and came frequently to see the sheepfold'; according to Ermold, the emperor, taking care the monastery's expenses and 'supplying them with big gifts, became 'at once Caesar and abbot' – *caesar et abba simul*.<sup>71</sup>

The description of Inda's foundation in Ermold's *Carmen* adds an element to the story that is easy to take for granted: almost the entire justification for creating the community of Inda or engaging in the Church reforms has been presented in direct speech. The depiction showed Louis the Pious as an active player who explained what he was doing, and why. His

65 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1161-1165.

66 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1220-1227: 'Altera causa monet, quoniam tu nam ipse fateris / Ingratum voto hoc opus esse tuo / Nec deceat monachus civilibus infore rebus / Resque palatinas ferre libenter eos'.

67 Generally, see Airlie, 'Palace complex'.

68 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1226-1227: 'Atque iterum nostras renovatus visere sedes / Fratribus et solido ferre patrocinia'. The word used by Ermold, *patrocinia*, carries connotations of servitude or legal representation of a master: Niermeyer et al., *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon*, pp. 775-776.

69 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1242-1245: See Verdon, 'Recherches sur la chasse'; Goldberg, 'Louis the Pious'.

70 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1246-1248: 'Quo, Benedicte, tua regula, sancte, viget / Namque idem Benedictus erat pater illius aedis'.

71 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1249-1251: 'Et Hludowicus adest Caesar, et abba simul / Haec loca saepe colit, operatque revisere caulas / Ordinatet sumptus, munera larga parat'.

interlocutors were also given space to respond: Ermold presented these issues as arising from an idealized conversation. Whether conscious or not, the poet here touches upon a key point for understanding the Carolingian Church reforms. Even though both the narrative agency of Benedict and Stephen was to confirm Louis' actions, they were given a speaking part and both played a key role in the dialogue.<sup>72</sup> Echoing the idealized portrayal of Louis in the prologue to the *Institutio Canoniorum*, where the emperor was the one enabling the bishops to do their work, Ermold's ruler created favourable circumstances for new monastic communities, and his abbot welcomed and applauded this imperial intervention. Moreover, this phenomenon was not limited to Inda specifically, but also applied to other monasteries. Benedict taught monks at Inda, who were then 'sent by the king to monasteries to be an example and standard for brothers' elsewhere in the empire.<sup>73</sup>

It remains an open question whether this was the intended aim of the monastery, or simply a consequence of the many guests they received.<sup>74</sup> Still, we are allowed a tantalizing glimpse of the Carolingian monastic policies in action through two letters sent from Aachen shortly after the foundation of Inda. They were composed by Grimaldus and Tatto, both monks of Reichenau, sent to acquire a pristine copy of the *RB* that Charlemagne had obtained at the monastery of Montecassino in the late eighth century.<sup>75</sup> As attested in the first letter, to their librarian Reginbert, they had succeeded and sent him an officially sanctioned version of the *RB*, which had been corrected by a *magister* at the palace.<sup>76</sup> The second letter was addressed to their abbot, Haito, and suggests that the community's secondary agenda had been to gain an insight into the standards of living

72 Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, pp. 121-122, calls Ermold 'obsessively fond of direct discourse' and argues that these speeches are 'key sites for interpretation and analysis on Ermold's part'.

73 Ermold, *Carmen*, lib. 2, ll. 1202-1203: 'Hujus discipulos rex per coenobia mittit / Fratribus exemplum normaue sive forent'.

74 Semmler, 'Benediktinische Reform', p. 809.

75 Zelzer, 'Zur Stellung des *textus receptus*', pp. 212-218; Traube and Plenkens, *Textgeschichte*, pp. 32-33 and pp. 63-78. Bayer, 'Aachen, Kornelimünster und die Reichenau', pp. 55-58; Tatto probably became abbot of Kempten: Schwarzmaier, 'Zur Frühgeschichte', pp. 332-333; Grimaldus is more difficult to place, but he was *not* the later abbot of Sankt Gallen: Geuenich, 'Beobachtungen zu Grimald von St. Gallen'.

76 Grimaldus and Tatto, *Epistola Reginberto Magistro*: 'Ecce vobis regulam beati Benedicti [...] direximus, sensibus et sillabis necnon etiam litteris a supra dicto a patre ni fallimur ordinatis minime carentem', p. 302. Cf. Meyvaert, 'Problems'. On Reginbert, see Heinzer, "Ego Reginbertus scriptor".

designed at the imperial court.<sup>77</sup> The monks made this point explicitly, and reported on

the honourable customs regarding the order of the rule that we have been able to prudently learn in the house of this venerable abbot and his brothers.<sup>78</sup>

They then give twelve points of improvement for their own monastery, ranging from the way the bell should be rung to the way the *lector* should be treated.

Although it is evident that these letters were not intended to be read as official capitularies, their contents show remarkable similarities with 'synod reports', such as the so-called *Statuta Murbacensia*, regarded as an earlier version of the *Capitulare Monasticum*.<sup>79</sup> Also, the question whether these ideas were developed at Benedict's initiative or the emperor's instigation was never touched upon. The simple fact that these had become 'imperial' practices was enough.<sup>80</sup> A poem at the end of the first letter even indicates that it simply was part of monastic life to keep learning and improving: when Grimaldus and Tatto hailed the 'flower of youth' that chooses to remain on the road of salvation, it implies that they welcomed the renewal provided by the newly corrected *regula*.<sup>81</sup>

These letters give a view from Inda, formulated by monks who were trying to follow Benedict of Aniane's lead for reasons that were both religiously and politically inspired. The fact that both letters, along with what presumably was a copy of the copy of the *RB* mentioned in this correspondence, are contained in the early-ninth-century manuscript from St. Gallen, currently Stiftsbibliothek MS Cod. Sang. 914, demonstrates that this version of the Rule

77 Grimaldus and Tatto, *Epistola cum XII Capitulis*, p. 305.

78 Grimaldus and Tatto, *Epistola cum XII Capitulis*, p. 305: 'morum honestorum in ordine regulari apud venerabilem illum abbatem et erga eius fratres constituti addiscere possemus, vestra pandere sanctitati'.

79 *Actuum Praelimum Synodi Primae Aquisgranensis Commentationes sive Statuta Murbacensia*, in which, on p. 450, similar concerns are voiced in slightly stronger terms: 'Ad quorum exempla informandos per universa regni sui coenobia monachos decreuit imperialis censura, ut uno modo ea quae ex auctoritate regulae seu illa quae ex consuetudinum adinventionem aguntur in usu habeantur'.

80 Semmler, 'Benediktinische Reform', pp. 787-788.

81 Grimaldus and Tatto, *Epistola Reginberto Magistro*, p. 302: 'Salve flos iuvenum, forma speciosus amoena / Optatam retinendo viam vitamque salubrem / Ecce tui humiles famuli tibi munera mittunt / Quae animus dudum vester optavit habere / Omnipotens genitor, cunctum qui continet orbem / Te regat et servet semper ubique sanum'.

indeed spread further across the realm.<sup>82</sup> The ideals and ideas associated with the court and with Benedict of Aniane were starting to take hold, showing that the way Louis the Pious took responsibility for his *imperium* was being accepted. However, to a large extent, their use, spread and implementation remained up to the goodwill and initiative of the communities affected.<sup>83</sup> In the end, they travelled to the court as much as the court travelled to them.

This, then, was the extent of the monastic reforms associated with the reign of Louis the Pious, and descriptions like these explain why Benedict has long been seen as one of the main instigators of the Carolingian monastic reforms.<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, it is striking that Benedict's name is not mentioned in the capitularies and councils pertaining to the reform councils that took place parallel to the composition of the *IC*. Outside of the *VBA*, the clearest indication that he was involved in any such undertakings at all is a note in the so-called Basilius-recension of Hildemar's *Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*, that the duration of the novitiate 'was a point of contention between Adalhard and Benedict', evidently referring to a debate they had during a council meeting.<sup>85</sup>

Of course, Benedict of Aniane was a major participant in these debates, if only through the influence exerted by his two major works, written in about the same period: the *Codex Regularum*, a collection of monastic rules that preceded the Rule of Saint Benedict, and the *Concordia Regularum*, a comprehensive attempt to come to terms with the diversity found within these rules by showing their inherent similarities with the *RB*.<sup>86</sup> However, although these works definitely played a role in the reform efforts, he was not the only author of the reforms themselves, and neither was monasticism his sole domain. For instance, Benedict wrote a Christological and ecclesiological

82 This manuscript has been digitized and may be viewed online at <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/list/one/csg/0914> (last accessed 30 July 2018).

83 Jebe, 'Discussing the *una regula*'.

84 Narberhaus, 'Benedikt von Aniane'.

85 Hildemar, *Commentarium in Regulam s. Benedicti (Basiliuskommentar)*, p. 140: 'quod contentio fuit inter Adalardum et Benedictum'. Semmler, 'Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils', pp. 48-49, places this debate during the council of Aachen in 802 on account of the fact that Adalhard was exiled in 816-819; however, seeing as the precise terms of Adalhard's exile may not have been nearly as absolute as has been assumed, this discussion could also have taken place during the reign of Louis the Pious – if it took place in a face-to-face meeting at all. On Hildemar and his *Commentarium*, see De Jong, 'Growing up', p. 119; Zelzer, 'Von Benedikt zu Hildemar: zu Textgestalt und Textgeschichte'.

86 On the *Codex Regularum* and its relation to the *Concordia*, see most recently the introduction to the facsimile edition by Engelbert, *Codex Regularum*, pp. 11-61; Choy, 'Deposit of Monastic Faith'; De Vogüé, 'La *Concordia regularum*'; McGrane, 'The Rule collector'; a summary of the *Concordia Regularum* highlighting its main themes was made by Dulcy, *La Règle*, pp. 35-67.



treatise against the Adoptionist heresy, which was embedded in a larger work on the nature of faith itself, the *Munimenta Verae Fidei*.<sup>87</sup> Like his supposed rival Adalhard of Corbie or Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, Benedict provided one voice among many. A loud voice perhaps, and a well-documented one, but necessarily not the one calling the shots.<sup>88</sup>

These dynamics have been sacrificed in Ardo's hagiographical narrative in order to create Benedict's larger-than-life literary *persona*. In fact, as has recently been argued by Martin Claussen, the manuscript evidence indicates that the abbot may have been reacting to trends in contemporary monasticism as much as he was setting them, suggesting that the *Concordia Regularum* was the product of a long process of *correctio* itself, rather than its catalyst.<sup>89</sup> Ardo's *VBA* thus reveals more about Aniane's sense of self-importance than about Benedict's real role in the day-to-day business of running the court. Even though Ardo was aware that Aniane was but a single community within the empire, his description of Benedict's roles as a politician and a reformer provides a fascinating case study of the interdependence between local customs and imperial ideologies. Additionally, focusing on this particular hagiography allows us to see how the author was aware that Benedict's influence was part of a broader movement. Instead of studying the *VBA* as a description of Benedict's life, works, and impact, this chapter will take a look at the way it situates Benedict's career as a member of the court within the larger machinations at work during his lifetime. In order to do that, it will first look at the way Ardo explains the position of his community of Aniane in the greater scheme, and how that influences his description of Benedict's deeds. Rather than idealizing the life of one abbot, the *VBA* gives a clear image of the continuous exchange of ideas between the emperor and his monks, how that debate influenced the vision of empire in a peripheral community, and how a ruler was seen to cope with being a *caesar et abba simul*.

87 The *Munimenta Verae Fidei*, its function and its constituent parts have recently been analysed by Williams, 'Forming orthodoxy'; Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 50-54. Given that this chapter is mostly concerned with the representation of emperor and abbot in the *VBA*, it will not attempt to add to the excellent arguments made by these two authors.

88 Diem, 'Inventing the Holy Rule', pp. 54-55.

89 Claussen, 'Reims, Bibliothèque Carnegie, 806'. Claussen's arguments are compelling and will definitely force scholars to reconsider the actual role of Benedict in the Carolingian monastic world; for the purposes of this monograph, however, the salient point is that that Ardo indeed carefully (re)constructed the life of Benedict rather than present a chronological overview of his accomplishments. See, however, Kettemann, "'Provocatively'?", who, on pp. 11-12 suggests that he is reacting against a remark in n. 94 on p. 20 of Claussen's article by offering an alternative approach.

## On the Outside Looking In

The narrative of the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* goes as follows. Born around the year 750 to the count of Maguelonne, our protagonist received an education at the court of Pippin III, under the watchful eye of Queen Bertrada, and later became part of the entourage of Charlemagne.<sup>90</sup> He accompanied the Frankish army during the conquest of Italy in 774, and subsequently underwent a *conversio* when his brother almost drowned while crossing a river.<sup>91</sup> After this life-changing event, he changed his name to Benedict, and against the wishes of his father entered the monastery of Saint-Seine in Burgundy.<sup>92</sup> There, he learned the tenets of monastic life, but, unsatisfied with the discipline of his brethren, he decided to return to his homeland and to found a proper community near the river Aniane on his father's land.<sup>93</sup> Due to his exemplary leadership, as well as his efforts in combating the Adoptionist heresy, Benedict's monastery grew rapidly, and the abbot rose through the ranks to become a close adviser of Louis the Pious, then king of Aquitaine.<sup>94</sup> Luminaries such as Theodulf of Orléans, Leidrad of Lyon, and even Alcuin of York, appealed to him to help reform monasteries under their authority, which greatly expanded his authority and established a wider monastic network around Aniane. In 814, the abbot accompanied Louis to Aachen, where he was given leadership over the newly founded monastery of Inda. Once there, Benedict prompted the emperor to instigate the empire-wide monastic reforms which cemented his name in history.<sup>95</sup> He helped Louis keep track of political developments, proposed wide-ranging reforms to monastic liturgy and *consuetudines*, and generally excelled at living the courtly life that he escaped all those years ago.<sup>96</sup> Having spent his

90 *VBA*, c. 1.1: 'Hic pueriles gerentem annos praefatum filium suum [i.e. Benedict's father] in aula gloriosi Pipini regis reginae tradidit inter scolares nutriendum'.

91 *VBA*, c. 2.1: 'Eo namque anno quo Italia gloriosi Karoli regis ditioni subiecta est'.

92 *VBA*, c. 2.1: 'Preparatis itaque omnibus, iter quasi Aquis iturus arripuit; set ubi sancti Sequani ingressus est domum, redire suos ad patriam iubet, seque in eodem coenobio Christo Deo servire velle indicavit. Postulat ingrediendi licentiam; qua adepta, mox capitis comam deposuit et veri monachi abitum sumpsit'.

93 *VBA*, c. 3.1: 'At ille suis illorumque non convenire moribus cernens, ad patriam concitus solum contulit pedem, ibique in patris suamque possessionem super rivulum cui nomen est Anianus necnon prope fluvium Arauris cum prefato viro Witmaro paucisve aliis iuxta beati Saturnini permodicam aecclesiam cellam exiguam ob abitandum construxit'. For a detailed analysis of the foundation of Aniane, see Schneider, 'Une fondation multiple'.

94 *VBA*, cc. 3-34; the one remark about Adoptionism may be found in c. 8. Semmler, 'Benedictus II', pp. 6-10.

95 *VBA*, c. 35.

96 On Benedict's liturgical reforms, see Meyer, 'Benedikt von Aniane'.

final years going back and forth between Inda and the palace in Aachen, Benedict died in 821, surrounded by the monks of his community.<sup>97</sup>

It is a comprehensive, well-rehearsed narrative, showing a considerable erudition on the part of the author.<sup>98</sup> Apart from the influence of the Vulgate and the *RB*, the *VBA* also shows that Ardo was familiar with, among others, the *Vita Martini* and the works of Gregory the Great – notably the second book of his *Dialogues*, which narrates the life of Benedict of Nursia.<sup>99</sup> These saints' lives provided a template for Ardo's own text, but convention is often ignored in favour of a more perceptive approach. As such, many details given can be corroborated through other source material, including the writings of Benedict himself and the Cartulary of Aniane.<sup>100</sup> Also, Ardo suggests that his proximity to the protagonist vouches for the accuracy of the strictly biographical parts. It was this apparent veracity that has, until recently, led to the acceptance of the idea that Benedict and the monks of Aniane were responsible for the monastic reforms under an otherwise ineffectual Louis the Pious.<sup>101</sup> However, rather than using Ardo's insistence on Benedict's role within the Carolingian *ecclesia* as an indication of the abbot's importance, it is important to keep in mind that he was primarily writing so that his community would remain part of the network created by its founder. As such, the *VBA* provides a wealth of insight into the way an early-ninth-century monastic author saw how the interaction between an individual monastery and the imperial court was forged and consolidated.

A first clue is given in the story of the inception of the *VBA*. We learn about this from the prologue and a letter written by the community of Inda to Ardo.<sup>102</sup> Although this letter has been heavily interpolated during the compilation of the cartulary, enough of its ninth-century core is left to assume that the *VBA* was commissioned by 'the servants of the monastery of

97 *VBA*, c. 41. See also Gaillard, 'De l'interaction entre crise et réforme', pp. 314-318.

98 For example, by Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 84-86, and by Waitz, *MGH Scriptores* 15.1, p. 199. See, however, Löfstedt, 'Zu Ardos *Vita S. Benedicti*', pp. 178-180, and Hays, 'Solecismorum fetor', for a more nuanced appreciation of Ardo's linguistic skills.

99 Cabaniss, *Emperor's Monk*, pp. 40-45; more work is needed on the sources and examples used by Ardo. Cabaniss does note that Ermold may have used the *VBA*, as implied in his *Carmen*, lib. 2, l. 1187: 'De cuius vita pauca referre libet'.

100 The clearest example of this is the inclusion of Charlemagne's charter of immunity in the narrative: *VBA*, c. 18, which parallels the first charter in the *Cartularium*, pp. 41-43.

101 Geuenich, 'Kritische Anmerkungen'; Kettmann, *Subsidia Anianensis*, pp. 1-32 and pp. 123-129.

102 As described in the so-called *Epistola Indensium* attached to the end of the *VBA*, c. 42, pp. 213-218. This letter has been the subject of various interpolations as well: Kettmann, *Subsidia Anianensis*, pp. 233-240.

Inda'.<sup>103</sup> In this so-called *Epistola Indensium* the monks provide an account of the abbot's final days, and finish by requesting that the *magister* Ardo 'compose and send [them], according to [his] God-given wisdom, a little book about the Life of our Father Benedict'.<sup>104</sup> Combined with the Prologue, in which Ardo explains why it had taken him a while to compose the *vita* as requested, it appears that a copy of the *VBA* had indeed been sent to the monastery. Moreover, Ardo makes clear his intention that it should in fact reach the palace.<sup>105</sup> He asked his addressees to present the *vita* to the chancellor, Helisachar, reminding them that he had been a friend of Benedict's.<sup>106</sup> The intention behind this went beyond simply being informative. Ardo was aware of Helisachar's importance and hoped that through him, his work would be read at the palace, which would undoubtedly benefit his career and the status of his community.<sup>107</sup>

Unfortunately for Ardo, there is no indication that this *vita* ever reached beyond Aniane. Attempts to start a cult around Benedict were unsuccessful, especially after the acquisition of more important relics turned Inda into Kornelimünster.<sup>108</sup> Even the summary *vita* provided in the *Epistola Indensium* was more successful than Ardo's composition. Its use by John of Salerno in the tenth-century *Vita Odonis*, as well as several other extant versions, indicate that the monks of Inda sent the message about the death of Benedict to more than one community; it became a *vita brevis* that functioned separately from the longer version written in Aniane.<sup>109</sup> Ironically, the *VBA* ended up serving as the source for the interpolations added to the copy of the *Epistola* attached to the cartulary: as demonstrated by

103 *Epistola Indensium*: 'His ita exceptis et ita se habentibus, nos famuli ex monasterio Inda [...] tibi Ardoni magistro nostro salutem in Domino optamus'.

104 *Epistola Indensium*: 'petimusque karitati tuae, ut secundum a Deo datam tibi sapientiam de vita patris nostri Benedicti libellum componas et eum nobis dirigas'.

105 *VBA*, Praefatio: 'presertim cum noverim, vos sacrae aulae palatii adsistere foribus [...] Haec me ratio annali continui spatio'.

106 *VBA*, Praefatio. Helisachar was archchancellor of Louis the Pious and abbot of Saint-Riquier: Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 235-240; Dickau, 'Studien zur Kanzlei', pp. 62-116.

107 Frechulf of Lisieux also dedicated the first part of his *Historiae* to Helisachar: *Epistula Elisacharo*. Ward, *Universal Past*, esp. pp. 12 and pp. 27-29. Ward's dissertation is currently being turned into a monograph for Cambridge University Press, and I want to thank him for sharing his PhD with me.

108 *VBA*, c. 35.1. The skull of Pope Cornelius, after which the monastery was named, first appears during the reign of Charles the Bald, and therefore will also not be used in the present study. Interestingly, the cult of Cornelius seems to have appeared more or less simultaneously in,

among others, Aachen, Lyon, Compiègne and Fulda: Kühne, *Ostensio reliquiarum*, pp. 198-207.

109 Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, p. 80.

Walter Kettemann, only the second half of the letter actually goes back to the 820s.<sup>110</sup>

Regardless of the text's later transmission, the Prologue of the *VBA* does explain why Ardo holds the palace in such a high regard. For instance, the *humilitas* he employed to explain his tardiness in coming up with a *vita* goes beyond the usual topical unworthiness to write so important a text, or the rusticity of his Latin. Ardo uses both *topoi* to observe that his intended audience dwelt near 'the sacred hall of the palace', where they could 'eagerly drain the flow of wisdom from an unfailing watercourse of the purest fountain' rather than 'drink of the boisterous streams' he provides.<sup>111</sup> This passage evokes the respect Ardo felt for the level of education at the palace. He even goes one step further. The *fons sapientiae* the monks of Inda partake in may also have reminded Ardo's readers of Sir. 1:5, according to which 'The word of God most high is the fountain of wisdom; and her ways are everlasting commandments', or even Prov. 18:4, which states that 'Words from the mouth of a man are as deep water: and the fountain of wisdom is an overflowing stream'.<sup>112</sup> Although it is unclear if Ardo is here invoking an earlier text, the metaphor of the *fons sapientiae* can be found quite often in medieval literature and exegesis. It is the juxtaposition with the *rivuli turbulenti* that stands out. It has a parallel in the pseudo-Augustinian *De Vita Christiana*, as the author invokes similar imagery in the dedication to his female addressee.<sup>113</sup> More immediately relevant to this passage, Bede, in his *In proverbialia Salomonis*, highlights the cleansing properties of water, and connects it to an obligation to teach if one has the mental capacity to do so.<sup>114</sup> If this was indeed the image Ardo had in mind, it would seem that, more than just emphasizing his own rusticity, he confirmed the elevated status of the palace and made it clear that to him, the imperial court (where Benedict also lived!) was the source, or rather the conduit, of divine wisdom: the place where the

110 Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 78-86.

111 *VBA*, Praefatio, 'Pavebam, ne hi, dum vitiose composita corrigere vellent, a male contextis exacerbati, adiudicarent negligenda; 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'.

112 Sir. 1:5: 'Fons sapientiae verbum Dei in excelsis et ingressus illius mandata aeterna'; Prov. 18:4: 'aqua profunda verba ex ore viri et torrens redundans fons sapientiae'.

113 Pseudo-Augustine, *De Vita Christiana*, col. 1033, 'Ita et tu, dilectissima soror [...]; exigui et turbulenti rivuli aquam pota, usquequo affluentioris haurias puriorem'. Evans, 'Pseudoaugustinian *De Vita Christiana*'.

114 Bede, *In proverbialia Salomonis*, lib. 2, cap. 18.

teaching that comes from the ‘deep waters’ of man’s words should be vetted and subsequently spread.<sup>115</sup>

Interesting in this respect is the request that Helisachar, chancellor to Louis the Pious and friend of Benedict, should be the first to proofread the *VBA* and even have the final say in whether it was to be suppressed or not.<sup>116</sup> Again, it is not so much the humility itself that stands out, but the explicit way in which Ardo connected it to the palace. He even gave a reason for singling out the chancellor when he referred to a letter Benedict had sent to Aniane, in which he called Helisachar his ‘truest friend from among the canons’.<sup>117</sup> Apart from the observation that Ardo assumed his intended audience knew about that letter, it is striking that Benedict had told his successor in Aniane to ‘hold Helisachar [...] as in my place’.<sup>118</sup> He considered it important that his monks retained a link with the palace, where sound advice might be found even after he had departed. Ardo was all too glad to exploit that link.

It is for this reason that the *VBA* emphasizes the parallels between the development of the Carolingian empire and the development of Aniane and its abbot. As the saint traverses the history of Western monasticism from extreme ascetic to benign Benedictine, this ‘long history’ is anchored to reality with frequent references to the knowable past. The connection between Benedict’s family and the Carolingian court was made clear early, while his ‘Gothic’ background is clouded in almost apologetic terms. What is important to Ardo is that Benedict had an aristocratic background, and that he received his earliest education in the very *aula* that would later host the ‘fountain of wisdom’. He became a cupbearer and later a soldier in the armies of both Pippin and Charlemagne, even though, like Saint Martin before him, he had already quietly made the decision to abandon courtly life altogether.

The ruling family remains present at each of the key points in the narrative, roughly following a tripartite scheme. Benedict’s conversion was set in 774, which was the same year as Charlemagne’s successful campaign against Lombard Italy – an event that definitely left an imprint on subsequent Carolingian discourse.<sup>119</sup> Later, the foundation of Aniane as a *monasterium*

115 Cf. Riché, *Divina pagina*, vol. 2, esp. pp. 756-757.

116 Cf. Simon, ‘Untersuchungen zur Topik der Widmungsbriefe’.

117 *VBA*, p. 43: ‘Elisacar quoque, qui pre omnibus super terram omni tempore nobis extitit amicus fidelissimus canonicorum’.

118 Benedict of Aniane, *Epistola Georgio* (*VBA*, c. 43): ‘Elisacar quoque [...] et fratres ipsos in meo habetote semper loco, et ad eum semper sit refugium vestrum’. Georgius was abbot of Aniane at the time; he is also mentioned in *Cartularium Anianensis*, c. 17, pp. 69-70.

119 Gasparri, ‘The fall of the Lombard kingdom’.

and the construction of a new church were again set against the background of a Carolingian development. The passage in which this happens is heavily interpolated, which alone attests to its continued importance in the narrative. The date according to Christian years was probably added by a later editor, along with the relevant charter.<sup>120</sup> Still, Ardo stuck to Charlemagne's regnal years, making it clear that his preoccupation was with the court in this case. More important, however, is that this conversion from a *cella* to a larger monastery, which went hand in hand with a thorough renovation of the church and even a rededication to the Holy Saviour, marks a new phase in the *vita* and in the development of the community.<sup>121</sup> Aniane went from a humble abode with a thatched roof to a richly decorated church with marble columns, its three altars illuminated with silver lamps. It now stood as 'the head of all monasteries, not just those that have been constructed in *Gotia* [Septimania] but truly also those that have been built and equipped in other regions, at all times, according to [Aniane's] example'.<sup>122</sup> In the end, it was the 'honour' conferred upon Benedict by Charlemagne that enabled this shift. It was in recognition of Aniane's progress in its humility that it could start to be a shining example to all.

All this was supposed to have happened in 782, shortly after the establishment of the kingdom of Aquitaine under Louis the Pious. It is not made explicit in the narrative, but Ardo reminds his readers that he was aware of this parallel. This becomes clear when the third phase of the development of Aniane is prefaced with a reference to Louis, 'then king of Aquitaine, but now by God's provident grace august emperor of the whole Church in Europe', who 'set [Benedict] over all the monasteries in the realm'.<sup>123</sup> It was the benefit of hindsight that allowed Ardo to indulge in this bit of

120 *VBA*, c. 17: 'Anno igitur 782, Karoli vero Magni regis 14, adiuvantibus eum ducibus, comitibus, aliam rursus in honore domini et Salvatoris nostri aecclesiam pregrandem construere coepit'. Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 106-129.

121 Ostendorf, 'Salvator-Patrocinium', pp. 361-373; Le Maître, 'Image du Christ'.

122 *VBA*, c. 18.1: 'Cognoscat, quisquis ille est qui hanc cupit legere vel audire vitam, cunctorum hoc capud esse coenobiorum, non solum quae Gotiae in partibus constructa esse videntur, verum etiam et illorum quae aliis in regionibus ea tempestate et deinceps per huius exempla hedicata atque de thesauris illius ditata, sicut inantea narratura est scedula'.

123 *VBA*, c. 29.1: 'Gloriosissimus autem Ludoicus rex Aquitaniorum tunc, nunc autem divina providente gratia totius aecclesiae Europa degentis imperator augustus, sanctitatis eius viam compertam, permaxime diligebat eiusque consilium libenter obtemperabat; quem etiam omnibus in suo regno monasteriis prefecit, ut normam salutiferam cunctis ostenderet'. This formulation is paralleled by a narrative in an 837 charter, in which Louis is asked to confirm a donation made by him when he was still king in Aquitaine: *Cartularium Anianensis*, c. 15, pp. 66-67: 'Notum sit quia holim adhuc in Aquitania constituti et necdum imperiali honore et nomine celitus in insigniti beneficiavimus quamdam villam in pago Lutovense, Aniani monasterii [...] petente

foreshadowing. By drawing a line from Louis' kingship to his later leadership over the *ecclesia*, he implied that Aniane, 'head of the monasteries' in Gothia, would become an integral part of the imperial court. Near the end of the *vita*, Ardo would remind his audience once more of the link between imperial power and abbatial influence: in the chapter immediately following the death of the emperor, it is told that Louis 'set Benedict over all monasteries in his realm, so that, as he had instructed Aquitaine and Gothia in the standard of salvations, so also might he imbue Francia with a salutary example'.<sup>124</sup>

Between 782 and Charlemagne's death, the *VBA* is preoccupied with the consolidation of Aniane, and also with the extension of Aniane's network and showing the respect garnered by their abbot. It is in this context that Ardo portrays Benedict's reforming activities in other monasteries, chief among them those led by his famous colleagues at court. All of these are mentioned in a single chapter nested among a series of miracle stories testifying to the success of Aniane. It opens with the statement that

Several bishops heard of the fame [*fama*] of his holiness and the holy opinion about his flock, and instantly began to request monks to serve as examples.<sup>125</sup>

The first of these was Leidrad of Lyon, whose importance as a courtier is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that he was one of the subscribers to Charlemagne's testament in 811.<sup>126</sup> Secondly, Theodulf of Orléans asked for help reforming Micy-Saint-Mesmin.<sup>127</sup> The importance of this request was not only confirmed through a miracle where one of the monks sent by Benedict caught a very big fish for dinner when the abbot came to visit, but also through a poem composed by Theodulf in honour of the monks.<sup>128</sup> Finally, even the influential courtier Alcuin was impressed with Benedict's *fama*, which according to Ardo not only brought Saint Martin of Tours into Aniane's gravitational field, but also strengthened the ties with the

nimirum Benedicto ejusdem monasterii tunc temporis abbate, et per auctoritatem nostram delegare curavimus'.

124 *VBA*, c. 36.1.

125 *VBA*, c. 24.1: 'Interea audientes eius sanctitatis famam gregisque eius sanctam opinionem, postulare instanter exempli gratia monachos nonnulli episcopi coeperunt'.

126 Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 287-288; Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 33.

127 Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 279-306; Charles, 'Quelques réflexions'.

128 *VBA*, c. 24.3; this poem has been named *Ad Monachos Sancti Benedicti* by the editor: Dümmler, *MGH Poeta Latini Aevi Carolini*, c. 30, pp. 520-522.



imperial court of Charlemagne.<sup>129</sup> He entered into correspondence with him – of which only two letters are extant – and also invited Benedict to send monks to the monastery of Cormery he was reforming.<sup>130</sup> Especially the description of Alcuin speaks volumes about the importance of these connections. They enhanced Benedict's personal prestige, and also extended the network around Aniane. This was Ardo's main point: Benedict never led these monasteries, but sent monks and *magistri* to cement his teachings there. The recognition by his fellow courtiers allowed him to build this network. Aniane would inherit this legacy: both the network and the teachings.

Aniane's network also included aristocratic donations, such as a foundation by the local aristocrat Wulfarius 'in the area around Albi', which may be identified as a continuation of the older monastery of Altaripa (Hauterives), near Castres, named *Bella Cella* in the Cartulary of Aniane.<sup>131</sup> The main growth spurt of Aniane's network, however, started when it became clear that the soil around the monastery was too barren to support the community and Louis donated three more monasteries: Menat in the Auvergne, dedicated to Saint Meneleus, together with the monastery of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe, and a community 'in the region of Bourges', which has been identified as Massay.<sup>132</sup> Benedict sent monks and abbots to these communities, which were de facto assumed to become part of Aniane's network. This support by the emperor, intellectuals and aristocrats consolidated Aniane's position. As Louis' ascension to the imperial throne drew nearer, Ardo's goal was to show how Benedict's influence had grown in parallel to that of the future emperor. For the moment, the monasteries donated were still within the borders of the kingdom of Aquitaine: both Louis and Benedict increased their *fama* without overstepping their own boundaries.

129 *VBA*, c. 24.5: 'Alcoinus quoque ex genere Anglorum, ordine levites, sapientia preclarus, sanctitatis merito venerabilis, regens monasterium beati Martini confessoris, qui fuit Turonensium pontifex, quique in aula gloriosi imperatoris Karoli omni honore dignus habebatur, auditam expertamque viri Dei sanctitatis famam, inviolabili se illi caritate coniunxit, ita ut ex suis epistolis ei sepe directis adgregatis in unum unus conficeretur libellus'.

130 *VBA*, c. 24.5. The two extant letters are Alcuin, *Epistola* 56 and 57. See also Chupin, 'Alcuin et Cormery'. A royal charter from 800, *Cartulaire de Cormery*, pp. 7-8, implies that the reform of Cormery along 'Benedictine' lines was long in the making: 'dilectus magister noster Albinus [...] licitum haberet monachos constituere in Cella Sancti Pauli [i.e. Cormery] [...] qui regulariter secundum Sancti Benedicti statuta in ea viverent'.

131 *VBA*, c. 34; Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 337-338.

132 *VBA*, c. 31.1; c. 33.

The final phase of network building (and the last part of the *VBA*) begins when Charlemagne dies, and Louis 'ordered Benedict into the region of Francia. (He) appointed Marmoutier in Alsace where Benedict located many followers of his kind of life from the monastery of Aniane'.<sup>133</sup> However, this was still too far from the palace, where Benedict was often and urgently needed. Louis thus provided him with 'a convenient place not far from that palace where he could live with a few [monks]'.<sup>134</sup> Benedict, of course, dutifully obliged and he twice switched monasteries in quick succession, at the instigation of the emperor. Nothing definitive can be said about Benedict's stay at Marmoutier, possibly because a fire destroyed the abbatial archives in 824, but following the chronology provided by the *Cartulary of Aniane*, his sojourn there must have been brief.<sup>135</sup> Two charters from 815, one granting the right to manage local property exchanges without imperial interference, and one concerning the donation of various *cellae* to Aniane, date from 22 February and 21 May, respectively.<sup>136</sup> In the first, Benedict was still designated abbot of Aniane, while the second names Abbot Senegildus – leading to the assumption that Benedict left between those two dates. However, his presence continued to be felt: on 15 October 816, Benedict could be found in Compiègne to settle several disputes on behalf of Aniane.<sup>137</sup> It therefore took Benedict a while to disentangle himself from his old community, whereas he hardly left a tangible imprint on Marmoutier. To Ardo, however, mentioning Marmoutier would have added another monastery to the network around his community, no matter how small its role in the life of the abbot.

Ardo does not provide many details about Inda, either. Possibly, he felt that this was not necessary as the community was his main intended audience. However, given the overall writing goals and the focus on Aniane in the *VBA*, Ardo may have chosen to highlight the story and the importance of his own community, leaving Inda to fend for itself. He did mention how the emperor 'was present for the dedication of the church' at Inda, endowing it 'abundantly from his own treasures' and granting it immunity.<sup>138</sup> Moreover,

133 *VBA*, c. 35.1: 'Franciae eum partibus ire iussit, in Alsath Maurum-monasterium designavit, ubi plures suae vitae sequaces ex Aniano monasterio collocavit'.

134 *VBA*, c. 35.1: 'placuit imperatori, ut non longe a palatio provideret locum abtum sibi, in quo cum paucis quiescere posset'.

135 Sigrist, *L'Abbaye de Marmoutier*, pp. 17-18.

136 *Cartularium Anianensis*, c. 5, pp. 47-48; and c. 12, pp. 60-61.

137 *Cartularium Anianensis*, c. 14, pp. 65-66.

138 *VBA*, c. 35.2: 'In dedicatione vero ecclesiae adfuit imperator eamque de suis copiosissime ditavit fscis munitatemque iussit.

Ardo demonstrated that Louis intended for this monastery to become an exemplary institution, stating:

[Louis] decreed that 30 monks should dwell there in the service of Christ. To complete the number, the venerable abbot commanded brothers selected from noted monasteries to come, whom he might instruct by his example to be lessons of salvations to others, until animated by divine grace, secular pomp abandoned, and seeking knightly service for the eternal King, others might in time be selected from that province.<sup>139</sup>

Later, he would add that

Because Benedict established observance of the Rule throughout other monasteries, he instructed his own at Inda so that monks going from other regions might not engage in the noisy conversation to which they were accustomed, but might see the standard and discipline of the Rule portrayed in usage, walk and dress of the monks at Inda.<sup>140</sup>

Alongside elevating Inda's prestige, this description conveyed a powerful view of the Carolingian *ecclesia* for the community of Aniane, namely that its position as the 'head of all monasteries' gave them a tremendous responsibility. The monks of Aniane were called upon to guard Benedict's teachings and to act as the conscience of the Carolingian monastic culture propagated from Inda. The image Ardo conveyed was one of cooperation, of education. He did not advocate a 'Cluniac' model, based on a shared liturgy, with one single monastery at the head of a large order, but rather one in which exemplary teaching would be recognized and respected.<sup>141</sup> Ardo argued against the idea that individual communities only existed in isolation. He was also aware that monastic ideologies could only be developed or spread if they were grounded in reality. Given that the Carolingian

139 *VBA*, c. 35.2: 'per scripturam, ut ibidem Deo Christo famulantes persisterent monachi, statuit. Qua de re, ut numerus impleretur, venerabilis abba de notis monasteriis lectos iubet venire fratres, quos suo instrueret exemplo, essentque aliis documentum salutis, quousque instinctu divinae gratiae, seculari pompa relictas, aeterno Regi militare desiderantes ex eadem provincia in eorum subrogarentur ordine'.

140 *VBA*, c. 36: 'Et quoniam alia per monasteria ut observaretur instituit regula, suos in Inda degentibus ita omni intentione instruxit, ut ex diversis regionibus adventantes monachi non, ut ita dixerim, perstreptentia, ut imbuerentur, indigerent verba, quia in singulorum moribus, in inessu habituque formam disciplinamque regularem pictam cernerent'.

141 On the exceptional status of Cluny, see Wollasch, *Cluny*; Riché, 'Cluny'; Helvétius and Kaplan, 'Asceticism', pp. 286-287.

discourse gave precedence to ecclesiastical unity and the salvation of all Christians over the concerns of individual entities, it stands to reason that attempts to homogenize practices among monastic communities might be counterproductive. Nevertheless, by virtue of their influential founder, the monks of Aniane might retain their local traditions along with their position as an imperial favourite.

Ardo's primary concern was to show that Aniane need not lose its preferential treatment even if their daily life did not always fit with the Carolingian ideal as expressed, for example, in the conciliar acts of 813 or the *IC*.<sup>142</sup> From his vantage point on the outside looking in, his high-stakes game of declaring Aniane to be the cradle of monasticism would have bolstered local confidence, while defending any possible idiosyncrasies at court. The network built on the foundations laid by Theodulf, Leidrad and Alcuin may not have been an attempt at monastic reforms, but more like an attempt to found a new prayer confraternity or to continue one set up by Benedict.<sup>143</sup> This was an initiative by monasteries themselves, aiming to join the different 'monastic experiences' of Frankish monks by setting up networks of prayer across the realm.<sup>144</sup> Different houses within the confraternity offered up prayers for members of other communities, whose names were inscribed in so-called *libri vitae* or *libri memoriales*.<sup>145</sup> Such networks stand as a testament to the observation, first expressed in such terms at Attigny in 762, that neither man nor monastery was an island.<sup>146</sup> They encouraged communities to pray, while reminding individuals to do good works in order to deserve these prayers.<sup>147</sup> Such prayer confraternities sped along cultural integration by creating a general idea that everybody supported everybody else.<sup>148</sup> Even if an organized, structural coherence and drive for unity was sometimes lacking, networks such as the one described by Ardo were a step towards an *ecclesia* that served as an actual body politic.

142 Gravel, *Distances, Rencontres*, pp. 305-306 and p. 467; *VBA*, c. 39.

143 For example, Benedict may be found in the confraternity book of Sankt-Gallen, together with two of his peers: Geuenich, 'Benedikt von Aniane'.

144 Geuenich, "Dem himmlischen Gott in Erinnerung sein ..."; Geuenich, 'Gebetsgedenken und anianische Reform'.

145 For an overview of the theological and liturgical background of this phenomenon, see Angenendt, 'Theologie und Liturgie'; Wollasch, 'Totengedenken im Reformmönchtum'.

146 Schmid and Oexle, 'Voraussetzungen und Wirkung'; Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, pp. 55-57; Halfond, *Archaeology*, p. 195.

147 Schmid, 'Mönchtum und Verbrüderung'; Oexle, 'Memoria und Memorialbild'; Angenendt, 'Kloster und Klosterverband'.

148 Cf. Oexle, 'Deutungsschemata der sozialen Wirklichkeit'.

This observation seemingly clashes with Ardo's depiction of Benedict's programmatic activities at Inda and around the palace, after it has been made official that Louis had set Benedict 'over all the monasteries in his realm'. Referring to the reform councils of 816-819 in chapter 36 of the *VBA*, Ardo describes a gathering of 'the fathers of monasteries together with as many monks as possible', organized by the emperor to counter the 'tepidness' which had gradually crept into the regular life of many communities. After many days, all lingering questions had been clarified, and one 'salubrious *consuetudo*' had been agreed upon. The resulting capitulary drafted by Benedict, implied to be the *Capitulare Monasticum*, was presented to the emperor for its final confirmation. Then, 'Louis appointed *inspectores* for each monastery' to see whether the communities actually followed the new regulations, while Benedict instructed the community of Inda so 'that monks from other regions would not need loud voices to be instructed', but could rather follow the example they saw around them instead. It was a situation similar to the one implied by Grimaldus and Tatto in their letters to Reichenau.<sup>149</sup>

This is a key passage in the *VBA*, which places a heavy responsibility on Benedict's shoulders. Nevertheless, it is a responsibility that he shoulders together with his monks and his colleagues. Also, similar to the prologue of the *Institutio Canoniorum* it is once again the emperor who set the wheels in motion. Moreover, while this chapter indeed describes how Benedict provided the guiding principles towards a unity of practice, it presented this as arising from deliberations among equals, similar to monastic practice in the chapter house. He is never shown to impose anything, but rather teaching his colleagues how to be monks. In doing so, he was also improving himself. Most importantly, however, it should not be forgotten that this passage was meant to glorify Benedict, Aniane, and – to a lesser extent – Inda. The *RB*, Ardo emphasizes in chapter 37, does not cover all possibilities: it 'keeps silent about many things by which a monk's habit is adorned with jewels'. In a deliberately ambiguous passage, Ardo shows that Benedict knew that the Rule's complete implementation was hampered by anything from human frailty to the geographic circumstances around a monastery.<sup>150</sup> Conversely, his Benedict, like Smaragdus, was aware that the possibilities for human

149 *VBA*, c. 36.1-2.

150 *VBA*, c. 37; Cabaniss' English translation is too strong in emphasizing Benedict's insistence on unity and *concordia* here. Kettemann takes a step back and refocuses the passage on the *RB*, which he implies is the subject of the argument and (thus) the thing ordering or leaving out certain items.

virtue ranged far beyond the confines of the *RB*. What mattered to him was to enable people to be good Christians first, and teach monks to be good members of their communities second. In Ardo's words, Benedict's task at the palace was to promote the *utilitas* of all people, but he only actively intervened when it concerned the *necessitas* of monks: those aspects of monastic life that required guidance from above.<sup>151</sup> Given the nature of Ardo's narrative, it would be Benedict who provided that guidance, and his monasteries which were the first way stations on the path towards salvation. As Benedict walked his own path, Aniane followed in his wake.

Benedict relied on reports from Montecassino, the *fons et origo* of the Rule. Ardo, for his part, wanted to present Aniane – and to a lesser extent Inda – as the place where the teachings of the second Benedict could be experienced first-hand.<sup>152</sup> This is why he emphasized his abbot's role in the ecclesiastical reforms of Louis the Pious, with such conviction that his importance continues to be taken for granted. The *VBA* reveals that even Ardo had to acknowledge that these reforms were a collective effort, however. Benedict was undeniably an important figure, but his influence was limited to those matters pertaining to the *regula* (and to a lesser extent to the *consuetudines*), while the imperial court, for better or for worse, remained responsible for the ordering of the *ecclesia* as a whole.

Combined with the institution of Inda as an exemplary monastery led by Benedict, the image that Ardo was going for is similar to the one implicit in texts like the *Institutio Canoniorum*: monasteries would be allowed to operate with a relatively high level of autonomy, and determine the pace at which they would reform by themselves. They would 'return to a certain degree of unity' not by coercion, but through education, by setting up at least one monastery where the new standard would be demonstrated, so that other monastic communities could follow suit.<sup>153</sup> Being willing and able to do so was a matter of accepting the education offered by Benedict, who was presented as having attained the highest possible monastic ideal.<sup>154</sup> In fact, at this point in the text, Ardo even inserted some of the changes made to monastic *consuetudines* made by Benedict, in a form not dissimilar to the

151 *VBA*, c. 35.3, 'Erat quippe miserorum advocatus, set monachorum pater; pauperum consolator, set monachorum eruditor; divitibus pabulum vitae prebebat, set monachorum mentibus regulae disciplinam inculcabat; omnium licet utilitatibus consuleret, monachorum tamen necessitatibus sedulo interveniebat'.

152 *VBA*, c. 38.6.

153 *VBA*, c. 36.2.

154 Diem, 'Inventing the Holy Rule', pp. 83-84.

letters and capitularies mentioned earlier.<sup>155</sup> These were the culmination of the abbot's life, and within the *VBA*, these regulations mark his final feat before his death. Benedict had acquired the wisdom and knowledge to live according to the *RB* – which, almost ironically, included the acknowledgment that he ‘could not learn all the hidden meanings of the Rule’.<sup>156</sup> Right until his final moments, Benedict kept on learning. His greatest intellectual accomplishment, according to Ardo, was the *Concordia Regularum*, essentially showing that ‘[Benedict of Nursia’s] Rule was sustained by the rules of others’: a permanent constructive discourse contained within a singular codex.<sup>157</sup>

### ‘Armed with the Javelins of Debate’: Benedict of Aniane Goes to Court

To Ardo, the proximity of Inda to the palace meant that Benedict would be able ‘to endure the troubles he had once set aside’ and become a full-fledged member of the court again, even taking on a role akin to that of a chamberlain who regulated access to Louis the Pious.<sup>158</sup> He received people ‘who sought imperial opinion’ and ‘at opportune moments, he brought their complaints set in documents to the emperor’.<sup>159</sup> It was a curious way of portraying Benedict’s life at court, and it may have had something to do with the abbot’s description of Helisachar, the chancellor, as his successor at court. Judging by the prologue, Ardo knew of Helisachar’s function at court. *Mutatis mutandis*, he may have wanted to portray Benedict in a similar role while he ‘wore away the floors of the palace’, as someone who was more than just an abbot who occasionally advised the emperor. Louis was portrayed as the one ultimately in control, however: as the aging abbot

155 *VBA*, c. 38. Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 42-47.

156 *VBA*, c. 38.7: ‘mox humiliter suscipiens, sine reverentia aiebat, necdum se posse occultos sensus regulae nosse’.

157 *VBA*, c. 38.7: ‘Ex quo rursus ut ostenderet contentiosis nil frivola cassaque a beato Benedicto edita fore, set suam ex aliorum fultam esse regulam, alium collectis regularum sententiis composuit librum, cui nomen *Concordia Regularum* dedit, ita dumtaxat, ut beati Benedicti prederet sententia, ei vero racionabiliter concinentia iungerentur deinceps’.

158 *VBA*, c. 35.3. On the chamberlain (*camerarius*), see, among others, Ward, ‘Caesar’s wife’, pp. 206-207; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 41-42; and, of course, the ideal type in Hincmar’s *De Ordine Palatii*, c. 22, pp. 72-75.

159 *VBA*, c. 35.3: ‘Omnes siquidem qui aliorum passi incommodis imperialia petebant suffragia, cum ad eum accederent, alacriter susceptos osculabatur, eorumque querimonias in scedulis impressas tempore opportuno offerebat imperatori’.

every now and then forgot about messages he was to convey to the emperor, Louis had the habit of patting down his sleeves, where the written messages are kept, so as not to miss anything.<sup>160</sup>

In this scene, Ardo shows how Benedict has completed his journey. He started by escaping the woes of a courtly life, but in doing so set out on a path that would inevitably take him to Aachen. As he built his monastic prowess and improved the standing of the communities around him, he also strengthened his internal resolve to enable him to return to the palace he had once shunned. Nevertheless, Ardo made sure to show that his protagonist had every right to be there.<sup>161</sup> Being fully aware of the interdependence between the worlds of the cloister and the court, he could not afford to portray Benedict as a saintly interloper or a *peregrinus* whose status as an outsider allowed him to admonish the king and his court.<sup>162</sup> Instead, from the first chapter onwards, it was important to show the friendly connections between Benedict's Gothic family and the Carolingians.<sup>163</sup> Through his father's connections, Benedict enjoyed an education under Queen Bertrada, and later became a servant of the Carolingian rulers Pippin and Charlemagne.<sup>164</sup>

Ardo seems to prefigure the saint's future role: by casting him in the role of *pincerna*, cupbearer, he may have wanted to invoke the story of Nehemiah, a Jewish official at the court of Artaxerxes I of Persia. Nehemiah is credited with rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and with reinstating the laws of Moses among the people of Israel in spite of the opposition he faced – all with the sponsorship of the king. Nehemiah, speaking in the first person, self-identifies as the cupbearer at the Persian court, something which Bede would later explain as meaning that he would 'outwardly perform a joyful service, but inwardly was overcome by a grave sadness because he remembered that the holy city had been destroyed and that the people of God were held in

160 *VBA*, c. 35.3: 'Ex quibus aduetus aliquoties serenissimus imperator mapulam manicasque eius palpans reperiebat repertasque legebat atque ut utilius noverat decernebat; propter oblivionem quippe talibus in locis eas ferre solitus erat.' From Cabaniss' translation, it follows that Louis is plucking at his own sleeves, which he explains as 'an interesting sidelight on Louis' nervousness [and] forgetfulness'. However, *eius*, referring to *mapulam manicasque*, is a demonstrative pronoun which does not designate the emperor – it was Benedict who literally had things up his sleeve. Both German translations follow this interpretation. Many thanks to Courtney Booker for his help with this passage.

161 See also Kettemann, "Provocatively"?, pp. 40-41.

162 McGrane, 'The Rule collector', p. 282: 'the ambiguity which [Benedict of Aniane] experienced as he simultaneously pursued an intense search for God and immersed himself in the life of the empire is something that all who seek to follow the Rule of Benedict experience today'.

163 Generally, see Althoff, 'Friendship'.

164 McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 73-74; Nelson, 'Bertrada'.



disgrace and contempt by the enemies of God'.<sup>165</sup> Ardo describes a similar attempt to keep up appearances by Benedict, and even though it is unclear to what extent the Book of Nehemiah influenced Ardo's narrative as a whole, the author might have seized upon the lucky coincidence that his protagonist had been in a position similar to that of a prophet and fellow reformer. In a sermon on the story of Joseph, the sixth-century Bishop Caesarius of Arles reflects on the same courtly office, telling his audience that Joseph's request to the pharaoh's cupbearer to help him get out of prison was an indication that he still trusted men more than the Lord.<sup>166</sup> The high position of the cupbearer at the royal court would thus be used to link important people to those in power. This was in the end the most important observation for Ardo. Benedict had *Königsnähe*, but, like Nehemiah, he was destined for greater things. The narrative conceit of the cupbearer thus allowed Ardo to prefigure the connections between the two worlds occupied by Benedict, and to help explain how his subsequent alienation from the court did not make him a stranger in his own land.<sup>167</sup>

It is important to remember that the *VBA* is not a biography. It is a *vita*, a hagiography, and as such, special attention should be given to the way Benedict's life has been presented, the discourse within which it functioned, and the significance accorded to specific events in the narrative.<sup>168</sup> This meant not only highlighting Benedict's spiritual journey, but also explaining how this pertained to the development of the Carolingians. One example of this is provided by the timing of his *conversio*. According to Ardo, Benedict's conversion to the monastic life took place 'in the year that Italy was made subject to the sway of glorious King Charles', and was prompted by a near-death experience he had while rescuing his brother who 'recklessly sought to ford a certain river'. Having survived the ordeal, 'Benedict bound himself by a vow to God not to fight for the world any further'.<sup>169</sup>

Ardo's dating of this event, combined with the sentence *seculo deinceps non militaturum* and his depiction of Benedict returning to his *patria*, has been thought to indicate that Benedict was in Italy to accompany Charlemagne on his conquest of the Lombard kingdom.<sup>170</sup> By extension, the river his brother almost drowned in was the Ticino near Pavia. The assertion is

165 Bede, *On Ezra and Nehemia*, lib. 3, c. 4, p. 158.

166 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 91, cc. 5-6, pp. 51-52.

167 Murray and Kramer, 'Tears for fears'.

168 Mulder-Bakker, 'Invention of saintliness', pp. 17-18.

169 *VBA*, c. 2.1: 'Eo namque anno quo Italia gloriosi Karoli regis ditioni subiecta est, cum frater eius incaute fluvium quemdam transfretare vellet et a tumentibus raperetur undis'.

170 First postulated by Paulinier, 'Saint Benoît d'Aniane', p. 20.

plausible. Given his position at court, Benedict would have been qualified to join a major campaign like the one in 774.<sup>171</sup> However, this is never made explicit by the author, even though showing Benedict as a soldier would have made sense to the intended audience.<sup>172</sup> Given that Ardo had no qualms about glorifying the military prowess of Benedict's father, it was acceptable to show one's participation in warfare and conquest to show the value of the protagonist as a member of the courtly inner circle.<sup>173</sup> However, the *VBA* never makes that point, so the assumption that Benedict was in Italy to experience this life-changing event is quite tenuous, and may ultimately miss Ardo's point.

An interesting alternative is offered by Walter Kettemann.<sup>174</sup> Following his analysis of the first two chapters of the *VBA*, Kettemann concluded that Benedict's trip to Italy was connected with the conflict between Charlemagne and his brother Karloman, described in Einhard's *Vita Karoli*.<sup>175</sup> His view is that Benedict and his family were members of a group of Aquitanian aristocrats supporting Karloman against Charlemagne. When Karloman died in 771, Benedict fled to Italy together with the remnants of Karloman's party, and had to look for new career options when Charlemagne conquered that region.<sup>176</sup> This would fit with an earlier remark by Ardo that Benedict had already been thinking about quitting courtly life for about three years, i.e. from 768 onwards.<sup>177</sup> His brother's accident, by that logic, would have been a pretext, but not the cause for conversion.

The solution is both elegant and plausible, but ultimately hinges on the hypothesis that the conflict between Charlemagne and Karloman was so severe as to actually divide the aristocracy, forcing Benedict into hiding after the death of his supposed patron. As Rosamond McKitterick has argued, the relationship between the brothers may have been more cordial than, for example, Einhard's retrospective insistence on their enmity has us believe.<sup>178</sup>

171 Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy', pp. 300-302.

172 Scharff, 'Karolingerzeitliche Vorstellungen vom Krieg', pp. 479-485. Stone, *Morality and Masculinity*, pp. 111-115.

173 *VBA*, c. 1; but cf. Bullough, 'Was there a Carolingian anti-war movement?'

174 The following summarizes Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 50-51 and pp. 243-249; see also Kettemann, "'Provocatively"?'

175 Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 3.

176 Cf. Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie*, pp. 15-35, who connects this conflict with Adalhard's conversion; Paschasius Radbertus, *Vita Adalhardi*, c. 7, tells us this decision was due to Charlemagne's less-than-exemplary marriage politics. Kettemann calls this 'noch immer ein nicht völlig gelöstes Forschungsproblem' ('a research problem that has not been fully solved yet').

177 *VBA*, c. 1.2: 'Per triennium autem hoc corde tegens, soli Deo secretum tenuit'.

178 McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 79-80.

Additionally, Carolingian court culture under Charlemagne was pragmatic enough to avoid alienating members of the aristocracy, and certainly not in an area that had only recently been conquered. Why could Benedict not have followed the example of Adalhard, Wilichar of Sens, Fulrad of St. Denis or Count Warin, who switched their allegiance in 771 without too much trouble?<sup>179</sup> Moreover, given the monastic politics of Charlemagne in Aquitaine in the late eighth century, using monasteries to extend and consolidate Carolingian power in the region, the fact that Benedict's first order of business was to found a new monastery and to advocate royal sponsorship seems incongruent with the idea that he wanted to keep a low profile.<sup>180</sup> Ardo was writing over 50 years after this event, and would have moulded it to suit his story. Therefore, it is prudent to regard this conversion story as part of a larger narrative, and not as a way of coming to terms with the seedy details of Benedict's (and Charlemagne's) past. The argument *ex silentio* that Benedict went into a monastery because he was a supporter of Karloman seems to overstate the political role of Benedict in the 770s, as well as Ardo's biographical intentions and feeling for the politics of the era.

Another explanation may be found within the narrative itself. As noted, Ardo presents Benedict's career as connected to the Carolingian rise to prominence, using political developments such as the creation of the kingdom of Aquitaine or the death of Charlemagne to propel his narrative forward. Without discrediting the plausibility of the interpretations presented above, therefore, the remark about Charlemagne's conquest of Italy should also – and primarily – be seen as a convenient way of dating Benedict's *conversio* and an attempt to link it to a significant event in the development of the empire. If anything, the abbot's desire to leave the court as described in the *VBA* could be read as a commentary on the intrigues at court or the sorry state of the aristocracy – a point made more explicitly in the *Vita Adalhardi*, for instance.<sup>181</sup> It certainly opened up the possibility for him to do the good works he ended up doing.

It all started with improving himself. For most of the first part of the *VBA*, Benedict learned to appreciate the *RB*, which he at first considered to be 'for beginners and weak persons'.<sup>182</sup> Having entered into the Burgundian monastery of Saint-Seine to receive his training as a monk, Benedict took a

179 McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 83–88.

180 Cf. Delaruelle, 'Charlemagne, Carloman, Didier', or, more recently, Jarnut, 'Ein Bruderkampf und seine Folgen'; or for a Lombard perspective, see Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy', p. 301, as well as Nelson, 'Making a difference'.

181 Cf. Kramer, "ut normam salutiferam cunctis ostenderet".

182 *VBA*, c. 2.3: 'Regulam quoque beati Benedicti tironibus seu infirmis positam fore contestans'.

cue from the Rules of Basil and Pachomius and ‘perennially explored more impossible things’.<sup>183</sup> The ‘young and ungovernable’ Benedict actually went so far as to defy a direct order from his abbot who told him not to take his ascetic aspirations to unattainable heights.<sup>184</sup> Only gradually did he come to terms with the *RB*, and only after he was made cellarer did he ‘become an example of salvation for many [...] like a new athlete just back from single combat entering the field to fight publicly’.<sup>185</sup> His education at Saint-Seine, in addition to extending Aniane’s network, would be his first step towards leading an exemplary community of his own. Significantly, this is also his first foray outside the kingdom of Aquitaine. His efforts to reform the monasteries around him started with him learning the ropes in the ‘hotbed of monasticism’ that was Burgundy, but perhaps equally importantly, in the larger world of the Carolingian Church.<sup>186</sup>

Ardo was aware that this world extended beyond monastery walls. For instance, he also briefly touches upon the abbot’s efforts to combat the ‘noxious error’ of Adoptionism, and how he ‘rescued not only the lowliest, but also prelates of the Church, armed with the javelins of debate’.<sup>187</sup> However, apart from this short reference, most of the abbot’s career and empire-wide influence was described in terms of his efforts to improve the life monastic wherever he went.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, Benedict is shown ‘explaining the mysteries of the canons and expounding the homilies of blessed Pope Gregory to ignorant ones’ during a gathering with bishops and abbots in Arles.<sup>189</sup> Ardo may have referred to the Council of Arles of 813, but there is no indication that Benedict was actually there.<sup>190</sup> Rather, Ardo merely wanted to show that as Benedict ‘turned away little by little from the rigor of his first way of life’, he also took on a more public role, a role that required interaction

183 *VBA*, c. 2.3: ‘ad beati Basilii dicta necnon et beati Pacomii regulam scandere nitens, quamvis exiguis possibilita gereret, iugiter impossibilia rimabat’.

184 *VBA*, c. 2.3.

185 *VBA*, c. 2.3: ‘in amorem prefati viri Benedicti regulae accenditur, et veluti de singulari certamine novus atleta ad campum publice pugnaturus accessit’. On the model of the *athleta Christi* and its place in hagiography, see Poulin, *L’Idéal de Sainteté*, pp. 101-103.

186 Diem, ‘Inventing the Holy Rule’, p. 77.

187 *VBA*, c. 8.1: ‘non solum infimos, verum etiam presules aecclesiae, suo eripuit studio et adversus nefandum dogma veris disputationum iaculis armatus sepe congressus est’.

188 Cavadini, *Last Christology*, pp. 128-130, mentions that Benedict’s treatise, the *Disputatio Benedicti Levitae adversus Felicianam Impietatam*, ‘deserves a study all its own’. Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 51-58.

189 *VBA*, c. 20: ‘Arelato cum quam pluribus episcopis, abbatibus, monachis perplures resedit dies, canonum secreta pandens et beati Gregorii papae homelias enucleans ignorantibus’.

190 As proposed by Cabaniss, *Emperor’s Monk*. See, however, Garipzanov, *Symbolic Language*, pp. 72-73, on the connection between these councils, liturgical reforms, and Benedict.

with other prelates rather than just with the extended community of the faithful.<sup>191</sup> His efforts paid off in the monastic world as well, as shown by the requests of Leidrad, Theodulf and Alcuin to help them found or reform communities under their responsibility.<sup>192</sup> As presented by Ardo, Benedict's re-integration into the courtly world went hand in hand with the extension of the network around Aniane.

The alliance between abbot and empire also drew negative attention. In the narrative, the blame is placed on the shoulders of the Devil, who as always tried to destroy the unity of the faithful. His agents in this case were topical bad advisers, the bishops and nobles who had the emperor's ear and who tried to discredit Benedict's name at the court of Charlemagne as he entered in the service of the king of Aquitaine.<sup>193</sup> They call him 'a wandering monk, greedy for property, and an invader of other people's estates', all of which directly called into question his credentials.<sup>194</sup> Especially the first insult is telling. The term used by Ardo to designate 'wandering monks', *circelliones*, is mentioned in Smaragdus' *Expositio* as being more or less synonymous with the *gyrovagi*, who in the *RB* are among the worst kind of monks imaginable.<sup>195</sup> It is *mala fama* at its best – or worst. If Benedict was indeed one of these wandering monks, how could he be fit to rule over all the monasteries in the kingdom of Aquitaine? Apart from being a pretext for Ardo to demonstrate how Benedict was none of the things of which he was accused, the episode leaves us with a powerful impression of Ardo's view of the court, wracked as it was with politics, intrigues, and the everlasting struggle for *Königsnähe*.<sup>196</sup> This was the court that Benedict had left, and Ardo must have been aware that even after 814, it was not a place for the weak-hearted.

The *VBA* does not touch upon any actual conflicts Benedict may have had, but is put in the service of showing how the emperor guaranteed unity and peace in a court rife with discord.<sup>197</sup> This may even be subtly emphasized

191 *VBA*, c. 21: 'A rigore vero suae primae conversionis paululum declinarat, quoniam impossibile opus adsumerat; set voluntas eadem permanebat'.

192 *VBA*, c. 24.

193 *VBA*, c. 29.2; cf. Gravel, *Distances, Rencontres*, p. 498, and generally, Nelson, 'Bad kingship'.

194 *VBA*, c. 29.2: 'omnesque pariter invidiae face succensi, non clam, set iam palam virus pestiferae mentis vomentes, circillionem rerumque cupidum et prediis aliorum invasorem suarum animarum iugiter oratorem publica voce clamabant'.

195 Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 1, at col. 728D.

196 See also Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 283-284.

197 An interesting juxtaposition would be Paschasius, *Vita Adalhardi*, c. 51, in which Adalhard is presented as the *assertor veritatis* whose influence keeps the court peaceful. Cf. Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, p. 11.

by the formulation used to describe Benedict's enemies, who according to Ardo had been hit by the 'javelins of envy' wielded by the Devil. The exact term used here, *iacula invidiae*, may be found in one other text, a Sermon against the Pharisees by the fifth-century Bishop of Ravenna, Petrus Chrysologus.<sup>198</sup> Known for his homilies, which had been collected in the eighth century by Felix of Ravenna, the works Petrus Chrysologus could be found, among others, in the library of Lorsch, and were cited by Paschasius Radbertus.<sup>199</sup> If Ardo had somehow encountered this text, he may have had Chrysologus' metaphor in mind. In this sermon, Chrysologus lashes out against those who are 'eager to witness an offense, but not eager to witness a cure' – those who refuse to do good out of a false sense of duty. They are ready to accuse those bringing deliverance, they remain silent 'in order for God to be at fault'. Their eyes, he says, have been 'wounded by the javelins of envy'. Benedict, it has been noted before, only brought the 'javelins of debate [*disputatio*]: weapons meant to fight against those who are misguided, but in a public discourse or an open dialogue.'<sup>200</sup> He came with arguments. Charlemagne saw this as he saw through the lies told by his bad advisers, and 'embraced [Benedict] and with his own hand extended a cup to him'. Thus, the emperor marked the abbot as a valued member of the court instead of exiling him, as feared by his friends.<sup>201</sup> The circle was now complete. At the court of Pippin, Benedict had been a cupbearer. Now, he was 'not just revered by the least, but also by the greatest', and recognized as a saint in a scene that echoed the tale of Saint Martin's interaction with the emperor Maximus at a feast.<sup>202</sup>

In an interesting reflection on the relation between empire and kingdom it was Charlemagne – not Louis – who accepted Benedict into this elite circle. However, it was only when Louis became emperor that he was recognized as a 'benefit to many others'. Louis actually respected his counsel and 'his opinion on those matters which the Rule directs', and gave monasteries the security they needed to pray for the empire, its ruler and his family.<sup>203</sup> Whereas

198 Petrus Chrysologus, *Sermo* 99A, p. 113.

199 Becker, 'Präsenz, Normierung', pp. 75-76; Ganz, Corbie, p. 82.

200 VBA, c. 8. De Jong and Van Renswoude, 'Introduction: Carolingian cultures of dialogue'.

201 VBA, c. 29.2: 'ut viso eo deoscularetur eique poculum propria porrigeret manu; et quem aemuli a proprio solo autumabant fieri extorrem, ad eum rediit magno cum honore'.

202 VBA, c. 29.2: 'hunc non solum minimis, verum etiam magnatibus venerandum ostenderunt'; Roberts, 'Martin meets Maximus'.

203 VBA, c. 38.6: 'Ostendit quoque per scripturam imperatori rationem de his quae iubet regula, set certis ex causis intacta remanent; et de his quae illa prorsus reticuit, set utiliter supplentur'; c. 40: 'iussis obtemperans regis, set caritatis armis stipatus, multorum explere utilitatem paratus'.

the abbot was given free rein within the cloister, even Ardo admitted that Benedict only advised the emperor about external matters such as the protection of monastic communities within the empire. The emperor would then act upon his advice. Thus, as Ardo implies, Benedict may have been a driving force behind the decision to add a chapter on the free election of abbots in the so-called *Capitulare Ecclesiasticum* – but Louis ends up confirming the decision with his ring.<sup>204</sup> He may also have helped put together the *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum*, which would prevent monasteries from falling into poverty due to the material support they owed the empire. However, the *VBA* insists that the king ‘considered’ his advice, and decided for himself to acquiesce.<sup>205</sup> Ardo’s emperor remained in control and only conceded to the abbot what fell under his competency.

‘To the monasteries that remained under canonical power [*potestas*], [Louis] arranged it separately so that they could live regularly as well.’<sup>206</sup> Although this chapter from the *VBA* never gets explicit, the separation between communities living under a regular abbot, secular clergy, and canonical monasteries is presented as a *fait accompli*. In all this, it was the emperor who was able to rise above this division, who made arrangements for all types of community. Benedict, like Smaragdus or even the prelates attending the 813 councils, was presented as a teacher, an adviser, but never the one making the decisions. Even when matters as straightforward as simony or the despoiling of monastic lands were concerned, he had to gather the complaints and present them with due reverence to the emperor, who would then take action.<sup>207</sup>

If the charters issued for Aniane are any indication, this was exactly the image of imperial power conveyed to the south. Louis took an active interest in the monastery’s well-being, but it cannot have escaped the notice of the community that most of this imperial benevolence occurred after their abbot had departed for Aachen.<sup>208</sup> Moreover, the difference between the fifteen imperial charters issued between 814 and 822 – when Benedict died – and the four issued until 840 is striking, especially if one considers that one of these four, from 825, is a copy of a confirmation of a property exchange

204 *VBA*, c. 39.1; cf. *Capitulare Ecclesiasticum*, c. 5, p. 276.

205 *VBA*, c. 39.2: ‘Quae considerans, suggerente prefato viro, piissimus rex, iuxta posse servare precepit’.

206 *VBA*, c. 39: ‘His vero monasteriis quae sub canonicorum relicta sunt potestate constituit eis segregatim unde vivere regulariter possent; cetera abbati concessit’.

207 As shown by Timothy Reuter, ‘Gifts and simony’, early medieval views on the difference between simony and gifts was still far from clear.

208 Cf. Mersiowsky, ‘Towards a reappraisal’, pp. 23–24.

between Archbishop Noto of Arles and Count Leibulf of Provence.<sup>209</sup> This extends the gap between the extant charters directly benefiting Aniane to 23 years, or practically the full remainder of Louis' reign. Only in 835, the emperor made his presence felt again, to appoint a new *advocatus* for the monastery.<sup>210</sup> Assuming the survival of the charters somewhat reflects the frequency with which they were issued for Aniane in the ninth century – an assumption that is, admittedly, not without its problems – the conclusion that there was a correlation between Benedict's presence at court and the benefits granted to the community seems hard to avoid.

Although Ardo could not fully appreciate this while working on the *VBA*, he must have noticed the increased imperial influence in his community, influence that went beyond granting land, immunities from comital or episcopal justice, and freedom from tolls. This was perhaps most evident in a letter to the community from 822, included in the cartulary. In it, the emperor confirms how

Archbishop Agobard [of Lyon] has come to our presence, indicating how, in his presence and that of Archbishop Nibridius [of Narbonne], without hindrance and of one mind, you elected Tructesind to be your abbot.<sup>211</sup>

At first sight, this letter illustrates the relation between monasteries, episcopacy and emperor that had been consolidated in the *IC*, a division where royal and episcopal power ended where the *RB* began. However, it also allows us a glimpse of the personal relation built between Benedict and Louis.<sup>212</sup> Implying the emperor's trust in the former abbot, the letter contains an admonition the monks of Aniane that they had to obey Tructesind as they had Benedict, and that they should behave as he had prescribed. Most importantly, however, he warns them that they had to live a life that was 'saintly, and not merely regular'.<sup>213</sup>

The letter shows that Benedict, while in Aachen, was still considered the *de facto* abbot of Aniane; no replacement before Tructesind is mentioned.<sup>214</sup> It also

209 Lewis, *Development*, pp. 44-55; Février, 'La donation'.

210 *Cartularium Anianensis*, c. 17bis, pp. 70-71.

211 *Cartularium Anianensis*, c. 19, p. 75: 'Proxime accidit Agobardum archiepiscopum ad nostram devenisse presentiam, indicans nobis, quomodo eo presente et Nibridio archiepiscopo, sine mora omnes pari consensu Tructesindum super vos elegissetis abbatem'.

212 On the role of Agobard in this correspondence, see Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 302-303.

213 *Cartularium Anianensis*, c. 19, pp. 75-76: 'sancte non solum regularis vite'.

214 A charter dated to 21 May 815, *Cartularium Anianensis*, c. 19, pp. 60-61, mentions a Senegild presiding over the monastery which 'had in the past been built by the venerable man, abbot



documents how the emperor tried to live up to the expectations of the times, and act as the ruler for monasteries which, paradoxically, could no longer be regulated but needed guidance more than ever. To Louis, obedience to the abbot and adherence to the *RB* allowed communities to function as intended within the empire, but in order for them to unleash their full potential they had to act 'saintly' as well. 'This was how a ruler was expected to behave', Mayke de Jong writes, 'whereas the *claustrum* was an exclusion zone to all others, he was welcome there, and entitled to correct the conduct of those whose prayer was shielded by his protection'.<sup>215</sup> It was an attitude that allowed Louis to arbitrate conflicts within Fulda or Marmoutier, that allowed him to be an emperor, judge and teacher at the same time.<sup>216</sup> Writing from what must have felt like an increasingly peripheral position, it was all Ardo could do to ascertain that the idealized relationship between the court and his cloister would continue. His goal was to make sure the emperor and his retinue would remember to take the position of Aniane as *capud coenobiorum* seriously. If they did, it might not necessarily confer more real power unto them, but it would force the court to keep a close eye on the goings-on in the south.

## The Death of an Abbot

Ardo's frame of reference was heavily influenced by Benedict's teachings, especially when it came to his ideas about monastic customs.<sup>217</sup> He looked out on the world from within the walls of Aniane, receiving his information through the travels of others, such as students of Ardo, or the monks who were sent by Benedict to other communities and who kept in touch with their former home. Ardo therefore was well-acquainted with Benedict's ideals and ideas, but whose representation of the court and the emperor rested on secondary information. Consequently, when, following their abbot's death in 821, the monks of Inda asked him to write Benedict's *vita*, the reluctance he so eloquently described in his Prologue may have been because part of the narrative would have to take place in a world that he knew only indirectly. Misrepresenting that world might alienate his intended audience at court, whereas leaving the composition of the *VBA* in the hands

Benedict, on his own property' ('ubi etiam Senegildus abbas preesse videtur, quod holim vir venerabilis, Benedictus abbas, in suo construxerat proprio').

215 De Jong, *Penitential State*, p. 133, commenting on the *Vita Aegil*.

216 Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda*, pp. 237-264; Kramer, 'Teaching emperors', pp. 326-330.

217 De Jong, 'Growing up', pp. 122-123.

of a courtier might lead to an image of Benedict that was unacceptable to the monks in his own community. For them, the palace was as far away as it was for Ardo. Their links with their abbot were shaped by his teachings rather than the political clout he built in the second part of his career. Still, Ardo realized that Benedict's importance had also brought Aniane to the fore. His narrative should thus transfer some of their former abbot's prestige to the community he created, in order to ensure its continued existence in the comfortable shadow of the imperial court. For him, the life of Benedict of Aniane was as much about Aniane as it was about Benedict.

The tension between a courtly and a monastic approach towards Benedict's life becomes clear from the two descriptions we have of the death of the saint.<sup>218</sup> In Ardo's narrative, this process begins as Benedict is increasingly debilitated by illnesses which made it impossible for him to act on behalf his brethren. Thus, 'after a friendly conversation with the emperor, he was borne to his monastery' to spend his final moments in the midst of his community.<sup>219</sup> Even here, Ardo made sure that Benedict, having advised the emperor on the right course of action, secured his permission before returning to Inda. More importantly, the author emphasized that the abbot's job was done, that his physical presence would no longer be needed to continue labouring for his monks. According to the *VBA*, Benedict drew his final breath while singing the lengthy Psalm 118/119. According to the interpretation of Origen, which is echoed in the works of Hilary of Poitiers, this psalm blesses 'those who are undefiled on the *via*' and taught them to respect the Law of the Lord as a first step towards becoming a good Christian.<sup>220</sup> The two verses singled out by Ardo – verse 137: 'Righteous art thou, O Lord'; and verse 124: 'Deal with Thy servant according to thy steadfast love' – signify the virtue of accepting one's sinfulness in the moments just before death while also surrendering completely to the will of God.<sup>221</sup>

218 Kramer and Wieser, 'You only die twice', pp. 585-589.

219 *VBA*, c. 41.3: 'Invalenscente autem aegritudine, imperatorem familiariter adloquutus, monasterio deducitur'. On the use of *familiariter*, see Nelson, 'Legislation and consensus', p. 109.

220 *VBA*, c. 41.3: 'At cum alterius diei regularem explesset officium et cursum persolvere vellet, ventum est ad clausulam: *Iustus es, Domine* [Ps. 118/9:137]. Quem versiculum decantans, ait: "Deficio". Cf. Hilarius of Poitiers, *Tractatus Super Psalmos*, ps. 118, c. 3, pp. 48-49: 'Scit esse viam testimoniorum, cum dicit: "In via testimoniorum tuorum delectatus sum" [Ps. 118/9:14]. Scit esse viam praeceptorum, cum ait: "In via praeceptorum tuorum cucurri" [Ps. 118/9:32]. Novit esse viam legis, cum beati sint qui ambulant in lege Domini. Scit esse hanc viam iustificationum de qua nunc deprecatur. Scit etiam esse viam in prophetis, scit esse viam in evangeliis, scit esse viam in apostolis, de quibus saepe testatus est. Vult ergo per legem viae huius usque in perfectam illam vitae viam tendere'.

221 Kramer and Wieser, 'You only die twice', p. 587.

The sixth-century intellectual Cassiodorus, whose work remained highly influential in the Carolingian world, adds to this in his *Expositio Psalmorum* when he explains that this also stood as a reminder that obedience is in the end owed to God alone.<sup>222</sup> So it was that just as the monks were emphasizing these points, Benedict declared that he was dying, commended his soul to God, and ‘decorated with virtues, gave up the ghost during these words of prayer’.<sup>223</sup> Benedict, in short, was back on the road again.

It was a good death. All the threads of Benedict’s life are tied up and his cordial relation to the emperor is confirmed one last time. However, this version differs from the eye-witness account given in the *Epistola Indensium* in one important aspect. Here, the role of the emperor was expanded: Louis sent Tanculf, his chamberlain, to the monks keeping watch over their dying abbot at the palace, to tell them to ‘convey him to the monastery’.<sup>224</sup> It was not the abbot who requested the transfer, but rather the emperor who ordered the monks, together with Helisachar, to carry Benedict from the palace to the monastery. Presented like this, the emperor himself took responsibility for safeguarding proper monastic conduct, ensuring that Benedict died as an abbot and not as a courtier. The dynamics between cloister and court are highlighted in a way altogether different from Ardo’s vision.

If nothing else, the differences between these two versions demonstrate how different monasteries perceived their relation with the emperor in different ways.<sup>225</sup> To Ardo, the relationship between Benedict and the imperial court was one between teacher – admonisher – and students, in part so that Aniane could profit from its connection with Benedict. For the monks of Inda, Louis was closer the *caesar et abba simul* described by Ermold. In their version, Louis had, through their mutual connection with Benedict, become one of them, earning him the nickname *Monachus*.<sup>226</sup> Coming from a group of monks writing to another monk, this was not a reflection of his ineffectiveness as a ruler.<sup>227</sup> Instead, it was one of the highest compliments they could give him: in their presentation, Louis had managed to become a

222 Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, pp. 232-233.

223 *VBA*, c. 41.3: ‘sicque inter verba orationis virtutibus decoratum emisit spiritum’.

224 *Epistola Indensium*, c. 4: ‘misit imperator Tanculfum camerarium, iubens, ut eum ipsa nocte ad monasterium fereremus’.

225 Kramer and Wieser, ‘You only die twice’, p. 589.

226 *Epistola Indensium*, c. 3: ‘Imperator autem omne eius consilium libenter audivit et fecit; unde et a quibusdam monachus vocatur, videlicet quia monachos sancti viri pro eius amore semper suos proprios appellavit, et post eius discessum actenus abbatem se monasterii illius palam esse profitetur’.

227 Noble, ‘Monastic ideal’, pp. 237-238, and ‘Louis the Pious and his piety re-considered’; Booker, *Past Convictions*, pp. 225-228.

ruler who could actually live like a monk, capable of walking the *via regia* and also of bearing the *diadema monachorum*. In either case, the death of the abbot became a catalyst to turn his legacy into something greater. Both Aniane and Inda used the occasion to redefine their relation with the court – not to shut themselves out, but to show how they could remain part of the Carolingian discourse community.

The *VBA* was the narrative of a community in search of itself. It showed that the people in the network around (Benedict of) Aniane were as concerned with the large world of the Carolingians as with the small world built up around them. As such, it is an idiosyncratic text that represents the multiplicity of ideas at the disposal of those with a stake in the monastic reform movement. It was a narrative that fits in the context of the start of the reign of Louis the Pious, marked as it was by the implementation of extensive church reforms. In the end, the unique flavour of the *VBA* is due to its broad scope rather than the incidental details strewn throughout the narrative. It is the broad horizon described by Ardo which shows on which terms his community wanted to negotiate with the empire around it. These monks were among the most important carriers of a Christian identity, and they wanted everybody to know.

A further connection with the ideology represented by Benedict of Aniane presents itself through the works compiled by the abbot himself. Both the *Codex Regularum* and the *Concordia Regularum*, two massive compilations of monastic rules, had the goal of showing all the options available to monks, allowing them to make their own choice about the perfect way to live their life – with the implication being that all *regulae* in the end converged on his favourite rule. His goal was to ‘make one codex out of many’, and to synthesize the many monastic ideals current at the time.<sup>228</sup> If his *vita* served as a guidebook to show how the hero’s journey of Benedict gradually took him through all monastic alternatives before settling upon the *RB* as the way to go, it may well be read as a narrative companion to the intellectual legacy of the abbot.<sup>229</sup> Benedict was shown to enter into dialogues with teachers, abbots, rulers, or with himself, about which steps to take next. In the process, the appearance of the *Concordia Regularum* was explained

228 Benedict of Aniane, *Concordia Regularum*, Prologus, p. 3: ‘Quapropter, seu propter eos qui eas habentes ignorant quibus in locis fit eorum concordia, placuit omnes ex omnibus in unum coartari sententias, quae cum beati Benedicti concordare noscuntur regula, quatenus unus ex multis collectus existeret codex, ita dumtaxat, ut beati Benedicti praecederent, quibus sequenter ceterae neci possent. Quamobrem concordia regularum hic liber sortitus est nomen’. Claussen, ‘Benedict’; Choy, ‘Deposit of monastic faith’.

229 On this narrative structure, see Altmann, ‘Two types of opposition’.

as well. The vision of history contained in the *VBA* was the result of similar negotiations, of choices made by the author concerning the past he wanted to present. These were negotiations between local traditions and imperial preferences; between various streams of information that came together in the *scriptorium*; and between various sources, each with their own goals and agendas. Ardo already wrote this in his prologue.

And because the mind, divided by many matters, is blinded by oblivion, we believe it to be divinely ordained that, whatever with the passage of time may be obliterated, should be committed to writing, so that obliging forgetfulness and scurrying time may not efface them, so that those reading them take pleasure in them; they are gladdened, grateful, and eager to read. The author of such a record should not be judged lightly, even if it is difficult to praise with words what one strives to understand through diligence.<sup>230</sup>

Judging by the active role accorded to the emperor in the narrative presented in this chapter, the monks of Aniane were eager to confirm the importance of the court for their *ecclesia*. For them, the monastic reform efforts represented a way to further perfect their way of life, cementing their place in the empire and assuring them a place in Heaven in the process. They would repay the trust placed in them by shouldering the responsibilities that came with this position, and act as guardians and guides to the people living near them. They would also write down how it had all come to be, and record for posterity the lasting legacy of their abbot and the *ecclesia* he strove to improve, while simultaneously showing how it was the ruler who made sure the empire was at peace.

A very specific ideology of authority stands in the background of the *VBA* as a self-perpetuating prophecy: the assumption that individuals should be seen as the authors of movements that occurred on a large, empire-wide scale, even if the reality that they had to work together could not be denied. As such, the idea that the Carolingian monastic reforms was carried solely by the combined energies of Louis the Pious and Benedict of Aniane rested on a quite specific reading of the main narratives. The idea that a predominant

<sup>230</sup> *VBA*, Praefatio: 'Et quoniam mens diversis rebus partita oblivione caecatur, divinitus credimus esse consultum, ut quae oblivio proluxa procurrente tempore poterat aboleri, litteris mandarentur servanda, quarum lectione iocundantur, hylaescunt totosque se ad gratiam inflectunt hi qui talia concupiscunt legere; nec ab his temerarius iudicatur auctor scripturae, etiamsi contingat minus politis perstreperere verbis, ad quam avide cognoscendam desudant'.

role in the empire was played by Benedict is as much a product of Ardo's authorial intent as it is a reflection of the reality behind this enormous endeavour. It is a reality that we will never be able to reconstruct completely, but even from a close reading of the accounts from Aniane and Inda, it has become clear that a large and infinitely complex world was hiding behind the narrative. Even the author of the *VBA* felt he had to emphasize how his protagonist operated in a network. To miss this point is to give undue weight to Benedict of Aniane as a person. The story of his life is a glorification not of an individual reformer, but of a person who learned to work within a given system, and who learned to make people listen in spite of himself.

Near the end of the prologue, Ardo draws a connection between divine plan and imperial intention when he writes that he was upholding the 'very ancient custom, still upheld by kings' to write down matters of the past, so that they will not be forgotten.<sup>231</sup> Combined with the statement that he 'believes it divinely ordained for things to be preserved in records', it sets the tone for the rest of the *VBA*: divine influence and Carolingian authority not only drove Ardo's *vita*, but also Benedict's life. By extension, it affected the lives of all those who followed in his footsteps. Like the depictions of Benedict of Aniane in the works of Ermold and the monks of Inda, Ardo's Benedict thus also is more than an individual. Each of these actors was attuned to the fact that the creation and propagation of new ideologies necessitated not just the power to coerce subjects, but also the authority to truly convince peers. Internalizing Benedict's proposals about the proper way of life proposed by his sixth-century namesake required a thorough understanding of the world in which he lived. Ardo, like many of his contemporaries, wrote with an eye to the future and with a view towards establishing the authority of his holy man for his intended audience. He also accepted that in order to do so, he had to tell the story of a man who was fully embroiled in the system created around him, and who would try to change it from within using the power of persuasion, and wielding the javelins of debate.

231 *VBA*, Praefatio, 'Perantiquam siquidem fore consuetudinem actenus regibus usitatam, quaeque geruntur acciduntve annalibus tradi posteris cognoscenda, nemo, ut reor, ambigit doctus'.



# Epilogue

## Imperial Responsibilities and the Discourse of Reforms

It is tempting to think of the Carolingian court as a series of crises and conflicts which ultimately drove people towards their decision to reform or stay put – to resist imperial impetus or to increase its momentum. Indeed, it has often been convincingly argued that conflict, competition and controversy could ultimately prove to be productive in the longer run, at least at an intellectual level. The resolution of tensions and the way observers would reckon with such resolution in subsequent narratives does lay bare many of the inner workings of a society, ideally as well as in reality. Nevertheless, when Paschasius Radbertus wrote in his *Epitaphium Arsenii* that ‘an oath [*sacramentum*] is the end to any controversy [*controversia*]', this meant more than the literal interpretation that the swearing of oaths would not leave any openings for further argumentation during a legal dispute.<sup>1</sup> It implied that controversies were meant to end, and that public statements of certainty were of an almost hallowed nature. Moreover and more importantly, it should not be forgotten that, practically and etymologically speaking, ‘conflict’ and ‘competition’ carry connotations of togetherness: to think about conflicts is to think about how to resolve them together, as part of the web of mutual obligations that ultimately held together a community.<sup>2</sup>

The vitality of the Frankish *ecclesia* rested on healthy cooperation between its individual members. In the view of those who have been given a voice by history, each of these members, in turn, had their own part to play, their own place in the greater scheme of things while working towards the same goal. The ideal pursued by the prelates in Aachen, by Smaragdus and Benedict of Aniane, was not uniformity, but rather unity and clarity of purpose.<sup>3</sup> They were aware that the reforms they proposed depended on a network of interpersonal, interregional and inter-institutional relations that together formed one big imagined, visionary community. These local interests existed in a precarious balance with one another, and changing (or highlighting) one

1 Paschasius Radbertus, *Epitaphium Arsenii*, c. 27.2. A new translation of this intriguing text by Mayke de Jong and Justin Lake is currently in preparation, and will appear in the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library series. Additionally, De Jong is preparing a book on Paschasius Radbertus, titled *Epitaph for an Era*. Both are scheduled to be published in 2019.

2 Newman, *Competition in Religious Life*, pp. 2-16; see also the remarks by Brown and Gorecki, ‘What conflict means’.

3 See also the remarks by Ziegler, ‘Was heisst eigentlich “reform”?', esp. pp. 154-157.



variable could have repercussions that were felt throughout the ecclesiastical hierarchy. As reforms were negotiated, so were the relations between the interested parties. Competencies and obligations, power and authority, the fickle nature of fate and the constancy of institutionalized thought: everything would be reconsidered the moment one of these changed. Such a holistic approach would only be accepted by a group of people who may not have agreed on each particular detail, but who were willing to engage in an ongoing, self-evaluating dialogue that defined the norms guiding the interactions between them.<sup>4</sup> More importantly, for the idea of reforms to even become communicable those involved must have been aware that they were part of an active (discourse) community.<sup>5</sup> This awareness has been at the core of this book's main argument.

Feelings of belonging were expressed in the Frankish realm of the eighth and ninth centuries by the way individuals placed themselves (or were placed) within a matrix formed by the intersecting concepts of *ecclesia* and *imperium* – Church and empire.<sup>6</sup> Fostered by common ideas about life and the afterlife and via the network of communication that encompassed the empire, the discussion on how to keep on improving the Church became more than a means to an end. In some ways, it had grown into one of the *raisons d'être* for the courtly discourse community by 813: the idea that continuous reform was a key pastoral function drove many bishops, abbots, aristocrats to continually exchange ideas, either at court or at a more local level. Regardless of whether or not participants saw themselves as being part of a larger programme or were working towards a set end goal, the recipients of their *correctio* would thereupon be prompted to re-evaluate their relation with the authority that was consolidating its position within the *ecclesia*. Like the *ecclesia* as a whole, reactions to different reform initiatives were characterized by a diversity that went beyond a simple dichotomy of outright rejection or wholesale acceptance.<sup>7</sup> These reactions reflected the whole gamut of human complexity, and should be seen as attempts to reconcile this complexity with the ideas embodied by the stricter side of these reform initiatives as they were committed to parchment.

One of the most important questions underlying the case studies in this book was whether or not the act of writing was intended to be the last word in a given discussion, or part of an ongoing movement that the author

4 Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, p. 14.

5 Musolf, 'Metaphor in the discourse-historical approach', pp. 52-57.

6 Generally, see Jenkins, *Social Identity*, pp. 132-147.

7 See the general reflections in Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse*, pp. 515-584.

hoped would propel the empire forward.<sup>8</sup> Modern answers to this question will invariably be as diverse as the assumptions of the authors, but it is important to keep in mind that texts such as the *acta* of the councils of 813 or the *Institutio Canoniorum* were not simply vessels for communicating the wishes of a reforming court. As has been shown, these texts also showcase the ability of Frankish bishops to engage in self-reflection. Moreover, if the intention was to correct the *ecclesia* by continuing the discussion about how to actually improve it, texts such as these were also oriented towards the upper echelons of society, meant to admonish and to provide order. Similarly, the works of Smaragdus and Ardo may well have been intended for single recipients or individual communities, but their concern about explaining to the audience how they fit into a larger social whole should be coupled with the awareness that their audience would essentially be society itself. Even if, for example, Smaragdus wrote his *Expositio* primarily for the community of Saint-Mihiel, his intention was to embed his monastery within the Christian world envisaged by the Carolingians, not set it apart. Similarly, the authors of seemingly prescriptive texts – capitularies, *acta*, rules – would be aware that they were not insulated from the consequences of their own writing. This alone invited responses and engendered continued ponderings: as the impact of such proposals made themselves felt, the negotiations on how to continue would start again.

This process has been one of the primary motors of ecclesiastical improvement long before the Carolingians took power, and would continue to be part and parcel of what it meant to be a good Christian for centuries afterwards. The cases presented in this book should be seen as illustrations of this process, as blurry snapshots of an intricate machine in motion. Each of them would come to represent a pivotal figure or text later in history, but at the moment of writing they only had the weight of the past to contend with. They incorporated traditions, subverted authorities, consolidated certainties, and generally (and diligently) tried to live up to expectations. Crucially, these were expectations set not just by people in power. They were formulated by the very people who had to live by those rules – people who were aware that past performance is no guarantee for future results.

The councils organized in 813, right at the time when Charlemagne's reign made way for that of Louis the Pious, illustrate this attitude. Judging from the way each of the groups of prelates gathered across the empire and framed their responses, they accepted the guidance provided by the court while also retaining their own interests and idiosyncrasies. The prologues of the

8 Cf. Dutton, 'Why did Eriugena write?'

individual conciliar acts from Arles, Reims, Mainz, Chalon-sur-Saône and Tours show that each of the regions represented saw the overlap between *imperium* and *ecclesia* taking shape in a wholly different way, which consequently impacted their views as to their own place in the greater scheme of things. In Arles, for instance, precedence was given to cooperation and unity within the *ecclesia*, albeit without giving up on the traditions lingering in the region. Reims, on the other hand, saw teaching and knowing one's place as the main answer to the questions confronting them, while Mainz emphasized that a clear sense of order needed to be maintained, and that keeping the responsibilities that came with one's place in this order was the most important factor in ordering the *imperium*. Chalon-sur-Saône, for its part, seemed to have seen Charlemagne's agenda as an invitation to engage in *admonitio*, and composed their conciliar acts almost as a moral treatise. Lastly, Tours felt most comfortable simply explaining everyone's place and their duties within the realm. Thus, each of the councils wanted to demonstrate their willingness to answer the call of the court, their answers demonstrate that the Church was still characterized by a certain degree of diversity. These bishops actually welcomed the court's initiative and seemed to have regarded it as a way of carving out their own place in the *ecclesia*, but their collective responses betray their awareness that the final word had not been said yet, and would not be said by them, either.

Taking a cue from this feedback 'from below', it fell to Louis the Pious to compile and collate the court's reaction to these diverse yet unitary council acts. This initiative took the form of another series of councils, this time organized at the palace in Aachen between 816 and 819. The *Institutio Canoniorum* was one of their most visible products. As shown in the second chapter, this text was not necessarily concerned exclusively with setting up rules for the lives of canons, as has long been thought. While this was certainly one of the main themes of this *florilegium*, the text as a whole was mostly concerned with setting up the position of bishops instead. After all, it was the bishops' *ministerium* to ensure that everything in the *ecclesia* would go according to plan. As such, the *IC* more than anything showed the interconnectedness of all things ecclesiastical, and how the bishops tried to make sense of their own place within this tangled skein. They did so, quite unsurprisingly, using the ancient and patristic texts at their disposal. The *IC*, like many similar texts, in reality constituted only the next step in an ongoing debate: formulating these ecclesiastical ideals was as much a question of looking forward as it was of looking back. Being a text composed by – and to a large extent for – bishops, it seems logical that these prelates presented themselves as safeguards for the laity, priests,

monks and canons under their responsibility. They represented anyone attempting to live the perfect Christian life, enabling religious communities to persist and thrive. After all, it was their ability to operate within the secular and ecclesiastical spheres, combined with their learning, which enabled them to watch over the people of the world, and protect them from themselves.

Smaragdus would have sympathized with their plight. He may have even shared it. If the emergence of a Carolingian discourse community was a consequence of a direct dialogue between the ruler and the members of the inner circle of the court, his decision to compose his moral treatise in a format reminiscent of a so-called ‘mirror for princes’, in which a (sometimes fictional) ruler was counselled on the right way to rule seemed only logical. Although the mechanisms of *admonitio*, like so many themes in this book, had been put into place long before, it is no coincidence that the so-called *speculum principum* re-emerged as a separate genre precisely in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.<sup>9</sup> This was, after all, a time when the wages of empire had been newly formulated and when the legacy of Charlemagne needed to be safeguarded. In addition to being purely admonitory, the treatises composed by Smaragdus were thus also written with a view towards maintaining the existing order, and impressing upon its audience the importance of maintaining the new world order, often in explicitly biblical terms.

Smaragdus’ triptych of works – the *Via Regia*, the *Expositio* and the *Diadema Monachorum* – attempted to bridge the conceptual gaps between the ideals of the *ecclesia* and the exigencies of the *imperium*, and clear up any remaining misgivings about what this meant for those aspiring to live a perfect life. Given Smaragdus’ background, it comes as no surprise that he felt that monks were in the optimal position to do so; his *Expositio*, for instance, shows how he intended the teachings of saint Benedict of Nursia to be a guiding principle for everyone who had chosen to live a monastic life. His *Diadema Monachorum* takes an even more idealistic approach and describes how a regular life was only the beginning; although written specifically for use in monastic communities, Smaragdus never closed off the possibility that others could attain the ‘crown for monks’. This becomes even clearer in his *Via Regia*, ostensibly written for an otherwise unspecified ruler. If the *Expositio* was intended to show monks how they should live, the *Via Regia* attempted to do the same for people living in the world. In both cases, the correct ‘way’ to accomplish this was to follow the actual

9 Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*.

*via regia*, the king's highway. That, for Smaragdus, was the symbol for the right way of life in spite of all the challenges that get thrown on the path. By following this *via regia*, everyone should eventually be able to don their own *diadema monachorum*.

Smaragdus described his world in idealistic terms, and seems to have been aware that only monks, isolated as they were behind the walls of their (internal) cloister, were able to reach the heights of the contemplative life described in his works. Nonetheless, the central text to the final case study of this book purports to describe a situation that does exactly that. The *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* presents us with a world view in which the monastic life was linked with imperial ideals, and in which the emperor could be one of the monks. While it should be acknowledged that this was not the only monastic reaction to Louis' *correctio*, the monastic model represented in the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* took the model pioneered under Louis the Pious to its logical extreme, and opted to show its abbot as being equally capable of leading the *ecclesia*, if not more so. To Ardo, Benedict's personal journey had become a political one, which ultimately benefitted both his local community and the empire at large. More importantly, his hero's journey towards becoming an exemplary monk and abbot had prepared him for life in the political arena in a way that the court never could.

This is a common thread through the cases presented in this book. Whereas the normative ideal shown in the *Institutio Canonorum* leaned heavily on the explanation of how one could hold a high-level *ministerium* and still be a good Christian in the world, the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* set out to explain how a sufficiently trained monk could accomplish the very same, regardless of the secular pressures he would have to endure. This came close to the ideal propagated by Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel: everyone could aspire to perfection, but it would require a monk's discipline and the support of one's superiors, peers, friends, and even enemies. If everybody aspired to the same goals, the only real dangers to society would be complacency and a false sense of security.

The empire inherited by Louis the Pious was a complex mechanism of interdependent parts. Each of its intricacies, from the smallest cog to the hands moving across the clock face, had a function to fulfil. Although the mechanism itself would be working towards a singular goal, everyone attempting to study this machinery will invariably focus on different parts, shining light from different angles, interpreting its function in different ways. The clockwork that was the Carolingian empire had as many faces as there were people watching it, repairing it, using it – something that holds

true for contemporary actors as much as for modern historians.<sup>10</sup> More important, however, is the observation that in such an empire, regulated by the expectations of everyone with a part to play, even the ruler would never have been on the outside looking in. At best, Louis and his entourage had a slightly better overview of what made the empire tick. As they must have been aware, their position at the top of the hierarchical order may have given them more control, but it still did not allow them to force the many constituent parts of the *ecclesia* in a way counter to its nature. What their vantage point must have given them, then, was the expectation that things could, should and would eventually get better.

The different texts studied in this book each show how such expectations helped shape the Carolingian rhetoric of authority, how this authority was legitimized, and why it would be accepted in the first place. Whether combating heterodox movements or attempting to right perceived wrongs in the empire proper, whether actually advising rulers *in concreto* or only telling stories with moralizing intentions, the composers of the narratives discussed here were all reflecting on their own position vis-à-vis the imperial authority that was propagated from the centre. Those actually at the centre were simultaneously considering what this meant for them and the responsibilities they had to bear; the tools to argue about empire, authority and *ecclesia*, were created while the discursive rules of the community that was being built up around the highest echelon of Carolingian society took shape. This in itself also explained and re-emphasized the idea that the collective burden should be shared among everyone partaking in the empire. To them, authority was not a function of the enforcement of rules. Their empire was held together by social or even ideological power, and part of that ideology consisted of continuous renegotiations of the conditions under which it would be justified to retain (or accept) one's authority. Reforms were an important if unspoken part of these negotiations, as the ability and willingness to improve oneself was one way of gaining authority, while helping others become better persons counted as a visible way of doing this.

This is one of the many factors underlying the continuities and changes visible during the last years of the reign of Charlemagne and the early years of Louis the Pious. They had different personalities, were raised differently, and it seems safe to say that their respective styles of rulership were quite different from the outset. It has been suggested that Charlemagne was 'learning on the job' as his *imperium* was shaped, due in large part to the force of his personality and his aptitude for choosing the right men for whatever task

10 See Rosenau, 'Many damn things simultaneously', pp. 107-119.

was at hand.<sup>11</sup> Louis the Pious, on the other hand, inherited an empire that seemed as coherent as it ever would be, and with it – influenced, perhaps, by the organization of the councils of 813 – he inherited a mission. His auspicious beginnings seemed to have shaped his rulership into something that was altogether more ‘programmatically’ than his father’s had ever been.<sup>12</sup> But even if Louis felt he came burdened with glorious purpose, he too must have realized early on that a ruler never acted alone.

In the end, it was the imperial courtiers, the ecclesiastical elites – be they from Louis’ Aquitaine or from Charlemagne’s Aachen – who helped shape Louis’ personal views on the dynamic system bequeathed unto him by his father into the reforms that exemplified the first years of his reign. When we regard their texts as snapshots of an ongoing process, these courtiers emerge as agents of change while also being the guardians of continuity. More importantly, they were the masters of the ecclesiastical discourse that held everything together. Whether it was Smaragdus dispensing advice to whomever needed it, Ardo reflecting on his abbot’s role(s) at the imperial court, or the collective of elites that helped compose the *Institutio Canoniconum*, they all contributed to the ‘extended court’, a dynamic system in which the emperor’s penance at the Council of Attigny that opened this book would be a logical consequence of the system they had created for themselves. Conversely, as long as the emperor continued to listen to the advice petitioned from his subjects, and these subjects upheld the order by working together in peace and harmony, the empire would continue to function. The bishops and abbots who composed the texts studied in this book thus stand in the shadows of what they knew had been tried before – and would cast their own shadow as well – but at the moment of inscription, their texts were as predictive as they were prescriptive. They were not meant to exercise power, but to express hope.

One point arising from this view of the imperial machine is that the Carolingian courtiers who were actively involved in this process seemed to have been aware of their own dynamic community. They needed to be flexible about their ideas, because they fully appreciated that whatever answer they provided would never encompass the full complexity of the world they inhabited.<sup>13</sup> Smaragdus, consistent though he was, was aware of the many ways a good Christian life could be led, and used his works to present a variety of available options. More than only prescribing rules

11 Nelson, *Opposition*, p. 25.

12 Suggested by Davis, *Charlemagne’s Practice of Empire*, pp. 429–436.

13 Another example of this is given by Nelson, ‘The *libera vox* of Theodulf of Orléans’, pp. 288–306.

and regulations, the *Institutio Canoniorum* also set out to provide moral guidance to bishops and their communities, and was more intent to use its many patristic sources to demonstrate how having authority and being a good member of the *ecclesia* were not mutually exclusive. Providing a narrative example of this mode of thought, the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* was composed to show its audience how living a good life and following God's order(s) would enable court and cloister, *imperium* and *ecclesia* to coexist without having to resort to compromises.

To acknowledge that variety was a fact of life did not preclude attempts at establishing consensus or even feelings of unity, however. The members of the Carolingian intellectual elite knew all too well that, when all was said and done, the empire they hoped to represent required a certain measure of control to remain together. Additionally, the idea that they were responsible for the salvation of their subjects led to the conclusion that they should have a greater say than most in the ways this salvation could be obtained. Regardless of whether this was about regulating monastic *consuetudines*, about separating monks from canons, or about establishing orthodoxy, this was what motivated them to set the agenda and try to put up the boundaries within which stakeholders were allowed to speak. Again, this mentality was limited by the fact that whatever agenda was decided upon needed to be realistic, acceptable to and accepted by the communities they were trying to improve. It is for this reason that the authors studied in this book placed so much emphasis on the internalization of (what they thought were) proper Christian teachings. In the end, salvation was between God and individual believers, priests, bishops, abbots and kings bore responsibility for ensuring everybody would be in a position to achieve it on their own. Behavioural changes were thus, paradoxically, in the end maybe less important than the attitude behind these changes. The end goal would be to engender the will to do good, be just, eschew pride, etc. within the *ecclesia*. There were many ways that led there – each person's *via regia* came with its own twists and turns.

The sources studied show two ways to deal with the challenges thus posed. Firstly, in spite of the many debates hiding underneath the surface of the sources, the unanimity of the collective taking the decisions would always be emphasized. When a debate moved from one level to the next, as was the case with the *Institutio Canoniorum*, it was important to show that the texts used and the lessons taught had been agreed upon by everyone present, before they would be passed on. In this sense, it may be reiterated that the intended 'normative' character of this text should not be exaggerated, either. As implied in the letters sent to Arn of Salzburg, Magnus of



Sens and Sicharius of Bordeaux along with the definitive copies of the text, the emperor was all too aware of the human element in his deliberations: while the importance of possessing a fully correct copy of the decisions was underscored, it was equally important to listen to the *missi* who would come to check on the progress made in the space of a year after having received this communication. As shown by the various capitularies written for such *missi*, they were fully expected to provide additional guidance as they saw fit. Letters such as the ones accompanying the *Institutio Canoniorum* thus not only allow a glimpse of any additional deliberations that did not find their way into the final text, but also show how Louis did not see this particular part of his *correctio* as finished once the *Institutio Canoniorum* had been promulgated. In other words, this too was an ongoing process.

This leads to a second important factor holding the Carolingian elite discourse community together: the *persona* of the ruler, and how it would be used. While the respective personalities of Louis the Pious and Charlemagne undeniably played a role in the shaping of Frankish society, even more important was how their authority was perceived, how they exercised it, and under which terms it was accepted. Theirs was a role to play. Their public image would be carefully built up in the very texts that carried their messages, and would also influence the responses composed by those who received them. Again, this was a continually developing dialogue that is sometimes more pronounced than others. There are several different versions of Louis the Pious at work within the texts treated in these chapters, only one of whom spoke with the voice of the ruler himself.<sup>14</sup> The Louis from the introduction of the *Institutio Canoniorum* was an arbiter of reform. He shared qualities with the abbatial emperor in Ermold's *Carmen in Honorem Hludowici*, or Ardo's *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, but he was in a different *persona* all the same. It should be noted that these narratives present a confirmation of an ideal for a specific audience, whereas the emperor in the *Institutio Canoniorum* also reflects the self-awareness on the part of the authors that they needed their ruler to have acted in the way they chose to describe him. Smaragdus may not have written his *Via Regia* about a specific king, but it certainly was addressed to one, the subtext being that the ruler should indeed embody the best the realm had to offer. Against a backdrop of centuries-old traditions of loyalty and *fides*, combined with new ideals of *correctio* and religious authority, it befell the ruler to transcend the boundaries separating the *ecclesia* and its monastic communities from the world around them. Whether described as *rex et sacerdos* or *caesar et abba*

14 Ubl, 'Die Stimme des Kaisers'.

*simul*, Charlemagne and Louis the Pious were expected to be held in equal regard by secular and ecclesiastical elites alike, and as such their role in shaping their own *imperium* worked in much more subtle ways than can be found by merely attempting to reconstruct the life and deeds of the emperor.<sup>15</sup>

The circumstances surrounding Louis the Pious' succession would have influenced this perception, as hinted in the descriptions of the councils of 813 and Louis' coronation in various narrative sources. More than any other Carolingian ruler, Louis the Pious rose to his *imperium* in a period where his responsibilities all but overlapped with the expectations of the *ecclesia*. In that sense, the penance at Attigny marked neither the end of the beginning nor the beginning of the end. In the optimistic first decade of his rule, clear of the teleological perspective we have been granted by hindsight, 822 may not have been seen as a low point for an emperor whose piety had gained him the reputation of being able to live like a monk. It is tempting to think that Smaragdus would have been proud of Louis, or at least of the *persona* the new emperor had created for himself.

The ruler was only as important as his ability to catalyse and engender discussions among his followers. The emphasis on cooperation and the realization that decisions needed to be made consensually before committing them to the permanence of parchment was a recurrent theme in the conciliar acts of 813. It underpinned the compilation of the *Institutio Canoniorum*, and allowed Ardo, Smaragdus and Benedict to take on the role expected of them. The texts and traditions – ancient, patristic, contemporary – shared among the participants in the Carolingian experiment cemented the discourse community, either because their relative merits would have been discussed at the many councils held in the course of the Carolingian reforms, or because they had been compiled into cohesive narratives by individual observers.

Taken together, the cases presented allow us an insight into this evolution of an ecclesiastical ideology of reform between courtly idealism and the ethics and pragmatism of those involved in its implementation.<sup>16</sup> Far from reflecting an actual coherent programme, these were elite thinkers weighing in on the question how to improve the state of the Church as they prepared for the next round of debate. The authors studied moreover show that they inhabited several roles at once: bishops reforming themselves, monks glorifying the empire to increase their monastery's standing, or abbots addressing an audience well beyond the walls of the cloister. Thus, they demonstrate the complexities, dialogues, and the many ways an ideal

15 On the use of this title for Charlemagne, see Angenendt, 'Karl der Große'.

16 Armstrong, 'Ethics'.

vision of society could be described. They also show the importance of separating reconstruction from representation when it comes to researching the networks around them, or the world they were describing. This work has shown how the authors behind these narratives were aware that the world did not start and end with the texts they were composing, and that their harmonious ideals often clashed with the harsh realities of everyday life. This is what makes the sources so complex: they truly were a product of their time and the society they sprang from.

Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, retelling a metaphor centuries in the making, explains how the early medieval *ecclesia* was built by many individual 'living stones' which, together with the apostles and the prophets, were constructing a 'spiritual building', a 'dwelling not made with hands, that will last eternally in heaven'.<sup>17</sup> Even if the Carolingian *ecclesia* would end up being greater than the sum of its parts, each of these parts would have to be hewn to perfection in order for the collective to function. In a similar way, the focus on several key texts in their proper context may not allow us a full view of the Church that the Carolingians were sketching, but it does grant a deeper understanding of the way they tried to make their dreams into a reality, and how they tried to live up to the great expectations they had set for themselves.<sup>18</sup>

17 *DM*, c. 60. On this metaphor and its impact on early medieval realities, see Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry*, pp. 103-105; Thunø, *Apse Mosaic*, pp. 159-171.

18 Tremp, 'Die letzten Worte'.

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# Index

This index provides the names of people, places, and events as well as the main works and literary figures cited in this book. Sources have been indexed by author, unless the author is unknown in which case the work can be found under its own entry. For important figures recurring throughout the book, such as Louis the Pious and Charlemagne, only specific categories have been entered.

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