

A CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT: CAROLINGIAN IMPERIAL IDENTITY IN THE *CHRONICON MOISSIACENSE*

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On the fourth of May 1678, the French civil servant Nicolas-Joseph Foucault wrote a letter to his colleague Étienne Baluze about a number of interesting manuscripts that he had found in the archives of the monastery of Moissac. The list featured many items, such as a seventeen-volume collection of works by Augustine, a copy of the *Lex Gothorum*, a *Sanctorale* that was later recognized as Lactantius's lost *De mortibus persecutorum*, Smaragdus's *Diadema monachorum*, and an 'old pontifical'.¹ It was enough to raise the interest of Baluze, who at the time served as the librarian of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the notorious Minister of Finances under Louis XIV: the monastery received 1200 francs 'to be used for ornamentations', and the whole collection was sent to Paris.² Also among these manuscripts was 'une ancienne chronique d'Adam à Louis le Débonaire, avec quelques petits traités'.³ In the centuries that followed, this 'ancient chronicle', an eleventh-century manuscript that is currently Paris,

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¹ The complete list may be found in a footnote in Foucault, *Mémoires*, pp. CXIX–CXX. On the discovery of Lactantius, see Rougé, 'A propos du manuscrit'.

² Foucault, *Mémoires*, p. 79: 'Au mois de juillet 1681, j'ai envoyé à M. Colbert deux cents manuscrits de l'abbaye de Moissac; il a donné aux chanoines 1,200 applicables en des ornemens [*sic*].'

³ Foucault, *Mémoires*, p. CXX. See also Delisle, *Le cabinet des manuscrits*, 1, 456–58.

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BnF, MS lat. 4886, became known as the *Chronicon Moissiacense*, the *Chronicle of Moissac*.⁴

The *Chronicon Moissiacense* is a highly interesting work of Carolingian historiography, which to this day continues to raise as many questions as it helps answer. Apart from the eleventh-century codex discovered by Foucault, it only exists in one other version, which was also part of Colbert's library. This is a twelfth-century manuscript, currently Paris, BnF, MS lat. 5941.⁵ While both versions present themselves as copies of an adaptation of Bede's computistical tract *De temporum ratione* (hereafter *DTR*) and imply Bede was the author of the narrative, the intention behind them or the codicological context within which they fit differs wildly between the two. The first one appears to be the more accurate copy of the two, starting with the prologue to the *DTR* and inserting a paragraph from Isidore's *Etymologies* (the entry on 'Chronicle') as well as a prologue specifying both Bede, the purported author, and his sources. BnF, MS lat. 5941, on the other hand, has been heavily interpolated, and was later incorporated into a fourteenth-century manuscript with texts pertaining to the history of Barcelona, in the process turning it into a different work. This is indicated both by the title given in this manuscript, the 'Genealogia ortus vel actus sive vita Karoli gloriosi atque piissimi imperatoris', and by the fact that this version only starts around 680, with a defeat of the Austrasian Pippin of Herstal and Martin of Laon at the hands of Ebroin. This defeat set in motion the events that led to the decisive Austrasian victory over their Neustrian adversaries at Tertry, seven years later.⁶

⁴ Apart from the edition by Kats and Claszen, 'Chronicon Moissiacense Maius', this text has been partially edited and commented on by Kettemann, 'Subsidia Anianensia', as well as by Pertz, MGH Scriptores 1, pp. 280–313 (with additional improvements in MGH Scriptores 2, pp. 257–59). Buc, 'Ritual and Interpretation', also includes an edition of BnF, MS lat. 4886, albeit for the years 813–18 only. The dating is based on a list of popes on fol. 67^v of BnF, MS lat. 4886, which ends in the tenth year of the pontificate of Alexander II, providing a *terminus ante quem* of 1071: Kettemann, 'Subsidia Anianensia', p. 503. This list is written in a different hand from the preceding texts, however, and appears to have been written over an erased fragment entitled 'Nomina apostolorum quis fuerit in Romam'; the first line 'Petrus apostolus anni xxv et mensibus ii dies iii' has remained intact, the remainder of the list of popes is written in a noticeably different hand (which may have been responsible for some marginal glosses as well).

⁵ BnF, MS lat. 5941 has been digitized; BnF, MS lat. 4886 is also online, see the entries in the bibliography. More research is needed to assess the composition of these manuscripts, especially BnF, MS lat. 4886. Many thanks to Anna Dorofeeva and Bernhard Zeller for helping me to make sense of some of its idiosyncrasies (and deciding it would be worth a separate research project to reach a fuller understanding of this manuscript).

⁶ *CM*, a. 680, p. 105. On this event, see Fouracre, 'Francia', pp. 390–92. It is unclear if this

While the two extant manuscripts thus highlight different qualities of the 'Urtext', it has been generally accepted that the version known as the *Chronicon Moissiacense* (*CM*) received its current form sometime in the early 820s.⁷ This form was the final link in what Ian Wood and Helmut Reimitz have called a 'chain of chronicles', a compilation of many older texts.⁸ The observation that it contains many otherwise unknown historiographical details with a definite southern slant has caused the *Chronicon Moissiacense* to be regarded as an 'Aquitanian counterpart' to the *corpus* of Carolingian historiography that owed its perceived credibility to its connection with the court.⁹ This has been enhanced by the edition in the first volume of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, which added the two extant versions together into a single reconstructed text that, until well into the twentieth century, was thought to represent this 'southern' version of Frankish history.¹⁰

In 1978, Patrick Geary already argued that a southern origin for the *CM* was highly probable, although it will remain unclear where exactly this particular version of history first saw the light of day as there are several likely candidates among the monasteries in the region.¹¹ Geary also signalled the need for a reappraisal of the *CM*'s manuscript transmission. His admonition was repeated

version lost the beginning at some point during its transmission, or if it was a conscious choice by the compiler to start in the 680s. Given the pro-Carolingian slant of this late medieval Catalan version, it may not be a coincidence that it starts around the same time as the famously pro-Carolingian *Annales Mettenses Priores*, for instance, which takes the Battle of Tertry (687) as its starting point: ed. by Von Simson, p. 1; trans. by Fouracre and Gerberding, p. 350. See also Hen, 'The Annals of Metz'.

⁷ Kettemann, 'Subsidia Anianensia', pp. 33–40.

⁸ Wood, 'Chains of Chronicles'; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 216–39.

⁹ For example Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, II, 266. McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past'. One could also consider the *Annales Mettenses Priores* as such a family-friendly source, written as it was at the monastery of Chelles under the influence of Charlemagne's sister Gisela, Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, II, 260–64; Hen, 'Canvassing for Charles'.

¹⁰ See above, notes 4 and 5.

¹¹ Geary, 'Un fragment'; Kettemann, 'Subsidia Anianensia', p. 504. Geary postulated that the manuscript may have come from Narbonne, and Walter Kettemann, who favoured the region around the monasteries of Psalmodi, Gellone, or Sauves, it seems safe to assume that it has roots somewhere in the Languedoc-Roussillon region. See also Buc, 'Ritual and Interpretation', pp. 202–04, and Kats and Claszen, 'Chronicon Moissiacense Maius', I, 19–20, for alternative interpretations about the origins of the chronicle, which, most notably, centre on the monasteries of Ripoll and Rabastens, and which are based on connections to the manuscripts of the *CM* rather than the text per se.

by Philippe Buc twenty-two years later.¹² Since then a lot more work has been done to deepen our understanding of the *CM*'s relation to its cultural and political context. Also in 2000, Walter Kettemann made a major step forward in his dissertation on the textual output of the monastery of Aniane, near present-day Montpellier, founded by Benedict, one of the most prominent players at court during the early years of Louis the Pious, and one of the architects of the emperor's attempts to continue his father's programme of *correctio* for the Frankish *ecclesia*.¹³ According to Kettemann, the *CM* should be placed among these texts. Although it is impossible to say anything with certainty, a strong case has been made by Kettemann for a composition somewhere in Septimania, based on what Fichtenau has called yearly *Korrespondentenberichte* that emanated from the court circle.¹⁴ It thus stands as evidence of enduring contacts between the court and the southern reaches of the empire: contacts which were maintained by Benedict of Aniane especially.

Over a decade later, Hans Kats, as part of his PhD thesis at Leiden University, set out to make a full critical edition of the text. His work was completed posthumously by David Claszen in early 2013.¹⁵ Their edition and commentary remain the most comprehensive version of the text currently available, and their work on the stemma and the codicological context around the *CM* proves a valuable starting point for further research. Between them, Kettemann and Kats/Claszen have recovered many pieces of the puzzle. The main goal of this contribution will therefore be to raise points for further development rather than to close the book on the *Chronicon Moissiacense*. It will do so by focusing on the narrative in its early ninth-century context, rather than on the question of its origins or the current state of our knowledge of the manuscript context.

If we accept that the *CM* in its early ninth-century version most probably sprang from the south, it offers a historical narrative that at times presents an alternative, localized version of events while still remaining anchored to the wider political realities at the time.¹⁶ Regardless of whether or not the text

¹² Buc, 'Ritual and Interpretation'.

¹³ Kettemann, 'Subsidia Anianensia', p. 37: the full work was made accessible to the public only in 2008, and is available online. On Benedict of Aniane and his influence, see Kramer, *Rethinking Authority*, pp. 169–214.

¹⁴ Kettemann, 'Subsidia Anianensia', pp. 523–24.

¹⁵ Kats and Claszen, 'Chronicon Moissiacense Maius', I–II. In what follows, I shall refer to the commentary in vol. I by adding the names of the co-authors, and to the edition in vol. II simply by referring to the title they have given the work.

¹⁶ Similar to the *Chronicon* by Ado of Vienne, as studied in this volume by Sukanya

may be linked to the influence of the powerful courtier Benedict of Aniane, it offered a vision of the Carolingian rise to power that suited an audience of southern elites, a version which allowed the south to retain a sense of its own identity without denying the importance of the Carolingians for the development of the region.¹⁷ Studying the way in which the scribes responsible for composing and/or compiling the *CM*, who probably stemmed from the elite monastic milieu of Septimania or Aquitaine presented their version will help us better understand the way they saw themselves as a function of the empire that had sprung up around them.¹⁸ The value of the *CM* thus goes beyond the regional details it provides. For all intents and purposes, it still is a universal history, a narrative of God's design for humanity, presenting the story of the rise of an empire as the culmination of a divine plan.¹⁹ It provides a fresh perspective on the ways in which the Carolingian 'success story' could be written by contemporary observers who were part of the empire without being part of its inner circle, and who shaped their history according to the expectations of their audience as well as their own political preconceptions.²⁰ This becomes especially clear if we look at the final part of the *CM*, which details the re-establishment of the empire in the West as a crowning achievement of Frankish history. Looking at this final part of the compilation not only offers us an opportunity to see how the recent and distant pasts would on occasion collide

Raisharma. It is also noteworthy that the compiler added to the universal and imperial appeal of their chronicle by adding a considerable number of entries on Slavic peoples in the east of the empire, as they had become part of the 'mental map of scholars of different backgrounds in Western Europe': Rossignol, 'The Entry of Early Medieval Slavs', esp. p. 53.

¹⁷ Whether or not the sources from southern Gaul allow us to speak of a distinct 'identity' for the region remains an open question. One of the first modern historians to attempt a comprehensive history of the region, Auzias, *L'Aquitaine carolingienne*, posited on p. 70 that 'Aquitaine was no different from other regions within the empire', but Wolff, 'L'Aquitaine', pp. 66–67 affirms that this appears only to be true from a political and administrative point of view. Focusing on the pre-Carolingian period, Rouche, *L'Aquitaine* does work from the assumption that the history of southern Gaul gave the region a distinct flavour, whereas works such as Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past* remind us that the challenge of pinning down Aquitaine consists in part in analysing the way medieval authors dealt with their own past(s). See also Bellarbre, 'Aquitania, Wasconia, Hispania', and Bellarbre, 'La "nation" aquitaine'.

¹⁸ Cf. Reimitz, 'The Art of Truth', pp. 102–03. Although the *CM* in its current form is the product of several generations of composition, compilation, and authorship, I will henceforth refer to its producer(s) as 'the compiler' whenever necessary.

¹⁹ Werner, 'Gott, Herrscher und Historiograph'.

²⁰ See for a later example Airlie, 'Sad Stories'.

in the early ninth century.²¹ It also helps to highlight the chimeric nature of the text itself.

Contexts

Understanding the manuscript context of the *CM* is a challenge in itself, and although it falls beyond the scope of this contribution to fully delve into the intricacies of the compilation history, some brief observations are needed to get a firmer grasp of the narrative strategies used as the story neared its final entries.²²

While it is unclear whether or not it concerns an addition made by the eleventh-century copyist, the earlier manuscript, BnF, MS lat. 4886, provides a hint as to the intent behind the compilation: it attributes the text to Bede, who, according to the preface added by the compiler, used a veritable who's who of late antique historiography for his sources.²³ In fact, the *CM* in this manuscript is bookended by Bede: the prologue to his *Chronica maiora*, chapter 66 of *DTR*, is at the start, and it is followed by chapters 67 and 68 of that same work.²⁴ The addition of these two chapters provided a short preview of the end of times to finish the historical narrative provided by the *CM*.²⁵

This provides a clear indication as to the intentions behind the compilation. One of the goals of Bede's *Chronica maiora* was to show how the computation of Easter Cycles, as explained in the *DTR* as a whole, and the reckoning of time in general related to the passage of human history, including its inevitable

²¹ For this distinction, see for example the cases presented by Sot, 'Autorité'. On the importance of looking at the end of a chronicle to situate it in its most immediate context, see for instance MacLean, 'Insinuation', esp. pp. 24–25; and in the present volume, Ward, 'The Sense of an Ending'.

²² The as-yet unpublished PhD thesis by Bellarbre, *Composer avec le passé*, offers the most comprehensive overview of the manuscript matrix, context, and transmission of historiographical works in Aquitaine in the high Middle Ages.

²³ *CM*, p. 5: 'In Christi nomine incipit LIBER CRONICORUM BEDANE PRESBYTERI FAMULI CHRISTI, collectum breviter ab auctoribus ceterisque storiografis, Iheronimo, Augustino, Ambrosio, Ysidoro, Orosio nec non Iosepho, qui multa de temporum seriem scripsit Rufino vel Marcellino comite, de totis summatim incipiens ab Adam numerum annorum et aetates temporum secundum Hebreos vel secundum LXX interpretes, iuculente [*sic*; probably luculente] scripsit. Addens ad huc [*sic*] annos ab incarnatione domini'.

²⁴ Bede, *DTR*, ed. by Jones, 67 ('Reliquiae sextae aetatis') and 68 ('De trina opinione fideium, quando veniat Dominus'), pp. 535–38; trans. by Wallis, pp. 239–41.

²⁵ See Palmer, 'The Ends and Futures', as well as Darby, 'Bede's History of the Future' and Kramer, 'The Bede Goes on'.

end.²⁶ That time was on the mind of the composer or compiler as well becomes clear in the prologue at the beginning of the narrative, in which Bede's six ages are expanded upon. They are described as a series of sunrises and sunsets, with each age beginning positive and ending on a darker note.²⁷ Thus, the *CM* signalled its audience that the story described would continue after the narrative was done: 'It is uncertain when the evening will fall over the [sixth] age,' the author wrote, but evening will fall, 'and at the end, the whole machinery of the world will be consumed by fire during the judgement of the heavenly majesty.'²⁸ Afterwards, the seventh age would start with the liberation of the souls of the righteous, and those who would have been washed of all sins may take their place among the martyrs in heaven.²⁹ That last time, the sun would not set.

To Bede's chronicle, in itself a continuation of the *Chronicon* by Eusebius-Jerome, were added fragments from works by other authors, most notably *Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Jewish War* by Flavius Josephus, as well as Orosius's *History against the Pagans* and the Latin translation of Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica* by Rufinus for the parts dealing with early history, and the *Liber historiae Francorum* and Fredegar's *Chronicle* from the moment the Franks make their appearance.³⁰ Attached to this eighth-century composition is a continuation that, until the year 803, is based on the *Annales Laureshamenses*, a short chronicle from the Rhineland that was initially compiled in 785 at the abbey of Lorsch.³¹ This text comprises a more or less cohesive narrative for the first sixty-five years until 767, and was afterwards updated on a year-by-year basis. One version, similar, but not identical, to the one in Sankt Paul im Lavanttal MS 8/1, continued until 803 and served as the basis for the *CM*.³² While the

²⁶ Bede, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, trans. by Wallis, pp. xviii–xxxiii and the commentary to the *DTR* on pp. 353–66 (cited under Primary Sources); McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 91–99.

²⁷ *CM*, De sex huius seculi etatibus, pp. 1–4.

²⁸ *CM*, De sex huius seculi etatibus, p. 3: 'Cuius quidem aetatis vespera quando veniet incerta. Quod vero veniet certissima orribilior ceteris hominibus tenebrescit, cum ingruente persecutione antichristi [noviss]ima paucis electorum liberatis totus mundus eius iniqua et damnabili crudelitatae maculabitur et ad ultimum supernae maiestatis iudicae [sic] tocius mundi machina igne consumabitur.'

²⁹ *CM*, De sex huius seculi etatibus, p. 4.

³⁰ Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, II, 258; McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past*, pp. 19–21; McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 45–48.

³¹ *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. by Katz. See Kaschke, 'Annales Laureshamenses'; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 351–68.

³² McKitterick, 'Entstehung'; Pokorny, 'Die *Annales Laureshamenses*'.

readings integrated into the *CM* differ from those offered in this manuscript at several (minor) points, a cautious conclusion seems to be that the compilation of the *CM* must have been made after 803 as well. The choice of the *Annales Laureshamenses*, which may simply have been a matter of availability, gives the *CM* a rather idiosyncratic perspective on the Carolingian Empire, different from more 'official' narratives such as the *Annales regni Francorum* and its later reworkings.³³ This point of view is continued in the last fifteen years of the *CM*, which consist of material that has not been accounted for elsewhere, and which has been considered to be a continuation of the *Annales Laureshamenses*. This assumption is primarily based on the spurious idea that the compiler of the *CM* would not have been able to compose any 'original' content.³⁴ It is, however, equally likely that the compiler of the extant version did add these entries without recourse to a previous source, adapting them to the style of the last source text used.

The ending in 818, the fact that the *CM* may be the culmination of a late eighth- and early ninth-century cluster of historiographical narratives, and the fact that the layout of the marginal glosses in BnF, MS lat. 4886 indicates that some of them may have been copied from an earlier version, all support the hypothesis that this is a relatively intact copy of a supposedly ninth-century predecessor.³⁵ This is in spite of the fact that one quire or several pages appear to be missing between fols 45^v and 46^r, leading to a gap for the years 716–72. Subsequent editors have filled this gap by incorporating the narrative in BnF, MS lat. 5941 wholesale, but given the wholly different historiographical strategies employed in that compilation, this solution raises as many problems as it solves: according to one reading by the influential Catalan historian Ramón d'Abadal, this manuscript even was based on 'an independent work, written [...] by a monk of Aniane in the mid-ninth century on the basis of the *Royal Frankish Annals*, another [southern] annals, now lost, and loose notes', only tangentially linked to its counterpart BnF, MS lat. 4886, and more overtly concerned with establishing the history and identity of the rulers of

³³ Collins, 'Charlemagne's Imperial Coronation'; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 359–69. Thegan also seems to have used the *Annales regni Francorum* exclusively, for example: Tremp, *Studien*, pp. 23–26.

³⁴ Most notably, by Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, II, 265–66: 'Der Verfasser war so unselbständig und schrieb so gewissenhaft seine Vorlagen wörtlich ab, daß ihm auch der wertvolle letzte Teil der Chronik von 803–18 nicht zuzutrauen ist'; Rossignol, 'The Entry of the Early Slavs' follows this interpretation, albeit with some caveats. However, see Fichtenau, *Karl der Grosse*, pp. 303–05.

³⁵ Kats and Claszen, 'Chronicon Moissiacense Maius', I, 30.

Barcelona.³⁶ On the other hand, even if their precise relation cannot be gauged through the tangled skein that is Carolingian historiography in the early ninth century, the two texts appear to be connected by a shared pool of narratives, and it is the incidental details added in BnF, MS lat. 5941 that would situate the *CM* in south-western Gaul and possibly even the circle around Benedict of Aniane.³⁷ It has a marginal note describing the foundation of the monastery of Aniane by ‘the abbot Benedict who was called Witiza (*witiche*)’ in 782, for example, as well as a gloss referring to the ‘flowering’ of the *magister* Ardo, the author of the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, in 793.³⁸

Both manuscripts thus show how the *CM* is situated in a ‘convergence’ of several versions of history in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, and how this played out over a longer period of time. To this is added the observation that the narrative is also attached to a ‘historiographical family’ around the nucleus of an earlier compilation known as the *Chronicon universale* or *Chronicle of 741*.³⁹ This world chronicle, which tells the history of the world from Creation until the early 740s, also uses Bede’s *Chronica maiora* as its point of departure, and has a manuscript tradition and transmission that raises similar questions about the nature of that particular text and the intentions behind its compilation. It appears to be a historiographical text, but its dependence on Bede and its occurrence in such computistical manuscripts as Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Scaliger 28 makes it part of a tradition of *Zeitbücher* (‘time archives’).⁴⁰ This also speaks volumes about the inten-

³⁶ D’Abadal i de Vinyals, *Catalunya Carolíngia*, I, 11 n. 23: ‘En realitat són una obra independent, escrita, con hem dit, per un monjo d’Ania, a mitjan segle IX, a bases dels *Annals reials*, d’uns altres *Annals llenguadocians* avui perduts, i de notes soltes’; Taylor, ‘Inheritance’.

³⁷ Kettemann, ‘Subsidia Anianensia’, pp. 490–503 and 528; Riess, *Narbonne*, pp. 8–9.

³⁸ *CM*, ed. by Kettemann, a. 782, App. 2, p. 49: ‘anno XIII Karoli regis, Benedictus abba qui vocatur uitiche in loco qui dicitur anianum, ex precepto supradicti regis Karoli, monasterium hedificavit, in quo postea CCC sub regimine suo monachos habuit et per ipsius exemplum per totam gociam sive aquitaniam monasteria construuntur’; ed. by Kettemann, a. 793, App. 2, p. 75: ‘Inter quos etiam venerabilis ac sanctissimus abbas Benedictus qui vocatur uitiza. monasterii anianensis a partibus gocie et religiosos suos monachos. Bede. ardo qui et zmaragdus seu cunctis fratribus suis discipulis. Hi sunt ingela, aimo, Rabanus, Georgius. Cum ceteris fratribus cunctoque clero deuotoque populo pariter aggregato. HOC TEMPORE FLORUIT ARDO MAGISTER QUI ET ZMARAGDUS’. On Benedict’s name(s), see Kettemann, ‘“Provocatively”?’; Lifshitz, *The Name of the Saint*, pp. 57–72.

³⁹ *Chronicon universale*, ed. by Waitz. See also McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past*, pp. 22–28, and the contribution to this volume by Sören Kaschke.

⁴⁰ See Corradini, ‘Das Zeitbuch des Walahfrid Strabo’.

tions behind the *CM*. While being a narration of Frankish history, the *CM* is presented as a description of the passage of (Christian) time itself: a practical application of Bede's theories, a narration of history that is pastoral, political, and eschatological all at the same time.

Nevertheless, the *CM* remains a product of its own time, composed against a background of Carolingian rule. It was a period that saw the re-emergence of the empire in the West, as exemplified most by the coronation of Charlemagne in 800 which has, in various forms, been presented as the culmination of Carolingian ambition and an acknowledgement of their position in the European political scene. Even so, the importance of comparing the narratives of that event rather than reconstructing what may have happened has been demonstrated by Janet Nelson: each of the stories shows the different perspectives and attitudes brought to the political scene by the individual narrators, after all.⁴¹ Seen in the context of the long history presented in the *CM*, the portrayals of the various Carolingian imperial coronations that took place between 800 and 818 provide a fruitful testing ground to gauge the compiler's ideas about the Frankish Empire he lived in, and the Church that was supposed to guide it. When Bede in his *Chronica maiora* wrote that 'Aetius, the great salvation of the *res publica* [...] was killed by Valentinian; with him fell the Western Realm, and to this day it has not had the strength to be revived', this was a solemn moment that effectively exposed Bede's disillusionment with Roman political ideology, and the beginning of the end.⁴² The composer of the *CM*, on the other hand, retains this passage but immediately follows it with the story, culled from the *Chronicle* of Fredegar, of how Avitus was proclaimed 'Augustus' by his armies in Toulouse and Arles in the year 455.⁴³ This is followed by the establishment of the Merovingian dynasty under Clovis, who shortly afterwards is established as a Christian king, accepted by and acceptable to Romans and Franks alike.⁴⁴ To the composer of the *CM*, the political structure of the Roman Empire with its headquarters on the Italian Peninsula may have fallen with the death of Aetius, but it clearly was not the end of the 'empire' as an ideal, which had been estab-

⁴¹ Nelson, 'Why'.

⁴² Darby, 'Bede's History of the Future', pp. 136–37. Bede, *DTR*, ed. by Jones, p. 518: 'Aetius patritius magna Occidentalis reipublicae salus et regi quondam Attilae terror, a Valentiniano occiditur; cum quo Hesperium cecidit regnum neque hactenus valuit relevari'; trans. by Wallis, p. 222.

⁴³ *CM*, p. 87. On the various representations of Avitus, see Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 70–73; Gillett, *Envoys*, pp. 87–89.

⁴⁴ *CM*, p. 90; more generally on Clovis and the role of the Merovingians in the continuation of the idea of a Roman Empire in the early Middle Ages, see Fanning, 'Clovis Augustus'.

lished under Julius Caesar and his adoptive son Octavian, and which would be definitively (?) revived with the inauguration of Charlemagne in 800.⁴⁵

The place of Charlemagne's imperial coronation as the culmination of a long narrative arc will be a first case to study the place of empire, dynasty, and authority in the *CM*. This event has been retold in two other near-contemporary sources, so comparing the version in the *CM* to those other perspectives will help us gauge the vision of empire held by the compiler. After that, the discussion will move on to two more coronations occurring in the final part of the text. Both concern elevations to co-emperorship: Louis the Pious was crowned first in 813, and four years later Louis crowned his son Lothar in a remarkably similar way. Comparing and contrasting these scenes, which together form the ending of one of the main stories of the *CM*, not only allows us a closer look at the writing goals of the many people who had a stake in the completion of the text, but also shows how they saw themselves as a function of the empire within which they operated.

Caesar's Heir: The Creation of a Frankish Empire

The accounts of Charlemagne's imperial coronation on Christmas Day in 800 in the *Annales Laureshamenses*, and *mutatis mutandis* in the *CM*, differed notably from the narratives presented in the *Annales regni Francorum* (especially the Revised version), or Einhard's *Vita Karoli*. Both were composed later than the *Annales Laureshamenses*, but not necessarily later than the first draft of the *CM*.⁴⁶ Einhard, writing for the court of Louis the Pious, famously treated the imperial coronation as a surprise for Charlemagne. He wove together Charlemagne's *humilitas* and the political developments following his coronation, thereby expressing 'Frankish attempts to shift the blame for Charles's "usurpation" onto Leo III in order to appease the Byzantine emperors who were affronted by the appearance of a newly named emperor on their doorstep'.⁴⁷ In the *Annales regni Francorum* (*ARF*) on the other hand, a primary concern was to show how the Carolingian dynasty had come to represent the Frankish people, and how Charlemagne had been recognized as the rightful leader of the *ecclesia*, symbolized by the fact that he had been handed the keys to the Holy Sepulchre in the weeks leading up to his coronation.⁴⁸ As argued by Helmut

⁴⁵ Cf. also Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, pp. 163–65.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Nelson, 'Why'; Collins, 'Charlemagne's Imperial Coronation'.

⁴⁷ Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, ed. by Holder-Egger, 28, p. 32; Nelson, 'Why', pp. 14–16.

⁴⁸ *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. by Kurze, a. 800, p. 112; Nelson, 'Why', pp. 12–14.

Reimitz, the *ARF* were part of a concerted effort to synthesize 'Frankish identity and western ethnicity'.⁴⁹ This has been a favoured strategy for generations: whereas the earliest redactions of the *ARF* still opted for a rhetoric of Frankish inclusiveness, the Revision made in the early ninth century attempted to play down the Frankish aspects of Carolingian identity even further, in order to emphasize the essential unity of all the subjects of the Carolingian *ecclesia*.⁵⁰

The *Annales Laureshamenses* (*AL*) offered yet another perspective. Here, it was emphasized first that Byzantium was ruled by a woman, meaning it did not have someone worthy of the *nomen imperatoris*.⁵¹ Meanwhile, Charlemagne had conquered most of Europe, and had also become protector of Rome, first by defeating the Lombards, and later also by intervening on Pope Leo III's behalf after the pontiff had been chased out of Rome by his political enemies.⁵² Rather than focusing on the personal or Frankish implications of the coronation, the author of the *AL* had a keen eye for international politics as well. All three readings come together in the *CM*, which coupled this event with the long universal history preceding it. As presented here, the elevation of Charlemagne was the logical conclusion to a development that had been set in motion long before.

Expanding upon the *AL*, the *CM* continues by stating that the coronation meant that Charlemagne now controlled 'Rome, *the mother of the Empire*, where Caesars *and emperors* had always used to have their seat'.⁵³ It is an interesting phrase: the compiler did borrow it from the *AL*, but added the qualifiers *matrem imperii* and *et imperatores*. This characterization of Rome has many implications, chief among which may be the observation that the empire and

⁴⁹ Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, p. 471; Reimitz, 'Omnes Franci', pp. 67–68.

⁵⁰ Collins, 'The "Reviser" Revisited'; McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past*, pp. 66–81.

⁵¹ *CM*, a. 801, p. 139: 'Anno DCCCI, cum apud Roma [*sic*; only BnF, MS lat. 4886] moraretur rex Karolus, nuncii delati sunt ad eum, dicentes quod apud Grecos nomen imperatoris cessasset et faemineum imperium apud se habebant, tunc visum est ipso apostolico Leoni et universis sanctis patribus, qui in ipso consilio aderant, seu relico [*sic*] christiano populo, ut ipsum Karolum regem Francorum, imperatore [*sic*; only in MS 4886] nominare debuissent'. This reading is from MS 4886 exclusively. Whereas BnF, MS lat. 5941 is more grammatically correct, it also features a lengthy digression describing Charlemagne's coronation and acclamation before the *nuncii* even arrive; this digression, which contains echoes of the coronation of Louis (see below) was most probably added later. MS 5941 also compares the Empress Irene to Queen Athaliah from II Kings 11.1–20.

⁵² Nelson, 'Why', pp. 8–10; Schieffer, 'Karl der Große'.

⁵³ *CM*, a. 801, p. 139: 'quia ipsam Romam, matrem imperii, tenebat, ubi semper caesares et imperatores sedere soliti fuerant'; Ullmann, *Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 102–05.

the Eternal City are inextricably tied up: by positing the Eternal City as the ‘mother of the empire’, the author of the *CM* implied that Rome was the cradle of the empire.⁵⁴ However, as we shall see, it is perhaps even more significant that the phrase *et imperatores* was added.⁵⁵

The narrative proceeds. Charlemagne’s subjects, aristocrats and *sacerdotes* alike, gave the king the ‘name of emperor’:

And it therefore seemed right that this very man, with the help of God and at the request of the entire Christian people, would have that very *nomen* [of emperor]. King Charles himself was unwilling to deny their request: rather, with all humility, subjecting [himself] to God and to the request of the bishops and of all the Christian people, that same Day of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, he received the *nomen ymperatoris* [*sic*], with the blessing of the lord Pope Leo. And from then on he was called emperor and Augustus. And first of all, after he had become emperor, he strove to recall the Roman church herself away from that discord that the Romans had with the apostolic lord Leo, back to peace and concord.⁵⁶

To the author(s) of this passage, Charlemagne had become more than a king. He now was emperor of the Christians, and thus in a position to ensure that peace would reign even in the tumultuous city of Rome. In the *CM*, a sentence is added here to make clear what was meant. ‘The year passed without a campaign’, he wrote, copying from the *AL*.⁵⁷ However, as justice and peace followed in the wake of Charlemagne’s return to his capital, a remark is added to the *CM*, stating that ‘the emperor (*imperator*) Charles should be praised above all kings

⁵⁴ On *mater imperii* in late antique context, see Sinapi, ‘Les séductions’. For a similar use of the idea in the later Middle Ages, see Bailey, ‘Petrarch’, p. 324.

⁵⁵ Compare *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. by Katz, a. 801, p. 44: ‘imperatorem nominare debuissent, qui ipsum Romam tenebat, ubi semper Cesaras [*sic*] sedere soliti erant’. It may also be noteworthy that, whereas BnF, MS lat. 5941 follows the formulation from the *AL* more closely, BnF, MS lat. 4886 elaborates: ‘quia ipsam romam matrem imperii tenebat’.

⁵⁶ *CM*, a. 801, p. 140, ed. by Kettemann, App. 2, p. 99: ‘Ideo iustum esse videbatur, ut ipse, cum Dei adiutorio et universo christiano populo petentem, ipsum nomen [BnF, MS lat. 5941 adds ‘imperatoris’ here] haberet. Quorum petitionem ipse rex Karolus denegare noluit, sed cum omni humilitate subiectus Deo et petitione sacerdotum et universi christiani populi in ipsa navitatae domini nostri Iesu Christi ipsum nomen ymperatoris, cum consecratione domni Leoni pape, suscepit. Ex tunc autem imperator et augustus est appellatus [instead of this sentence, MS 5941 simply states ‘sicut supra dictum est’]. Et inprimis omnium, postquam imperator extitit, studuit ut ipsam Romanam ecclesiam de ea discordia, quam habuerant Romani cum domno apostolico Leonem, ad pacem et concordiam revocavit’. The translation is based on Nelson, ‘Why’, p. 3.

⁵⁷ This would not have implied that the government was idle in those years, however: Davis, *Charlemagne’s Practice of Empire*, pp. 350–64.

(*reges*) of the Franks who came before him with regard to riches, glory, honor, and reputation. He is the first of Frankish descent (*genere*) to be called *Caesar*.⁵⁸

In addition to the emphasis on the *nomen* of the emperor visible throughout the narrative recorded in the *CM*, this final passage juxtaposes *caesar*, *rex*, and *imperator*, which appears to hearken back to the description of the events leading up to the creation of the first Roman emperor, Octavianus/Augustus, and his adoptive father Julius Caesar. This part of the text is based almost completely on the earlier *Chronicon universale* (*CU*) and while it is important to spend some time on the choices made for the composition of that particular text, it is equally important to keep in mind that, at the moment of inscription of the *CM*, the choice of this particular text mattered. This retelling of the creation of the Roman Empire best suited the needs of the intended audience; the narrative was framed in such a way as to connect the account of the *AL* to the story the compiler presently wanted to tell.

Upon Julius Caesar's assumption of imperial authority, the *CM*, channeling the *CU*'s reworking of Bede (quoting, in turn, from Jerome's *Chronicle*), comments that 'the rulers (*principes*) of the Romans are called *Caesars*' after Julius, 'the first of the Romans who obtained the sole *imperium*'.⁵⁹ It reads as an almost offhand remark, hidden in a larger narrative of Caesar's conquests, compiled predominantly from fragments of Bede's *Chronica maiora* and Orosius's *Historia adversus paganos*, as well as the *Chronicle* of Eusebius-Jerome. The *CU* and by extension the *CM* wanted to demonstrate how Caesar's conquests (including his conquest of Cleopatra) paved the way for the creation of the *imperium* and the institutions that were to reign over it. The story continues with the briefest of accounts of Caesar's victories against Scipio and the sons of Pompeius, describes a number of dire portents prefiguring the death of Julius Caesar, and then narrates his murder.⁶⁰ Interestingly, Bede's quip that this happened 'because of [Caesar's] arrogance' is left out, while Orosius's assessment

⁵⁸ *CM*, a. 801, p. 140, ed. by Kettemann, App. 2, p. 100: 'Et eo anno demoravit piissimus Caesar Karolus apud Aquis palatium quietus cum Francis, sine hoste [this sentence is absent in BnF, MS lat. 5941]. Magnificatus est autem imperator Karolus super omnes reges Francorum, qui ante eum fuerunt diviciis, gloria, honore et nomine. Item primo ex genere Francorum caesar est appellatus [MS 5941 reads 'Iste primus ex genere franchorum imperator extitit']'.

⁵⁹ *CM*, p. 43: 'Anno tercio Cleopatre, ipse [= Julius Caesar] primus Romanorum singulare obtinuit imperium, a quo Caesares Romanorum principes appellati'.

⁶⁰ *CM*, p. 44: 'Caesar quattuor triumphus Romam ingressus, recuperate rei publice statum, contra exempla maiorum clementer instaurat. Auctoribus Bruto et Cassio, coniurantibus in eum LX vel amplius senatoribus aequitibusque Romanis, in curia XXIII vulneribus confossus interiit, post annos IIII et menses VI quam regnare caeperat'.

that he was ‘more merciful than his predecessors’ while he was restoring the *res publica* is included.⁶¹

Although the passage is never quoted directly, the compiler of the *CM* seemed to agree with Orosius when the latter wrote that Julius Caesar ‘distinguished himself rather as the architect of the empire than as an emperor.’⁶² That honour fell to his nephew, ‘Octavianus Caesar Augustus’, who became the ‘second [ruler] of the Romans’, and after whom ‘the kings (*reges*) of the Romans are called Augusti.’⁶³ The narrative continues with the way Octavian had attained his position: ‘710 years after the foundation of the City, Octavian, who, according to the testament of Julius Caesar, had taken up his uncle’s estate (*hereditatem*) and *nomen*, that is, “Caesar”, and who was later called Augustus, came to Rome while still a youth, and rocked it by a civil war.’⁶⁴ It was through this civil war, and the subsequent wars he waged, that the entire empire would attain some peace and quiet at long last, which Octavian sought to ‘nurture [...] among all the *gentes*’, for instance by promulgating laws.⁶⁵ And after ‘Caesar had established a true peace through God’s decree’, Christ was born. ‘In that time no man would dare to call himself *dominus*, because the true Lord is born among mankind.’⁶⁶

It is interesting to note that, while an explicit connection between the reign of Octavian and the birth of Christ is drawn, the *CM* largely eschews Orosius’s

⁶¹ Generally, on Caesar’s reputation, see Barnes, ‘The First Emperor’, esp. p. 281, and Suerbaum, ‘The Middle Ages’, esp. p. 318, respectively.

⁶² Orosius, *Historia*, trans. by Fear, VII.2.14, p. 322.

⁶³ *CM*, p. 44: ‘Octavianus Caesar Augustus Romanorum secundus regnavit annis LVI et mensibus VI, a quo Augustis appellati reges Romanorum, quorum XV vivente Cleopatra, XLI postea vixit’. The fact that the text continues to call the Roman rulers ‘kings’ here could imply that to the author, imperium should have Christian connotations as well, or that they think that the institution of the ‘empire’ might be run by ‘kings’ all the same, or was larger than the individual regna that together made up the empire. Either way, it is significant that they are called Augustus here, not emperor.

⁶⁴ *CM*, p. 44: ‘Anno ab urbae condita DCCX, Octavianus, qui testamento Iulii Caesaris avunculi et hereditatem et nomen adsumperat, id est Caesar, qui postea Augustus est appellatus simul ut Romam adulescens venit, bellis civi[li]bus movit’. The translation given here is based on Fear’s translation of Orosius.

⁶⁵ *CM*, p. 47: ‘Anno ab urbae condita DCCLII, [Caesar] Augustus ab orientem in occidentem, ad septemtrionam in meridiam hac per totum oceanum rem publicam quam bello quesierat, pacem cum cunctis gentibus nutrire studens, leges plurimas statuit. Domini appellatione declinabit’.

⁶⁶ *CM*, p. 47: ‘Igitur anno, quo verissimam pacem ordinatione Dei Caesar conpossuisset natus est Christus [...]. Eo tempore dominum se homo appellari non ausus est, quos verus dominus inter homines natus est’.

apologetic digressions explaining how ‘Caesar’s rule had been ordained [...] entirely to prepare for the future coming of Christ’, possibly because his understanding of history and the place of the empire was shaped under entirely different circumstances.⁶⁷ Instead, the text, basing itself mostly on Eusebius and Flavius Josephus as channelled through Bede’s *Chronicle*, fleshes out the state of the world at the time of Christ’s birth: it presents additional information about the political situation in Jerusalem, gives further examples of Roman exploits throughout Europe, and briefly explains that the death of Anthony and Cleopatra is reckoned ‘by some to be the first year of the *monarche* [*sic*] of Augustus’, with the later addition ‘that is, in the sixteenth year of Augustus’.⁶⁸ If nothing else, this could be an indication that the *CU*, and by extension the *AL* and the *CM*, distinguished between ruling, and ruling alone unchallenged.⁶⁹

The development of the *imperium* is thus retold in terms that were not focused on dynastic policy or with a view towards consolidating the contemporary political situation. What was important instead were the auspicious circumstances that led to the sole rule of someone who happened to be called Caesar through his family connections, and Augustus through his conquest of and rule over various *gentes*, one of which was the Romans themselves—note, for instance, that the text highlights that the ‘kings’ of Rome are called ‘Augusti’. That this was needed so that the right circumstances for the birth of Christ (and by extension, Christendom) would be created is implied rather than explicated. Conversely, even if the ‘fall’ of the Western Empire in the late fifth century is connected to the ‘fraudulent’ death of Aetius, the fall of the city of Rome is itself hardly dwelt on: apart from a brief statement that ‘Odoacer king of the Goths gained control of Rome’, one would hardly have thought anything had gone awry. It seems more significant indeed that the narrative presented here follows the ‘fall of Rome’ immediately with the rise and conquests of Clovis, ‘who became the first Christian king out of the kings of the Franks’, in a phrase taken from *Liber historiae Francorum*.⁷⁰ There was light on the horizon: Clovis, too, ‘was called consul, or Augustus’, and crowned with

⁶⁷ Orosius, *Historia*, trans. by Fear, vi.20.4, p. 309. On the Carolingian uses of Orosius, see the articles by McKitterick and Evans and by Corradini in this volume.

⁶⁸ *CM*, pp. 45–46. An interesting addition, given the *CM*’s southern origins, is the insertion of the information, from the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, that ‘Monacius Placius’ (actually Lucius Munatius Plancus) allegedly founded the city of Lyon.

⁶⁹ Other, similar instances of the use of *monarchia* may be seen in the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, ed. by Von Simson, a. 771, p. 58; or Regino, *Chronicon*, ed. by Kurze, a. 838, p. 74.

⁷⁰ *CM*, p. 90: ‘Hic Clodoveus primus rex fuit christianus ex regibus Francorum’.

a ‘golden crown’.⁷¹ Significantly, this ends a period in the West where many candidates are being given that title in quick succession, and indeed between Clovis’s and Charlemagne’s coronation the *CM* presents *Augusti* in the Eastern Roman Empire exclusively: after Theodosius, Valentinian III (r. 423–55) is the last ruler in the West to be accorded the titles of both Caesar and Augustus.⁷² Chronologically and geographically closer to Clovis, Majorianus (r. 457–61) and Libius Severus (r. 461–65) are both mentioned on one page in the edition, signalling a certain awareness of imperial instability — even if, significantly, the *de facto* ruler Ricimer (r. 461–72) is not mentioned at all.⁷³

If the coronation of Charlemagne in 800 as included in the *CM* marked the end of a longer narrative, the issue at hand seems not to have been the restoration of the Roman Empire *per se*. Instead, the acquisition of the *nomina* needed to wield imperial power separate from its ‘Romanness’, as a precondition for the upkeep of an empire may have been the ultimate aim of the narrative. By presenting the story of how *Caesar* had become the *nomen imperatoris* in a literal sense, the *CM* played with the particular concern for titles and terminology introduced into Carolingian discourse as a result of their knowledge of the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville, while also toying with the parallels between Julius Caesar’s name, Octavian’s title, and the words used to denote imperial power.⁷⁴ Caesar had been ‘the first among the Romans to obtain the *imperium*’, and the *imperator et Augustus* Charlemagne was ‘the first of Frankish descent to be called Caesar’. The Franks had taken over both the power (Augustus) and authority (Caesar) of the Romans, but had done so almost imperceptibly. By

⁷¹ *CM*, p. 91: ‘Et preconsultu tunica platead indutus, in ecclesiae beati Martyni et coronam auream. Ab ea die tamquam consul aut Augustus est appellatus.’

⁷² Theodosius: *CM*, p. 75; Valentinian: *CM*, p. 82.

⁷³ *CM*, p. 88 On the role of Libius Severus and Majorian in the context of the ‘reign’ of Ricimer, see MacGeorge, *Late Roman Warlords*, pp. 165–261; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 13–19. Of the emperors in the East, the inclusion of the Empress Consort Sophia *augusta* (r. 574–78) is worth mentioning, especially in the context of the *AL*’s remarks about Irene for the year 800.

⁷⁴ Borst, ‘Kaisertum und Namentheorie’, p. 37. On the reception of Isidore in the Carolingian world, see the studies by Markauskas, ‘Rylands MS Latin 12’, and, in the same volume, Carlson, ‘Adoption, Adaptation, and Authority’. On p. 24 of the ‘Introduction’, pp. 11–30, the editors note that this remains ‘a massive topic in need of further study’. An ongoing NWO VENI project by Evina Steinová, entitled ‘Innovating Knowledge: Isidore’s *Etymologiae* in the Carolingian Period’, will address some of the lingering issues concerning the reception of Isidore in the early medieval West. For more information on this project see <<https://www.huygens.knaw.nl/projecten/innovating-knowledge/>> [accessed 28 October 2020], as well as Steinová, ‘Innovating knowledge’.

combining the version of Bede's *Chronica maiora* as presented by the *CU* with the specifically imperial narrative of the *AL*, the compiler of the *CM* wanted to de-emphasize the connection between Roman traditions and the newly re-established Christian *imperium* to an even greater extent than was the case in the *ARF*. In the additions made to the *AL*, in which *caesar*, *Augustus*, and *imperator* were put next to one another, the *CM* demonstrated how Charlemagne's status as emperor was not Roman *per se*. He was a spiritual successor to the Roman Caesar, but also a Christian emperor, a combination which in the end trumped any other aristocratic, Frankish, or specifically Roman identity. With his assumption of the *nomen imperatoris* he had taken over an institution that was created by the Romans, with the city of Rome acting as the 'mother' of the empire, but which had universal applications all the same.

Charlemagne and his entourage wasted no time acting on their new responsibilities: the narrative of the *AL* ends with a description of measures taken in the following years. *Missi* were sent out to right any wrongs found in the empire; new impetus was given to the moral reform of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; and the laws were reassessed and improved.⁷⁵ That 'an elephant arrived in Francia that year', as a gift from Harun al-Rashid, signified that Charlemagne's new *nomen* had been accepted by his peers.⁷⁶ The *AL* thus finish on a rather optimistic note, with a peaceful year during which Charlemagne consolidated his empire.

One of the writing goals of the *ARF* was to show how the Carolingians had integrated themselves into the erstwhile Roman Empire, and how their Frankishness had developed from one among many politicized ethnic identities into the one identity to rule them all. The combination of the *CU* and the *AL*, however, was less concerned with showing the providential history of the Franks than with showing how the pieces move into place to provide the best possible outcome for the inhabitants of a Christian empire in the world.⁷⁷ The *CM* repeats the Trojan origin myth of the Franks, for instance, but did so not to portray the Franks as supplanting the Romans, but rather to show them as equals, brothers who had taken a different route westwards after the destruction of Troy.⁷⁸ Obviously, the outcome given was the best possible result, but it

⁷⁵ *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. by Katz, a. 802, pp. 45–46.

⁷⁶ *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. by Katz, a. 802, p. 46: 'Et eo anno pervenit elefans in Francia'. On this elephant, see Hack, *Abul Abaz*, McKitterick, 'Migration of Ideas', pp. 1–4, and Ottewill-Soulsby, 'Carolingian Diplomacy with the Islamic World', pp. 64–71.

⁷⁷ Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 410–43.

⁷⁸ Cf. for a similar strategy employed in another historiographical narrative, Dörler, 'The *Liber historiae Francorum*'; Yavuz, 'From Caesar to Charlemagne'.

was not due to any misplaced sense of Frankish supremacy. It was a subtle difference with alternative versions of the Carolingian success story, but a difference nonetheless. The *Franci* play a pivotal role in the story of the *CM*, but their role took a back seat to the development of the *ecclesia* and the *imperium*, and lacks the politicized nature of, for example, the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and its continuator, or the *Liber historiae Francorum*.⁷⁹ Even though both of these texts have been used in the *CM*, their narratives had been stripped of any Neustrian or Burgundian favouritism.⁸⁰ After all, there was no need for that anymore once Charlemagne had assumed the name of emperor.

The choice to include the optimistic narrative of the *AL* in the *CM* may have been a matter of availability for the compiler. For instance, if the *AL* were indeed first composed in the circle around archbishop Richbod of Trier, as suggested by Heinrich Fichtenau and later, albeit more cautiously, by Rosamond McKitterick, Benedict of Aniane may have heard of the initiative as they were both working against Adoptionism, or even through Alcuin, who had been a teacher to Richbod and a friend to Benedict.⁸¹ This may explain why the Lorsch version of Frankish history made its way south. However, going by the ties between the court and Aniane at the time, and the network around Aniane, the monasteries in the area must also have had access to different visions of the Frankish past. There were many options available, and the possibilities to engage in a dialogue with authorities past and present, 'to create new *Spielräume* for the compatibility of identities, laws and histories' were still as great as ever.⁸² The compiler must have found something in the *AL* that they felt completed the narrative started by Bede and the *CU*, and which accorded with the overarching narrative created by the passage of time itself. Assuming he had access to a 'completed' version of the *AL*, the choice seems to have been deliberate. The message the compiler of the *CM* wanted to convey was that the *imperium* that happened to be held by the Carolingian dynasty was subservient to the observation that this was an unavoidable conclusion of God's plan as it unfolded with the passage of time.⁸³

⁷⁹ Kats and Claszen, 'Chronicon Moissiacense Maius', I, 86–88.

⁸⁰ Cf. Lifshitz, 'The Vicissitudes', pp. 375–77 and 383–84.

⁸¹ Fichtenau, 'Abt Richbod'; McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 109–10.

⁸² Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, p. 360.

⁸³ See also Van Espelo, 'A Testimony of Carolingian Rule?'

The Lessons of the Fathers: New Models for Old Testament Kings

After the compilation leading up to Charlemagne's imperial rule had finished, the *CM* continues for another fifteen years of 'original' input. This is marked by a rather jarring break between the old and the new generations. Instead of finishing, as the *AL* had done, with the statement that Charlemagne 'let the year 803 pass without a campaign',⁸⁴ the *CM* immediately continues with a description of the conquest of Barcelona by Louis the Pious.⁸⁵ It was business as usual once again; the narrative of this final part shifts towards the southern part of the empire to a greater extent than was the case in the preceding compilation, but this does not mean it became a local chronicle. Attention continues to be given to all frontiers, with the *Franci's* decisions about the future of the empire forming the ties that bind it together. The *CM* was thus part of an ongoing conversation about the past between the court and the various places where histories were written. Gathering and ordering information was not the prerogative of a single central court; narratives were composed everywhere, in a way that made sense to an audience that may have been in the periphery, but that was by no means marginal. Even in Septimania, there were monks invested in the fate of the empire.⁸⁶

This becomes clearest if we briefly look at the two imperial inaugurations in this final part of the *CM*. The first one occurs in the entry for the year 813, in the palace of Aachen. It starts when Charlemagne convened his entourage in Aachen to discuss 'matters of necessity to God's church and the Christian people'.⁸⁷ Immediately afterwards, a council was held during which Louis is confirmed in his new position as the heir apparent. It is a passage that deserves to be quoted in full:

⁸⁴ *Annales Laureshamenses*, ed. by Katz, a. 803, p. 46: 'et ipse sine hoste fecit eodem anno.'

⁸⁵ *CM* a. 803, at p. 142. The switch occurs on fol. 51^v of BnF, MS lat. 4886, but (perhaps owing to the fact that this copy was made much later) there is no indication that a 'new' section begins apart from the same rubrication used throughout the text. On the siege and conquest of Barcelona and its significance, see Bachrach, 'Military Organization', pp. 24–26; Salrach i Marés, *El Procés*, I, 9–26 and 32–39; Collins, *Caliphs and Kings*, pp. 224–33; generally, see Smith, '*Fines imperii*', pp. 188–89 and Chandler, 'Carolingian Catalonia', as well as Chandler's monograph, *Carolingian Catalonia*, pp. 60–110.

⁸⁶ Collins, *Caliphs and Kings*, pp. 233–37.

⁸⁷ *CM* a. 813, p. 145: 'Et convenerunt ad eum episcopi, abbates, comites et senatus Francorum ad imperatorem in Aquis. Et ibidem constituerunt capitula numero XLVII, de causis, quae in necessariae ecclesiae Dei et christiano populo.'

After that council, the bishops, abbots, counts, and magnates of the Franks gathered to make his son, king Louis, emperor. Everyone agreed in equal measure, saying that this was fitting, and it pleased the entirety of the *populus*. And with the consent and acclamation of all the peoples he appointed his son Louis emperor with him, and conferred the imperial authority (*imperium*) upon him by means of a golden crown, with the people shouting their acclamation: 'Long live emperor Louis!' And there was much rejoicing among the people that day. The emperor Charles also blessed the Lord, saying: 'Blessed are You, o Lord God, Who has given a heir to sit on my throne this day, my eyes even seeing it' [I Chronicles 29.10 and I Kings 1.48]. He instructed his son, that he ought to keep the precepts of the Lord in all things. He conferred the right of rulership (*ius regni*) upon him, and commended his sons, Drogo [of Metz], Theoderic, and Hugo. And when all had been concluded he gave everyone leave to depart, each back to his place, but himself remained in the palace of Aachen.⁸⁸

Compared to the account of Charlemagne's coronation in 800, there are many meaningful differences. The most striking of these is that Charlemagne had not actually been crowned, according to the *CM*. Instead, he had assumed the *nomen imperatoris* and was 'consecrated' as such by Pope Leo III, in effect taking on a new function and a new set of responsibilities.⁸⁹ In a similar way, Louis had been 'anointed' king of Aquitaine by Pope Hadrian I in 781, for instance.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *CM* a. 813, p. 146: 'Post haec consilium cum prefatis episcopis et abbatibus et comitibus et maiores natu Francorum, ut constitueret filium suum, Lodovicum regem, ymperatorem. Qui omnes pariter consenserunt, dicentes hoc dignum esse, omnique populo placuit. Et cum consensu et adclamatione omnium populorum, Lodovicum, filium suum, constituit imperatorem secum ac per coronam auream tradidit illi imperium, populis aclamantibus et dicentibus: "vivat imperator Lodovicus". Et facta est laetitia magna in populo in illa die. Nam et ipse imperator Karolus benedixit dominum dicens: "Benedictus es domine Deus [I Chronicles 29.10], qui dedisti hodie sedentem in solio meo, videntibus oculis meis" [I Kings 1.48]. Docuit autem eum pater, ut in omnibus preceptum domini custodiret. Tradiditque ei ius regni commendavitque ei filios suos Drocone, Theuderico et Hugone. Et cum omnia perfecisset, dimisit unum[quem]que, ut haberet in locum suum. Ipse autem resedit in Aquis palatium.' Interestingly, in BnF, MS Lat 4886, this occasion is marked by a comment in the margin that was probably added later (by the same scribe who composed the papal list at the end), reading 'karolus magnus constituit filium suum Lodovicum imperatorem', whereas on the same page a gloss appears marking the death of Charlemagne ('karolus imperator obiit anno regni sui xlvii'), which, owing to the frame drawn around it, appears planned and added by the main scribe. This might indicate a later interest in highlighting dynastic continuity rather than the 'end of an era'.

⁸⁹ Cf. also the remarks on Louis's designation as heir to the *imperium* by Beumann, '*Nomen imperatoris*', pp. 647–48 (although it should be noted that he bases his conclusions on the description provided by Thegan).

⁹⁰ *CM*, p. 123. Classen, 'Karl der Große', pp. 110–21; Kasten, *Königssöhne*, pp. 136–40; Werner, 'Hludovicus Augustus', pp. 18–19.

To the author of the *CM*, these were liminal rituals that were not only supposed to have changed the identity of the person undergoing them, but which changed the office they held as well. They were reflective of the order governing Carolingian courtly life.⁹¹ When Charlemagne set a crown on the head of his son in 813, he transferred his *imperium* by means of the imposition of *regalia* symbolizing the transfer of authority within the same family, and he did so publicly.⁹² Similarly, when Louis was ‘blessed’ by Pope Stephen IV, who visited the Frankish court shortly after his own consecration in 816, the *CM* tells us that the pontiff had also brought a ‘golden crown’ with him: a public affirmation that Louis held the *ecclesia* in addition to the *imperium*?⁹³ Was this a symbol that Louis had been crowned not only by his *pater*, but by a representative of the *mater imperii* as well? Was it an echo of Clovis’s elevation to the status of *Augustus*, which was confirmed with the imposition of the only other *corona aurea* in the preceding text — and which might thus emphasize a link with the Roman Empire to those who picked up on the reference?⁹⁴ Whatever the case, any remaining doubts as to Louis’s legitimacy would now have been quelled. Whereas he had been made co-emperor by his father, the intervention of the pope, two years after Charlemagne’s death in 814, made him an emperor in his own right. This added emphasis may be more than just narrative consistency for the composer of the *CM*: the many different coronations and unctions, as well as the many different perspectives from which these rituals have been described, show that the establishment of imperial legitimacy was still in full development at the time.⁹⁵

While the coronation as such is an interesting tool for publicly conferring legitimacy onto Louis, it is equally noteworthy that the narrative emphasizes

⁹¹ Althoff, ‘Rituale’; but see Buc, ‘Ritual and Interpretation’, pp. 199–201.

⁹² Schieffer, *Die Karolinger*, pp. 118–19.

⁹³ *CM*, a. 816, p. 148: ‘Successitque illi in sacerdotium domnus Stephanus et in ipso anno, ipse apostolicus Stephanus venit ad domnum imperatorem Ludovicum in Francia. Invenitque eum apud Remis civitatem et adtulit illi coronam auream. Suscepitque eum imperator cum magno honore benedixitque ipsum imperatorem et inposuit illi coronam auream, quam adtulerat in capite’; more generally, see Garipzanov, *Symbolic Language*, pp. 46–53. Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmen*, ed. by Faral, lib. 2, ll. 1076–77, pp. 84–85, claims that this crown had originally belonged to Constantine, but this is not taken over by the composers of the *CM*. See also Becher, ‘*Corona*’.

⁹⁴ See above. The *CM*, p. 91, copied a fragment from the *Liber historiae Francorum*, which itself was a summary of the account of Gregory of Tours, who called this *corona* a *diadema* instead. The story of Clovis’s ‘coronation’ left traces throughout Frankish historiography, which still need to be resolved: see Mathisen, ‘Clovis’, pp. 101–12.

⁹⁵ Buc, ‘Political Ritual’.

the paternal authority with which this happens. This was an obvious choice: after all, it was the first imperial succession in the West in nearly four centuries, and it had already been established within the *CM* that this depended on dynastic legitimacy as much as on acceptance by the populace.⁹⁶ However, instead of using the Roman model yet again, the compiler this time has recourse to an even more venerable source: the Book of Kings. Specifically, he used a quotation that was taken from David's proclamation of Solomon as his heir.

This is not surprising. When it came to the development of Carolingian models for proper kingship, the Old Testament was limitless resource, whether it concerned Charlemagne's identification with king Josiah in his *Admonitio generalis*, or his nickname at court, David.⁹⁷ The choice for this passage even was prefigured in the prologue to the *CM*, which comes after Bede's calculation of the six ages of the world, and presents a moral explanation of what each of the ages actually means — up to and including the seventh and the eighth ages, after the resurrection.

The third and fourth ages are defined by the Old Testament kings: the evening of the third age is described by the author:

Evening fell over this age, when the *populus* of Israel, neglecting the command (*imperio*) of God, desired a human king (*rex*) to be placed above them. And the first they elected was Saul, who apostasised from God, and whom the Philistines together with a large part of that same *populus* (= Israel) killed.

This is then followed immediately by

The morning of the fourth age came victoriously and [saw] an illustrious kingdom (*regnum*) due to the triumphs of King David; and also the glorious and peaceful empire (*ymperium*) of his son Salomon as well as the miraculous and mystical construction of the Temple.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Generally, see Pohl, 'Creating Cultural Resources.'

⁹⁷ *Admonitio generalis*, ed. by Mordek, Zechiel-Eckes, and Glatthaar; De Jong, 'Charlemagne's Church', pp. 114–16; Garrison, 'The Social World of Alcuin.'

⁹⁸ *CM*, p. 3: 'Cuius vespera fuit, cum populus Israhel, Dei imperio neglecto [*sic*], regem sibi hominem superesse maluissent. Primumque elegerunt apostatam a Deo Saulem, quem Philistei cum magna ipsius populi partem [*sic*] peri[merunt]. Quartae aetatis mane fuit victorialae et triumphis clarum David regnum gloriosumque et pacificum filii eius Salomonis ymperium templeque mirabilis, ad mistica constructio.' On this and other passages, see in more detail Kramer, 'The Bede Goes On' (including an improved transcription and translation of the entire introduction to the *CM* on pp. 707–711). This introduction is referred to as '§ 9a' by Sören Kaschke in his contribution to this volume.

It is, in other words, the age in which the *populus* elected to put a man between them and the Lord, adding a layer of authority to the covenant which had until then been between God and his chosen people directly.⁹⁹ In many ways, this is the *fons et origo* of all ideas about royal responsibilities that permeated Carolingian political discourse, and David and Solomon, for all their faults, stood out as shining examples of how to be as good a ruler as the human condition would allow.¹⁰⁰ Conversely, when the fourth age ends, this is because ‘that same *populus* committed sins with the king they had at the time’, leading to the Babylonian captivity: a stern reminder that good kings build temples and keep their people in line, but bad kings lead to sinfulness and cause their people to suffer.¹⁰¹

Solomon is given pride of place at the end of the prologue, when he is cited as the source for an otherwise unattributed quote that is very loosely based on Proverbs 31. 21: ‘And so, Solomon said: “*All those who wear two layers of clothing* will rejoice endlessly and happily together with their king, whom they have at the time in this world served loyally”’.¹⁰² Whereas the Proverb upon which it is based uses these two layers of clothing as a sign of a well-run household, the lines that follow explain them in eschatological and even apocalyptic terms, as indications that these people would be clothed in white in Heaven as on Earth. Equally significant, however, is the interdependence between the worldly rulers, who provide the clothes, and the faithful, whose salvation would be dependent on their loyalty to him. Only when both did what was expected of them would they be able to rejoice together (*congaudere*) in Heaven. Wrapped in this eschatological narrative was thus an appeal to the loyalty of the readers to their rightful ruler, who would be revealed at the end of the work.¹⁰³

All this leads up to the reign of Solomon himself, which, according to the narrative in the actual *CM*, prefigured the ‘perfection’ of the ‘Church of Christ in this world’. This in turn prefigured the coronation of Louis by Charlemagne

⁹⁹ Hamilton, ‘The Creation of Saul’s Royal’, pp. 148–50.

¹⁰⁰ See Nelson, ‘Bad Kingship’.

¹⁰¹ *CM*, p. 3: ‘Q(uonia)m idem populus peccatis agentibus cum rege, quem tunc habuerunt, in Babiloniam captivitatem ductus est eorumque metropolis Iherusalem, cum templo et omnibus privatis publicis aedificiis, spoliata est igneque consumpta’. Meens, ‘Politics’.

¹⁰² *CM*, p. 4: ‘Sicque et Salomon ait: “Omnes vestiti duplicibus cum suo rege, cui simul in hoc seculo fidelitero serviebant sine fine feliciter congaudebant”. De quo eorum duplici gaudio etiam in apocalipsis legitur’. In the book of Proverbs, this saying is attributed to the mother of the unknown King Lemuel.

¹⁰³ See the reflections by Flaig, ‘Is Loyalty a Favor?’, as well as the historicizing approaches by Depreux, ‘Les Carolingiens’, and Esders, ‘Treueidleistung’.

in 813.¹⁰⁴ The culmination of the scene occurs when Charlemagne takes on the role of king David, expressing his happiness at being able to see his heir come to the throne. Using this quotation actually gives the scene an ominous subtext, as the words in the Book of Kings are spoken by King David as he is ‘advanced in years’, and the court is rife with speculation about his successor.¹⁰⁵ They are reported to Adonijah, Solomon’s rival, by his friend Jonathan, and the message about Solomon’s anointment ends up ‘spreading terror’ among Adonijah’s household. His dissatisfaction with this decision even ends up in a rebellion and Adonijah’s execution. Set up this way, the presentation in the *CM* could even be seen to foreshadow Bernard of Italy’s revolt and subsequent demise five years later, which could be a clue as to the date of redaction of this final part of the chronicle.¹⁰⁶ However, the wording of this passage and the way God himself is addressed also invokes the same scene as described in 1 Chronicles 29.10, in which David is in fact depicted as giving a speech ‘before all the people’.¹⁰⁷ The combination of these two biblical interpretations of the same event, which appears to be a deliberate choice by the compiler, thus states in unequivocal terms that Louis is the true and legitimate heir to the Frankish Empire, supported by tradition and biblical examples, as well as by the aristocracy and his father’s blessing.¹⁰⁸ He was supposed to protect his family, but also obey his father’s wishes and heed his lessons. The narrative of the *CM* thus established an empire and a dynasty, giving them legitimate power as well as hard-earned authority.

Four years later, in 817, Louis would crown his eldest son Lothar in strikingly similar terms, something which is even emphasized when the text states that Louis sought permission from the people to have one of his sons rule (*imperare*) alongside him, ‘just as Charles, his father, had done to himself’.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ *CM*, p. 21: ‘quo in hoc seculo Christi hedificatur acclesia, quae in futuro perficitur, VII annis perfecit et septimo octavi anni mense dedicavit’.

¹⁰⁵ 1 Kings 1.

¹⁰⁶ On this affair, see, among others, Depreux, ‘Das Königtum Bernards von Italien’; Jarnut, ‘Kaiser Ludwig der Fromme’; Noble, ‘The Revolt of King Bernard’.

¹⁰⁷ 1 Chronicles 29.10: ‘et benedixit Domino coram universa multitudine et ait benedictus es Domine Deus Israhel patris nostri ab aeterno in aeternum’.

¹⁰⁸ On this method of picking, choosing, and recombining biblical verses to make a point, see, for example, Heil, ‘Labourers’; Kramer, ‘Justified and Ancient’.

¹⁰⁹ The passages are extremely close: *CM* a. 817, p. 149: ‘Tunc omni populo placuit, ut ipso se viventem constitueret unum ex filiis suis imperare, sicut Karolus, pater eius, fecerat ipsum. Tunc tribus diebus ieiunatum est ab omni populo. [H]ac laetaniae factae post haec iam dictus imperator, Clotarium, qui erat maior natum, ymperatorem elegit. [H]ac per coranam auream

They acquiesce, and Louis elects Lothar, his eldest son, marking him out as the heir apparent by, once again, a golden crown and his father's variation on David's blessing to Solomon. Most noticeably, this ceremony lacked both papal involvement and the instruction of the newly crowned co-emperor by his father, but it stresses a familial connection by adding that Lothar, Louis's heir, came from the seed of his father.¹¹⁰ Other than that, the transfer of the *imperium* by means of a crown, the *acclamatio*, and the blessing of the Lord by the reigning emperor in terms echoing the coronation of Solomon by David in the Book of Kings are all there. Perhaps the person responsible for this passage thought that Lothar would still have many years left to learn the tricks of the trade. Perhaps this was an acknowledgment that, within the narrative, the *imperium Christianum* had become an institutional reality, and the father-son dynamic was only vital insofar as it concerned the first new emperor in the West and his immediate heir. Within the narrative of the *CM*, the continuation of the empire would be guaranteed by divine approval, as implied by the biblical examples provided.¹¹¹

If, in the context of the optimistic view of imperial authority presented in the *AL* and the *CM*, *rex* seems to be a rather neutral term, denoting people in a position of authority, the elevation from a *regnum* to an *imperium* entailed a lot of added responsibilities. Throughout the *CM*, especially in the parts dealing with Roman and Frankish history, God-fearing people made good rulers, and good rulers took the responsibility given to them seriously, echoing the pattern in the Chronicles and the Books of Kings of the Old Testament.¹¹² In that context, both *regnum* and *imperium* are rather neutral terms, and merely denote the power individuals wielded over their subjects. It is an observation that is made visible in the Prologue of the *CM* already. There, the evening of the fifth

tradidit illi imperium, populis acclamantibus et dicentibus: "vivat imperator Clotarius". Facta est autem leticia magna in populo in die illo, et ipse imperator benedixit Deum dicens: "Benedictus es domine Deus meus, qui dedisti hodie *ex semine meo* consedentem in solio meo, videntibus oculis meis [I Kings 1.48]".

¹¹⁰ Curiously, this addition of *ex semine meo* only occurs in BnF, MS lat. 4886. In BnF, MS lat. 5941, it has been added to Charlemagne's speech instead. On the (lack of a) papal connection, see Mierau, *Kaiser und Papst*, pp. 48–49; Lothar would be confirmed by Pope Paschal I in 823. Generally, see Kasten, *Königsöhne*, pp. 162–70.

¹¹¹ Werner, 'Hludovicus Augustus', pp. 28–29. See also Wendling, 'Die Erhebung', and also Schramm, 'Die Anerkennung Karls des Großen', pp. 510–11, who has an altogether more pessimistic view of the reign of Louis the Pious (although he does grant that the court's outlook around 814 must have been optimistic as well).

¹¹² Cf. Carr and Conway, *An Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 131–36.

age is marked by the fact that, ‘while there was no legitimate ruler (*princeps*), Herod, from another people (*gens*), received the authority (*imperium*), and polluted it with many injustices and bloody deeds’: the point was not to employ neatly defined political vocabularies, but to denote the connection between the exercise of power and the fulfilment of the prophecies that heralded the arrival of Christ and the beginning of the sixth age.¹¹³ Near the end of the *CM*, for the year 803, the *CM* similarly describes the leader of the Saracens in Barcelona as a *rex* who became a subject of the *ymperator* Charlemagne.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

In the *CM*, controlling a ‘territorial’ empire was not a precondition to hold *imperium*.¹¹⁵ At its core, it was a form of power over a multitude of people, but this was the type of power that came with an ever greater responsibility.¹¹⁶ Or, just as Isidore in his *Etymologies* defined a king only as someone who rules rightly, holding an *imperium* did not make one automatically worthy of the *nomen imperatoris*. It required constant piety to live up to that name, foreshadowed by David and Solomon, created by the Romans, and ultimately blessed by the birth of Christ and the beginning of the sixth age. For the composer of the *CM*, the establishment of the Carolingian Empire was not a consequence of the rise of the dynasty. In this version, the *regnum Francorum* had already passed to them a generation earlier, through a series of fortuitous circumstances, and at the time of writing, this needed no further vindication.¹¹⁷ The Carolingians had adapted to the circumstances, and acquired all the right prerequisites to seize their *imperium*. Indeed, Louis’s reign would be challenged within only three years, by the rebellion of Bernard of Italy in 817–18. Like Octavian and Solomon before him, the challenge put before him would be to hold onto it,

¹¹³ *CM*, p. 3: ‘Quintae aetatis [...] vespera fuit, cum secundum prophetiam patriarchae, legitimo principe deficiente, Herodes aliena eiusdem gentis susciperet ymperium, multisque illud iniustis et sanguinariis operibus maculasset.’

¹¹⁴ *CM*, a. 803, p. 144: ‘Regem vero civitas illius Saton, victum compedibus, misit ad patrem suum Karolum regem, ymperatorem in Francia’; conversely, Ermoldus, *Carmen*, ed. by Faral, lib. 1, l. 350, p. 30, calls the Muslim leader of Barcelona a *princeps*.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Alberi, ‘The Evolution of Alcuin’s Concept’.

¹¹⁶ Nelson, ‘Charlemagne and Empire’.

¹¹⁷ At least, not in the *Chronicon Moissiacense Maius* — the Carolingian family did go to lengths to legitimize their usurpation by means of other texts. See for example Strothmann, ‘Das Königtum Pippins’.

or, in narrative terms: he would immediately prove his worth and legitimacy by rising to the occasion and subduing any threat to his reign. The Carolingians thus perfectly fit the model of rulership that was described in the *CM*. They did not commission it, and neither was the *CM*'s narrative tailor-made to suit their dynastic needs. Rather, it was intended to be compatible with the model of rulership represented by the Carolingian court. The Carolingians were, in short, idealized because they happened to be in power; in the narrative, they did not attain power because they were ideal rulers, but because the composer had to deal with a given reality, and adjust their idealizations accordingly.¹¹⁸

The 'ancient chronicle' discovered by Nicolas-Joseph Foucault is a historiographical composition about the place of the Carolingian Empire within the history of the world. The narrative of Charlemagne's adoption of the *nomen imperatoris*, or of the way he conferred this title to his son, were as much concerned with the small world of the Carolingian court, as with the large world that had been built up around them. In order to present an image of that world, the *CM* contains a great number of choices made by everybody involved in its composition, leading to an idiosyncratic text that, more than anything, represented both the multiplicity of ideas at the disposal of any early medieval historiographer, and the way they converged in the Carolingian era. Instead of creating a narrative of authority that explicitly dealt with the Franks as the heirs of the Trojans or as a 'New Israel', or with the establishment of the Carolingian dynasty as the rulers of this people, the composer/compiler of the *CM* put *ecclesia* and *imperium* first, as recurring characters in a history that aspired to be truly universal. The fact that things were going so well at the time when the composer of the *CM* was making his yearly entries to the work was only partially due to the competence of the Franks and their Carolingian rulers. They ended up at the right place in the right time to renew the empire, but they should not forget that this was all part of God's plan.

This narrative fits with the context of the late eleventh century, when BnF, MS lat. 4886 was copied, as much as with the early ninth century, when it was first compiled. At the time of our earliest manuscript witness, computus and the passage of time was still as relevant as ever, and the imperial stability created by the Carolingians might even have been looked at with some nostalgia.¹¹⁹ Around the start of the reign of Louis the Pious, a rhetorical strategy that favoured empire and *ecclesia* over specific ethnic or elite identifications would

¹¹⁸ See the opening remarks by Pössel 'The Consolation of Community', pp. 1–5.

¹¹⁹ See for example Remensyder, *Remembering Kings Past*; Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory*, pp. 13–40.

have been entirely appropriate too, given that the compilation was developed in a peripheral context in (formerly Visigothic) Septimania. The *Chronicon Moissiacense* was about integration, about showing that, among the many choices available, there remained a correct way of doing things. Local details, such as the additional perspectives on the Aquitanian campaign waged by the Carolingians in the 760s, or the information provided about Saracen incursions into the region, point towards the origin of the narrative in its current form, but should in no way be taken to mean that this was intended to be a chronicle with a strictly local outlook. In the end, it is the broad scope of the text, rather than the incidental details, which gave it its unique flavour and which shows the terms in which the *CM* wanted to conceptualize the empire as it took shape around him. His narrative would show how Roman traditions and Christian ideals were among the most important signs that time was progressing in the way it should, guided by God, towards that inevitable end.

If the narrative of the *CM* sought to come to terms with the Carolingian success story, the vision of history contained in its pages likewise was the result of choices made by the author concerning the past he wanted to present. Local traditions and imperial preferences vied for attention; various streams of information that came together in various *scriptoria* had to be harmonized; and various sources, each with their own goals and agendas, had to be taken into account. The end result was a text as turbulent as history itself, with rulers continuously making sure that their realms were secure and at peace. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the final entry in the *CM*, detailing three campaigns Louis is coordinating simultaneously, ends with what almost seems like a sigh of relief that at the end of the day, *terra quievit*.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ See the final full entry in the *CM*, a. 818, p. 150.

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