“The Gentle Voices of Teachers”
FRONTISPIECE. School of Tours: The Jerome frontispiece from the First Bible of Charles the Bald. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 1, fol. 3v. Photo: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.
"The Gentle Voices of Teachers"

Aspects of Learning in the Carolingian Age

Edited by
Richard E. Sullivan

Ohio State University Press
Columbus
# Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS vii

PREFACE ix

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS xiii

1 Introduction: Factors Shaping Carolingian Studies 1
   Richard E. Sullivan

2 The Context of Cultural Activity in the Carolingian Age 51
   Richard E. Sullivan

3 The Pursuit of Knowledge in Carolingian Europe 106
   John J. Contreni

4 Carolingian Chant: Roman, Frankish-Roman, Frankish 142
   Richard L. Crocker

5 Edition, Translation, and Exegesis: The Carolingians and the
   Bible 171
   Bernice M. Kaczynski

6 Carolingian Art and Politics 186
   Lawrence Nees

7 Tradition and Learning in Search of Ideology:
   The Libri Carolini 227
   Thomas F. X. Noble
8 Conclusion: Visions of Carolingian Education, Past, Present, and Future 261
DAVID GANZ

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 285

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS 337

INDEX OF MANUSCRIPTS CITED 339

INDEX 341
Illustrations

Frontispiece  School of Tours: The Jerome
frontispiece from the First Bible of Charles the Bald  ii

1  Court school of Charles the Bald: St. Jerome
   translating the Psalms  178

2  Scriptorum of Saint Gall: the quadripartite
   Psalter of Bishop Salomon III  180

3  Portrait coin of Charlemagne (obverse)  187

4  Utrecht Psalter: a church council  188

5  Dagulf Psalter: ivory covers  190

6  Gospel Book of Gundohinus: Christ in
   Majesty  192

7  Ivory book cover: Christ trampling on the asp,
   basilisk, lion, and dragon  196

8  Ivory book cover from Lorsch: Christ between
   two angels  197

9  Early Christian ivory diptych panel (Paris)  199

10 Early Christian ivory diptych panel (Berlin)  199

11 Ivory cover of the Psalter of Charles the Bald:
    David and Bathsheba before Nathan  203

12 Illustration from the Bible of Charles the Bald at
    San Paolo fuori le mura, Rome: Solomon seated
    upon the throne  211
13  Lothair crystal: Scenes from the life of Susanna  213

14  Carolingian coin (reverse of fig. 3): image of a Roman temple  216
In a poem written after his departure in 796 from his “cell,” his “sweet, beloved dwelling” at the royal court at Aachen to assume leadership of the abbey of St. Martin of Tours, Alcuin said in praise of his former habitat: “In you the gentle voices of teachers could once be heard / expounding with their hallowed lips the books of Wisdom” (qtd. from Godman, Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance, pp. 124–25). It is from his reflection on what was obviously a satisfying season in his illustrious career that the title of this book has been borrowed. Such an expropriation is entirely fitting, for the essays that constitute this volume are indeed primarily about the “voices of teachers” expounding on their search for the wisdom that would motivate and guide right action, a quest that played a major role in shaping the history of eighth- and ninth-century western Europe. The authors of these studies address many matters related to teaching and learning in the large sense: the milieu in which teaching and learning occurred; who, what, and how the masters tried to teach; what material and cultural resources they drew upon in their effort to discharge their responsibility in society; and the impact their efforts had on the world in which they practiced their magisterial métier.

In the final analysis, each of these essays speaks to a particular facet of Carolingian history that must always hold a central place in the attention of scholars seeking to understand that distant age: the revival of learning. With due allowance for poetic license, Alcuin very likely consciously chose to speak of the “gentle” voices who nurtured that renewal. He knew well enough, and modern historians know even better, that there was much about the Carolingian world, including affairs at the court in Aachen, that
was anything but gentle. That world was filled with wars, murder, pillaging, oppression, injustice, intrigue, deceit, treachery—and almost everything else that might stand in opposition to gentleness. Contemporaries who described the Carolingian world talked much about these darker aspects of their society, and modern historians are often tempted to dwell at even greater length on such matters. Alcuin was surely aware that, in his violent world, the voices of the Carolingian masters sounded a different note, a note that provided whatever semblance of civility and whatever hope of improvement could be found in those times. And modern Carolingianists know equally well that unless they hear and comprehend the "gentle voices" of the masters of the eighth and ninth centuries, they will never fathom what was essential about Carolingian history or what constituted the vital heritage bestowed by that society on succeeding ages. It is the echo of those voices that the authors of these essays have listened for and attempted to translate into an idiom that has meaning for an audience living twelve centuries later, during another season when gentleness and civility are in short supply.

The studies that constitute the core of this book (chapters 2–7) derive from presentations that were originally made at a conference devoted to the general topic "Learning in the Age of the Carolingians," organized by the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at The Ohio State University in February 1989. Since this symposium was intended to engage the interest and to expand the intellectual horizons of an audience of non-specialists, each presenter consciously sought to frame his or her discourse on Carolingian learning in terms that would reflect solid scholarship expressed in an idiom that members of an educated audience could readily comprehend.

The reception accorded the papers suggested to the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and to the presenters that their publication might serve a useful purpose in informing both scholars and general readers. In response to this decision to publish the essays, the authors modified their oral presentations in order to enrich and expand upon the original treatment and to provide the scholarly apparatus required to support their interpretations of various aspects of Carolingian cultural activity. In making these revisions, each author has attempted to honor the spirit of the original symposium by maintaining a level of discourse suitable to a general audience while at the same time rendering due attention to the latest and best scholarship concerned with Carolingian culture. To the six essays that constitute the core of this volume an introduction and a conclusion have been added, each especially prepared to focus attention
on ideological and methodological issues affecting how contemporary scholars approach the Carolingian age, to highlight crucial concerns addressed by all the essays, to assess the results of this collective enterprise, and to chart the direction that future inquiry into Carolingian cultural history might take.

A selective bibliography of modern secondary materials, compiled from works cited by the several authors of the essays, has been appended. Its content perhaps needs a word of explanation. It combines two elements that may strike some as an odd mix.

The bulk of the works cited consist of studies devoted to various aspects of Carolingian cultural history in the proper sense of that term; the inclusion of such material needs little explanation. In no sense does this compilation provide a complete guide to the vast literature devoted to Carolingian thought and expression. The titles listed will, however, serve to demonstrate to experts the scholarly foundations undergirding the investigations that produced the studies included in this volume. More important, it is hoped that this component of the bibliography will provide a convenient guide to the basic literature that will be useful to those who are beginning the serious study of Carolingian history.

Interspersed with these items treating cultural history in a specific sense are works concerned with broad intellectual currents and historiographical issues, works that provide insight into how the past has been and is now viewed, that seek to open new vistas on how it should be reconstructed, and that try to clarify why contact with the past is important to the present world. The inclusion of this kind of bibliographical material in a work specifically devoted to Carolingian cultural history seems justified for a rather obvious reason: the nature of the past that historians discover and delineate is in crucial ways defined by the questions they ask about the past and the methods they use to recapture it. Those questions emerge from the way the world in which they live understands the human condition and the processes that determine the operation of human communities. Likewise, the techniques employed to explore the past are decisively shaped by what the contemporary world believes knowledge to be and how it is acquired. It follows that those who read what historians write about any segment of the past will have a fuller understanding of that past if they are aware of conceptual and methodological parameters encompassing historical inquiry in the contemporary world. In effect, the bibliography seeks to engage those who use it in a mutually interlocking intellectual process: learning what happened in the past and understanding how and why investigators arrive at that knowledge. Perhaps a greater awareness of the
latter dimension of historianship will serve to stimulate and enrich Caro­lingian studies.

Collectively, the authors of the essays in this volume wish to thank the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at OSU not only for sponsoring the conference that occasioned these essays but also for its support in seeing this volume into print. They are particularly in the debt of Dr. Christian Zacher, who was director of the Center at the time the conference on Carolingian learning was held and the decision to publish this volume was made, and who since has become Associate Dean of the College of Humanities at OSU. The counsel of Professor Joseph H. Lynch of the Department of History at OSU was invaluable. The staff of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies provided invaluable assistance, especially in arranging the original conference. No less valuable was the support lent to this project by former Dean G. Michael Riley of the College of Humanities at OSU and by Dean John Eadie of the College of Arts and Letters at Michigan State University. The volume benefited greatly from the expert guidance pertaining to numerous matters provided by the staff of The Ohio State University Press, especially Charlotte Dihoff, Acquisitions Editor, and Ruth Melville, Managing Editor. The authors are also grateful for the suggestions offered by the members of the audience at the conference.

As editor of this volume, I want to extend my special thanks to my colleagues. All of them listened with remarkable forbearance to suggestions for changes to successive versions of their essays; the response to those suggestions was invariably constructive (although not always what the editor expected). All accepted with good grace innumerable petty corrections imposed in order to achieve stylistic uniformity and standardization of the scholarly apparatus accompanying each essay. Most gratifying of all was the effort of each author to achieve not only the highest scholarly standards possible in discoursing on some aspect of Carolingian learning but also a lucid level of discourse suited to a general audience. That commitment to scholarly excellence and to intelligibility has nurtured a sense of gratification in being associated with this project—to hear again, as it were, the "gentle voices of teachers" still searching for and propounding the wisdom encased in ancient books.

East Lansing, Michigan

January 1995

R.E.S.
Abbreviations

CC cont. med.  Corpus Christianorum continuatio medievalis, vol. 1–. Turnhout, 1971–.

CCSL  Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 1–. Turnhout, 1953–.

LC  Libri Carolini sive Caroli Magni capitulare de imaginibus, ed. Hubert Bastgen, MGH, Concilia 2, Supplementum (Hannover, 1924).


MGH  Monumenta Germaniae Historica

Capit.  Legum Sectio II: Capitularia regum francorum, 2 vols.

Concilia  Legum Sectio II: Concilia, vol. 2: Concilia aevi Karolini, parts 1 and 2.


SS  Scriptores, 32 vols.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settimane</td>
<td><em>Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di Studi sull’alto medioevo</em>, vol. 1–. Spoleto, 1955–.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>