Few works of medieval art are so often reproduced as the famous portrait coins of Charlemagne (fig. 3). The proud motto Karolus Imperator Augustus (Charles Emperor Augustus) written in classicizing epigraphic capital letters, combines with the handsome profile view of the ruler wearing diadem and chlamys to evoke the heritage of ancient Rome and thus to represent the Carolingian “renaissance.” Hence the renown of the image, which seems to embody the modern historiographical conception that the essential character and indeed the intention of the Carolingian court was, at least in cultural terms, a revival of ancient Rome. Since we know that Charlemagne received the Roman imperial title only on Christmas Day 800, and that the surviving coins of this portrait type all postdate that event, in fact postdate 804, this coin series has plausibly been said to reflect the imperial coronation, especially as all three of Charlemagne’s earlier coin series were of an entirely different aniconic type.

In the case of the Charlemagne portrait coin, nearly all scholars seem happily prepared to grant the relationship between a political event and its reflection shortly thereafter in a work of pictorial art, as most scholars are prepared to grant the connection between art and contemporary political events in other historical periods. However, in the Carolingian period the Charlemagne portrait coins are commonly held to have been a special case. If one asks the question in broader terms, “How did the imperial coronation affect the development of Carolingian art?” it proves very diffi-
difficult to move beyond this single coin type, since other apparently classicizing or Romanizing works are as likely to predate as to postdate 800. Thus, insofar as the development and interpretation of the so-called Court School manuscripts and related works of art are concerned, the imperial coronation appears to be at most a minor issue, and perhaps altogether irrelevant.

It is a view still held by some that specific contemporary relevance of Carolingian art is all but impossible to determine in light of the Carolingian artist's tendency to rely upon earlier models, and that we bootlessly spend our time in looking for such specific connections and significance. Rosamond McKitterick recently observed that “it is unfashionable to link manuscript images with anything the artist has seen in real life,” before proceeding to suggest, I think rightly, that a miniature in the Utrecht Psalter (fig. 4) reflects the artist's familiarity with a contemporary Frankish synod or assembly, which he intended to recall in this new context. Her criticism of the long prevailing tendency among art historians is both painful and justified, and by no means a dead issue. Indeed, in an article published in 1988, a well-known scholar of Carolingian and other early medieval art, Herbert Kessler, has argued that in the early Middle Ages the artists’ “goal was generally to come as close as possible to reproducing the model,” and that such a goal all but precludes important contemporary references that we might term political.

Perhaps I should say that in the view succinctly articulated by Kessler, which emphasizes the role of prior pictorial models, only specific contemporary political references are excluded, for in fact in the same article he argues that the choice of models is itself a highly charged political statement in a general sense, that “the implications of origin connoted by style were exploited by patrons and artists, as when Charlemagne set about to attach his court to the age of Constantine by rehabilitating classical
If this interpretation of Charlemagne's artistic patronage is correct, then clearly Carolingian art is profoundly political. However, this view makes the Carolingian artists appear almost as precocious postmodernists, since the presence of systems of references to earlier works of art is alleged to have been the central significance of their art. Such a view is of ancient and, one might say, august historiographical tradition, since already in the early nineteenth century Hegel wrote that the essential feature of Germanic history was its initial reference to the Roman heritage: "The process of culture they [the Germans] underwent consisted in taking up foreign elements and reductively amalgamating them with their own national life."

I do not by any means doubt that Carolingian artists often, perhaps even normally, followed models in both style and iconography, but I am very much disposed to doubt that their own aims and understanding went no further than this, even if we today from our distant perspective choose to regard their aims and understanding as less interesting and significant than their contributions to a grand Hegelian historical development. Indeed, it seems to me not only that Carolingian artists invented images quite without any pictorial models when the occasion demanded, but also that, in at least some instances, they chose and adopted models in such a way that the works of art they produced bear directly upon contempo-
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In some cases, the specific political significance of Carolingian artistic works can scarcely be doubted. A good example is the Dagulf Psalter, produced at Charlemagne's orders as a gift for Pope Hadrian I, as the verses at the beginning of the volume itself attest, and datable, at least in my view, to 794–95. The volume opens not with the Psalms themselves, but with a nearly unprecedented collection of creeds and other prefaces that occupy a full twenty-three folios. The inclusion of the credal collection conveys a message to the pope that Charlemagne and his court know and follow the venerable orthodox traditions of the church, and Donald Bullough has shown how this statement and the specific texts of some of the creeds relate to positions taken in the *Libri Carolini* written at the court in about 793.13 No one doubts that at least one significant aspect of the *Libri Carolini*—the great treatise that attempted to rebut the actions of the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 787, in which the Byzantine church accepted the legitimacy of venerating religious images—is its polemical and political purpose.14 I therefore think I am on firm ground when I claim the credal collections included in the contemporary Dagulf Psalter as a pointed political statement. What then of the artistic decoration of the manuscript in which that political message was intended to reach the pope?

The theme of authoritative transmission of orthodox texts and doctrines is a central political message of the Dagulf Psalter, as well as of many Carolingian legal and administrative pronouncements, and is underscored by visual images, for instance by the two ivory panels that formed the original covers of the book (fig. 5). These show four scenes, two on each panel, of which the first, David playing his lyre, is a traditional element of Psalter decoration—as, for example, in the slightly earlier but also eighth-century Vespasian Psalter from Canterbury—and clearly follows some sort of model.15 The artist or patron of this iconographic program was here perfectly well served by an existing pictorial composition that must have been
in common circulation and accessible to the workshop, and thus felt no need to, as it were, reinvent the wheel. However, it is either very difficult or altogether impossible to find good parallels for the other scenes of the Dagulf Psalter cover, for which close pictorial models in earlier art cannot be adduced.\textsuperscript{16}

The other three scenes of the ivories show David selecting the scribes who will write down the Psalms, Jerome receiving from Pope Damasus a commission to translate the Psalms into Latin, and Jerome dictating his new translation to a secretary. Clearly these unprecedented scenes bear upon a general issue of ecclesiastical authority, specifically papal authority. This general issue is, however, specifically linked to a contemporary political situation, not only the Iconoclastic controversy but also the emerging dispute over Adoptionism, in regard to which Carolingian policy sought
to invoke papal authority as support for views of the Carolingian court.  
As already noted, the texts in the book covered by the ivory panels directly relate to these controversies, and it is, in fact, these prefatory texts, rather than the Psalms themselves, that explain the unique iconography of the covers of the Dagulf Psalter, as has long been noted by scholars. These surely qualify as “political” images, and it seems to me perverse to argue that their special features are the product of mere coincidence. They share with the portrait coins of Charlemagne of about a decade later very close dating and unusual form and subject matter, and are thus relatively easy to interpret in specific terms. They should at the very least indicate that such interpretations were not beyond the grasp or interest of Carolingian artists and patrons.

The really difficult hermeneutical problems arise when dealing with works that are part of a series, a pictorial tradition, and thus are not manifest inventions or else are not so closely dated. Let me take up first a work that forms part of a series and ask whether it might nonetheless carry specific political relevance to contemporary beholders.

The manuscript commonly known as the Gundohinus Gospels was written by a single scribe working in an unknown Frankish monastery and is dated to the “third year of King Pepin,” probably 754. It is, then, the earliest securely dated illustrated manuscript from Carolingian Francia. It has long been recognized that the manuscript draws upon early Mediterranean sources for its texts and decoration. Indeed, I have myself argued elsewhere at length that the book probably closely follows in most respects a Gospel book written in northern Italy in roughly the middle of the sixth century, finding, for example, that the closest parallel for the enthroned beardless Christ with pearled cross nimbus between angels seen in the Gundohinus image of Christ in Majesty (fig. 6) is the apse mosaic of San Vitale in Ravenna, datable 546–48.

Jean Porcher and some other scholars have taken the coincidence of a book with primarily Mediterranean sources dating from the first years of the new Carolingian dynasty as an announcement of a new “classicism” direction of Carolingian art, the beginning of the Carolingian renaissance in art, albeit a humble and, some have even said, a crude beginning. In this sense, Porcher’s interpretation belongs to the historiographical tradition continued also by Kessler, a tradition that sees a general programmatic statement expressed through the style or through the models or references evoked by Carolingian artists. The model is the message, in
other words. Thus here, the Mediterranean sources of the book, even in the absence of compelling evidence of Mediterranean classicizing style, are said to suggest a latent political program, namely, the revival of the Roman Empire.  

If the meaning of the art of the Gundohinus Gospels is exhausted when we say that it evokes the Roman past, then what can we say of the meaning of such a book as the Lorsch Gospels, produced in the orbit of Pepin's son Charlemagne close to the imperial coronation in 800? Both sets of Evangelist portraits—for example, the portraits of John from the Gundohinus and Lorsch Gospels, with the figures displayed under arches on columns and with their respective eagle symbols in the lunettes above—do, after all, stem ultimately from Mediterranean traditions. Surely art historical distinctions are limned with a very broad brush if we can only say that such sharply differing images in fact mean the same thing.  

Obviously the Lorsch artist's work has more fully evoked the classical heritage in terms of style, and very likely directly followed some late Roman work, such as the so-called Calendar of 354, at least for salient details like the medallion-decorated mantle. Florentine Mutherich has interpreted the relationship between such works as the Gundohinus and Lorsch Gospels by saying that both reflect the official goal of a Romanization of culture and society, but that the Carolingian program was both "developed" and "perfected" in the later works. Such a view implies that the scribe Gundohinus aimed to make a work like the Lorsch Gospels, but failed to do so because of lack of experience or skill and lack of access to the right kind of model. In fact the evidence of the book as a whole contradicts this interpretation.  

The Christ in Majesty miniature of the Gundohinus Gospels shows this artist and the intended meaning of his work in a very different and more ambitious light, suggesting a sophisticated and specific political context for his work. The two angelic beings flanking Christ are absent from the vast majority of the seemingly countless later Majesty images, such as that in the already cited Lorsch Gospels, but occur in the earlier tradition as a heritage from Roman imperial iconography, the angels of the Majesty substituting for the original soldiers. Suddenly a problem begins to emerge here: if the Lorsch Gospels "develops and perfects" the imitation of Roman art crudely begun in such works as the Gundohinus Gospels, why is it that Gundohinus is in fact closer to the ancient iconography, which all the "developed and perfected" later works spurn?  

Notice here two features of the Gundohinus angels. They are inscribed cyrubin (cherubim) and their wings are raised together so that they meet
over the head of Christ. These features are unparalleled in other Majesty images whether earlier or later, yet both occur together in a different series of images, those depicting the tabernacle of the Ark of the Covenant as described in the Old Testament books of Exodus (37:7–9) and 1 Kings (6:23–28). Both descriptions specify that above the ark were two golden cherubim facing each other, with their extended wings touching, exactly as visualized in the Gundohinus Gospels miniature and in depictions of the ark, as for example in a miniature of the Ashburnham Pentateuch, a Latin manuscript most probably from the seventh century and known to have been at Tours in the Carolingian period.27 Did Gundohinus simply confuse different models, or can we look for a sensible contemporary explanation?

The Gundohinus Gospels miniature is obviously not an image of the Ark of the Covenant, and thus the cherubim seem quite out of place here. Considering the image in relation to the contemporary political context can, however, suggest a plausible motive for this anomalous feature. The cherubim of the ark and sanctuary had been involved with the debate over images almost from the beginning of the Iconoclastic controversy in the early eighth century, since they offered the preeminent example of figural images specifically authorized by God. Both Byzantine and Carolingian authors used the image of the cherubim of the ark and sanctuary as a central element in the debate over images, the later eighth-century Libri Carolini discussing the cherubim at length in several places.28 Theodulf of Orleans, the Libri Carolini’s author, also made use of a visual image of the cherubim in order to state his understanding of the proper interpretation of scripture and the proper attitude toward images: the justly celebrated image of the cherubim erected in his chapel at Germigny-des-Prés. There, as in the Libri Carolini, the image served not to justify, but rather to restrict the use of holy images in the Christian church.29

Clearly the imagery of the cherubim in the Gundohinus Gospels suggests some connection with one of the more important theological and political controversies of the eighth century, the Iconoclastic controversy. While it is true that the manuscript’s image of Christ in Majesty belongs to a long series of images that signify in a general sense the Harmony of the Gospels and related themes, and that this generic significance was retained in the Gundohinus Gospels, a new level of specific meaning was added to the theme in that manuscript, not only through its inclusion of the cherubim but also through its direct juxtaposition of the Majesty miniature with a Trinitarian text by Jerome (or more likely Rufinus of Aquileia).30 In the manuscript the text was, very peculiarly, written in two separate loca-
tions, the first excerpt on folios 1r–1v and the second on folio 13r, directly facing the Majesty miniature. In the absence of any codicological or historical explanation for the division of the text into two parts, one is at least entitled to investigate the possibility that this juxtaposition of image and text was no completely unmotivated accident, and that the image and text face each other because they must have been intended to be seen together.

I shall not attempt here even a summary of my argument, advanced elsewhere, that we see here no coincidence but a deliberate reaction to a contemporary historical situation; that Gundohinus became aware of the Iconoclastic arguments and rearranged the position of his texts and the details of his miniature with the deliberate intention of proclaiming his own orthodoxy and, in a broader sense, that of the Latin and Frankish church in the face of a Byzantine “innovation.” It may be enough here to recall that, from the very beginning of Carolingian art, we have a startlingly complex and immediate reaction to a contemporary political issue. The instance is particularly interesting and to some degree not unusual in what I take to be its political reference and content, even though no evidence suggests a close connection of the Gundohinus Gospels with patronage of the Carolingian court circle. Surely no one would call the manuscript courtly in the style or luxury of its decoration!

Most of the examples to follow are, in contrast, closely connected to the court, but it is well to bear in mind that our ability to relate these works of art to a political context is more likely to be the accidental product of our sources of knowledge than of any essential apoliticism in the provinces. The courtly works of art are much better known and have been more thoroughly studied, and our documentary sources are very scanty when we leave the activities of the court circles.

An image from the court of Charlemagne whose possible relevance to contemporary political concerns has never been suggested is the front cover of MS Douce 176 in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, which bears a small ivory carving universally associated with Charlemagne’s so-called Court School (fig. 7). It depicts in the large central panel Christ trampling on the asp, basilisk, lion, and dragon, an image inspired by Psalm 90. That image was also the central subject in two closely related Carolingian ivory carvings: one of the two Genoels-Elderen ivories in Brussels, apparently the earliest of the three versions of the subject, and one of the two famous Lorsch Gospels covers, now in the Vatican (fig. 8).

Like the Lorsch panel, the Bodleian ivory is in a five-part form, but
Figure 7. Ivory book cover: Christ trampling on the asp, basilisk, lion, and dragon. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 176. Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library.

whereas the Lorsch composition is in fact five separate pieces of ivory joined together and measuring thirty-nine by twenty-eight centimeters overall, the Bodleian cover is a single ivory plaque measuring but twenty-one by twenty-one centimeters. Also differing from the Lorsch example is the iconography of the smaller satellite images of the Bodleian ivory,
which show not large angels but small narrative scenes concentrating upon the infancy and the miracles of Christ. Six of these scenes are directly copied from two fifth-century Early Christian panels in Paris and Berlin (figs. 9 and 10, respectively), presumably once part of a large five-part composition such as we see in the Lorsch Gospels cover. For once we can actually compare a Carolingian work of art with its surviving model!

At first the comparison seems to suggest that the Carolingian artist was indeed a slavish copyist, but one should be wary of jumping to conclusions along this line. Note that for the scene of the marriage of Cana the Early Christian carver has provided four water jugs, but the Carolingian artist six, and it is the latter that agrees with the specific evidence of John 2:6, as was recently pointed out to me by a perceptive student, Jack Becker. The Carolingian artist has in fact “corrected” his late antique pictorial model by recourse to the appropriate textual source, hardly an indication of an automaton-like slavish imitator. Of course, one must also say that the Carolingian artist has condensed the images and, we might say, removed their relatively naturalistic spaciousness, although one should remember that each of the Early Christian panels measures roughly twenty by nine centimeters and is thus nearly as large as the entire Bodleian plaque, so that the Carolingian artist faced a significant alteration of scale, and some alterations would perforce need to be made in adapting the model.

One important change vis-à-vis his model would not have been forced upon the artist of the Bodleian plaque by reduced space, however. Note that the three scenes at the left of the Bodleian ivory correspond, albeit not in the same order, to the placement of the three scenes on the Paris Early Christian panel, which would have occupied the left position in the original five-part diptych. Yet, on the other side of the Bodleian plaque, the three scenes that correspond to the Early Christian source are not all beside the central panel but have been pushed down, so that the lowest, the miracle at Cana, appears on what, in an Early Christian five-part model, would have been a different panel, the bottom rather than the side. Why make this change? Presumably it was made so as to insert something at the top of the panel that was not in any model. There is indeed an obvious interpolation at the top of the panel: the figure of the prophet Isaiah holding a scroll at the upper left corner.

In his study of the Court School ivories, Thomas Hoving could find neither precedent nor parallel for linking a figure of the prophet Isaiah with the Annunciation, as we see on the Bodleian plaque. Hoving proposed that the figure was copied from a lost Syrian model containing images of prophets holding scrolls, something like the famous Rossano
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Even if this comparison is at all germane, which I doubt, Hoving suggested no motive whatsoever for the copying of such a figure. Isaiah holds an open scroll clearly inscribed ECCE VIRGO CONCIPIET, "Behold a virgin shall conceive," a well known and often used quotation from Isaiah 7:14. That prophetic text is quoted in Matthew
1:23 along with its continuation, "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." The Matthew text is the lection for the vigil of the Nativity, the first Gospel reading in the famous Godescalc Gospel lectionary, written for Charlemagne in 781–83 and apparently kept at court throughout his reign. Hence the inclusion of a figure of Isaiah displaying this text, which opens the roughly contemporary lectionary from the same milieu, might be explained on the basis of the ancient and understandable tendency to illustrate the first words that follow it. Yet such an interpretation entails serious difficulties, as we shall see. In any event, in an ivory closely associated with Charlemagne's court, it is not at all surprising to see the reference to specific contemporary liturgical sources. But where is the indication of a singular contemporary political context or inspiration?

Bodleian MS Douce 176, the manuscript to which our ivory is now and, as far as anyone knows, always has been attached, is itself a Gospel lectionary. It is a handsomely decorated manuscript, with fine script and illumination in what has come to be called the Merovingian style, emphasizing zoomorphic letters dominated by fish and birds. No doubt because of the contrast between this style and the classicizing style of the ivory, the manuscript and its cover have often been thought to have been brought together at some late date; their mutual close connection with Charlemagne's court and almost exactly contemporary dates have been regarded as coincidental. In fact, as Adolph Goldschmidt observed, although the leather-covered seventeenth-century binding into which the ivory is set cannot be the original, the ivory fits the manuscript very well in size and proportion, making it likely that the two always went together. The manuscript was written in approximately the first decade of the ninth century at Chelles, the female monastery whose abbess was Gisla, Charlemagne's sister. Gisla was an important figure in her own right, and during the late 790s and early years of the ninth century she was a regular correspondent of Alcuin, several of whose letters to her survive. Alcuin also dedicated to Gisla his long commentary on the Gospel according to John, which was begun by 800 and completed in about 802.

Alcuin is, it seems to me, a very likely sponsor of the manufacture of the ivory cover intended for a new lectionary manuscript to be written in Gisla's own monastery. Chelles had a very accomplished and active scriptorium, working in a distinctly un-Roman Frankish ornamental style. Chelles surely did not have its own ivory carver, and the cover must have been executed elsewhere, presumably at or near Charlemagne's court.
Other evidence supports the view that the ivory cover was not made at Chelles for the lectionary written there and now preserved as MS Douce 176. I have already mentioned that Isaiah’s prophecy as repeated in Matthew is the first lection or pericope in the Godescalc lectionary. It was also the first lection in Alcuin’s lectionary as edited by Wilmart, and certainly would have been the basis for a lectionary cover produced at the court. However, MS Douce 176 begins its series not with the vigil for Christmas but with the Christmas feast itself; not, therefore, with the rubric In Vigilia Natalis Dni. but with In Natale Dni. ad s. Mariam, for which the text is Luke 2:1–14. MS Douce 176 shares this opening pericope with the earlier calendar preserved in Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek cod. M.P. th. fol. 62, and therefore represents a liturgical family distinct from that employed at Charlemagne’s court by Alcuin and others.

One might see the emphasis given in the Bodleian ivory to Isaiah’s prophecy and to the large figure of the enthroned Virgin, who sits at the top center of the panel directly above Christ, as nothing more than a rather simple complimentary reference to the special virtue of female virginity, which Gisla and her nuns shared with Christ’s mother. Such a compliment may well have been intended, and may be part of the explanation for the unusual iconography of the plaque. However, the emphasis upon the virginity of Mary, upon the angelic salutation to the Annunciation, and indeed upon Isaiah’s prophecy may also have a more distinctly political implication in the late 790s or the first years of the ninth century, as can be seen through an examination of works by Alcuin and others of Charlemagne’s scholars written against the Adoptionist heresy in Spain.

Donald Bullough has written that, in his Seven Books against Felix of Urgel written in 799 (PL 101:119–230), Alcuin “is most clearly innovatory in his treatment of Mary as the Mother of God and of her relationship both with fallen man and with the Incarnate word.” Indeed, the exalted position of the Virgin figures prominently throughout the treatise as a central argument against the Adoptionists. Following the fifth-century writer Arnobius, Alcuin in the same treatise also links the imperial purple wool that Mary was spinning at the moment of the Annunciation with the divinity of Christ from before his human conception (PL 101:210C). If Hoving was correct in linking the woman beside Mary in the Bodleian plaque with one of the seven daughters of Israel who were Mary’s spinning companions, then Alcuin’s anti-Adoptionist work may help to explain another iconographic motif in the work. At the same time, it is noteworthy that Alcuin directly links this discussion of the Virgin’s spinning with the angelic salutation and the conception of Christ by the
Theotokos, writing “Virgo Concepit” (PL 101:211A), paraphrasing and perhaps alluding to the prophecy of Isaiah. Elsewhere in his treatise De Incarnatione of about the same date (PL 101:271–300), also written against the Adoptionists, Alcuin explicitly cites the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, and approvingly notes its reappearance in Matthew 1:23, with the addition that “Emmanuel” signifies “God with us” (PL 101:276D). Alcuin is, in fact, not alone in using the Isaiah text against the Adoptionists, since Paulinus of Aquileia’s Contra Felicem of 796 cites the text four different times and with great emphasis, a fact kindly brought to my attention by Celia Chazelle. Surely the iconography of this ivory, with its Isaiah prophecy and concentration upon Christ’s miracles, has contemporary political resonance.

Another ivory carving, this one made for Charles the Bald, raises the issue of the political relevance of Carolingian works of art in a rather different and—most today would say—more direct way, since the previous examples bear primarily upon what now would be called ecclesiastical matters with only secondary political overtones and connections. The ivory carving at the center of the jeweled back cover of Charles’s Psalter, now in Paris, B.N. cod. lat. 1152, shows a dramatic episode in the life of David (fig. 11), the well-known episode of his sinful affair with Bathsheba, which caused him to fall from favor with the Lord. The story is told in 2 Samuel 11–12. From his roof David saw the beautiful Bathsheba in her bath, was overcome by lust for her, lay with her and conceived a child, and, abusing his royal powers, deliberately and maliciously gave orders that led to the death of her husband, Uriah. The prophet Nathan comes to David in his royal palace and speaks at first indirectly of the actions of an unnamed rich man who, wishing to have a sheep with which to make an offering, took one not from his own large flocks but instead seized the single lamb belonging to a poor man. David angrily denounces the pitiless rich man, at which point Nathan tells him that he has condemned himself (“Thou art the man”), and as punishment explains that David’s own sons will rise against him and that Bathsheba’s child will die. This rebuke is the occasion for David’s great Psalm of Repentance, Psalm 50(51), in which he begs for cleansing mercy while saying, “I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me.”

The ivory illustrates this story from Samuel and also the titulus to Psalm 50, depicting the parable of the rich man and the poor man in the lower register. In the larger upper scene, Nathan bursts in from one side and
FIGURE 11. Ivory cover of the Psalter of Charles the Bald: David and Bathsheba before Nathan. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 1152. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale.
points to the corpse of Uriah, and Bathsheba apparently seeks to retain David entwined in her snare, perhaps literally her weaving, as the two stand before what must be taken to represent the royal palace. David himself is caught at a moment of decision: should he deny his crime and punish Nathan, or admit his fault and beg forgiveness?

It is precisely because he chooses the latter course of humility and penitence that David is a proper model for a Carolingian ruler, guided by the man of God, aware of his own sin. Sedulius Scottus uses the episode in his treatise *De rectoribus christianis* (On Christian Rulers), written between 855 and 859 for either Charles the Bald himself or for his nephew King Lothair II, in which David is both contrasted with the “impious King Saul of Israel [who] was deprived of his kingdom and his life because he did not stand before the Lord as a faithful minister,” and praised for his submission to Nathan, when he “bewailed himself with bitter penance.”

Archbishop Hincmar of Reims cites the Nathan passage to Lothair II in his treatise against Lothair’s divorce, cites it again to Charles the Bald in his important and pervasively Augustinian comprehensive work of 873 on the royal office and duties, and indeed cites the passage yet once more in a letter to Pope Hadrian II, along with ecclesiastical canons and decretals and Augustinian injunctions concerning the proper duty of ecclesiastics to bring accusation against the sins and errors of their rulers.

The image on the ivory cover of Charles the Bald’s Psalter was commissioned by or presented to the king at an undetermined moment before 869, and presents an example of a royal sin that must be avoided, not royal glory to be imitated. Its selection can be explained in many ways. Least satisfactory is the notion that since Psalm 50 begins the second of three parts into which early medieval Psalter manuscripts were often divided, its selection reflects the particular importance of illustrations of that psalm in the pictorial tradition. If this as it were unthinkingly “automatic” explanation of the choice of Psalm 50 had any validity, one should expect to see Psalm 1 or Psalm 100 decorating the other ivory cover on the front of the book, not Psalm 56, as is in fact the case. That other carving illustrates not the *titulus* but the psalm text itself (verses 5 and 7, respectively), specifically showing the Psalmist “delivered from the midst of the young lions . . . and the sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword,” while at the bottom of the panel the enemies who have dug a pit as a snare fall into it themselves. Clearly the two covers make a program, arguing that if the ruler acts justly—specifically, does not confiscate the property of the powerless (or the church!)—he will be given victory over his enemies.
Certainly the image of Nathan's rebuke of David is by no means rare and may be found in a substantial percentage of the preserved early medieval Psalters in both Latin and Greek worlds, as in the well-known miniature of the tenth-century Byzantine Paris Psalter. Yet in that manuscript the episode is but one in a substantial series of scenes from David's life, and neither there nor in any other work is the sin and penitence of David given such prominence as in Charles the Bald's Psalter, where it is one of only two psalms illustrated. In this instance we can even say with some confidence that the choice of this scene cannot have been due to the chance availability of a model for that scene and no other, since, as was already noted by Goldschmidt, the ivory cover of Charles the Bald's Psalter appears to have had its direct source in the profusely illustrated Utrecht Psalter, which could have provided the artist and program designer with a model for any of the 150 psalms, not for Psalm 50 only. Clearly Psalm 50 was deliberately chosen by the artist or designer of the program of the Psalter of Charles the Bald; moreover, in taking the composition of the Utrecht Psalter for Psalm 50 as its essential inspiration, the artist of the ivory has altered the composition so as to place the dead body of Uriah in a very prominent position at the center of the ivory panel. Surely, especially in the case of a work of such superlative quality of expression and composition, such concentration upon the effect of David's sin cannot be dismissed as accidental.

The special bearing of Psalm 50 and the penitence of King David upon contemporary political thinking has recently been indicated by Christoph Eggenberger in his study of the late ninth-century Carolingian Golden Psalter of Saint Gall, a very richly illustrated book, yet one in which the Bathsheba episode is absent altogether. Eggenberger dismisses, rightly in my opinion, the possibility that the psalm is not illustrated in that magnificent book because no model was available to the artists, who demonstrably drew upon a wide variety of sources. Eggenberger suggests that the image of the sin and penitence of David was deliberately excluded from that illustrative cycle because the humility theme was not considered desirable for a book designed to be used by various important visitors to the monastery, that it was perhaps too provocative. As Eggenberger shows, drawing upon liturgical and exegetical sources, this psalm had a particularly important monitory function as one of the penitential psalms.

Although images sometimes could and did de-emphasize David's sin—as in the later Byzantine example already mentioned and in the earlier Carolingian Corbie and Zurich Psalters—by depicting his praiseworthy humble penitence without showing Bathsheba or the dead body of Uriah,
which were the causes of that penitence, the cover of the Psalter of Charles the Bald gives Uriah and especially Bathsheba great prominence. It must also be remembered that the designer of the program for the ivory cover deliberately chose this psalm with its penitential theme, where he could have followed earlier Carolingian royal tradition by placing David as author and musician on the cover, as on the Dagulf Psalter.62 Surely also the theme of the penitence of David was chosen, and the sin which preceded the penitence emphasized, on the cover of Charles the Bald’s Psalter because the conception of royal humility was so important to the ideal of rulership preached in the ninth-century Furstenspiegel,63 based ultimately upon Augustine’s picture of the humility of Theodosius in his City of God, book 5, chapter 26.64 Indeed, immediately after citing to Lothair II the proper penitence and humility of David after being rebuked for his sin with Bathsheba, Sedulius Scottus cites at great length the episode of “the wonderful humility and penance of the glorious prince Theodosius,” which Augustine had so prominently featured.65

Sedulius Scottus’ close linkage of David and Theodosius as royal models supports the view that the program of images developed for Charles the Bald’s Psalter extends to the miniatures inside the volume. There Charles appears in an enthroned portrait image, wearing a crown and holding a scepter and an orb, while the hand of God reaches down toward him. The inscription above the king says that he is like Josiah and Theodosius.66 Why are these two figures cited, rather than Moses, David, or, conceivably, Constantine?

Josiah was the king of Judah who, during the time of the prophet Isaiah, came to the throne as a boy of eight after his wicked father, Amon, had been slain by his own household. Josiah subsequently rebuilt the damaged temple in Jerusalem and found there the books of Moses (2 Kings 21–23), the “books of the Law,” which he read to the people,67 whom he attempted to lead in a religious revival by destroying all the altars and idols that had been established by his predecessors since the time of David. Indeed, Josiah is said to have “walked in the ways of his father David” (2 Kings 22:2). Josiah in this sense forms a natural model for emulation by a Frankish king concerned, as Charles the Bald and others had been, with legislation seeking to reform the Christian church and the moral life of the people in their care. Josiah had been cited earlier as such a model, along with Moses, David, and Samuel, by Theodulf of Orléans in his poem Contra indices, addressed to Charlemagne.68 On the other hand, Josiah’s story also carries a subversive subtext, for his virtues did not prevent the Lord’s
continuing anger with the people of Judah from allowing him to be killed in battle against the Egyptians and, in the time of his sons, allowing Jerusalem to be taken by Nebuchadnezzar, the Temple destroyed, and the people taken into captivity in Babylon. Josiah was good, but not triumphant, a model especially appropriate for a king besieged by powerful enemies and not always victorious.

Why is Josiah linked with Theodosius as a model for Charles the Bald? Theodosius is a different but no less difficult figure. First is a problem of simple identification. It is not altogether clear whether Theodosius I or Theodosius II is meant by the inscription, and either is a possibility; indeed it may well be that the two were either confused or erroneously merged in the ninth century.

Theodosius II is often considered to be the emperor represented in this miniature, for his name is attached to the greatest codification of Roman law before Justinian. Theodosius II is specified in an early ninth-century North Italian manuscript, with an inscription reading *Theodosius iunior imperator* in the portrait showing him enthroned and accompanied by the teeming bishops attending the Council of Ephesus. Theodosius II had also undoubtedly been represented in an early Carolingian miniature contained in a law book, without any inscription specifying which Theodosius is shown but presumably identifiable on the basis of the legal text with which he is linked and because of the lawyers who surround him.

However, Theodosius I “the Great” was also a well-known figure in the Carolingian period, paired with Constantine as a predecessor of the Carolingian kings in a description of wall paintings in the royal hall at Ingelheim written in the late 820s by Ermoldus Nigellus, in which Theodosius’ great deeds (*actis praeclaris*) are mentioned. When Lupus of Ferrières wrote to Charles the Bald in 844, he refers to a “very brief summary of the deeds of the emperors [that he had] presented to Your Majesty,” in which he especially commends Trajan and Theodosius “because you can most profitably find many things among their deeds to imitate.”

Theodosius is here unnumbered, but the elder emperor is presumably intended, because the reference is to his great deeds, as in the Ingelheim poem of Ermoldus.

One could argue that the common denominator between Josiah and Theodosius, and between each and Charles the Bald, is the idea of law. Josiah discovered and promulgated the “books of the Law”; Theodosius II was a law codifier; and Charles was actively interested in the law. Were the miniatures the frontispiece to a law book—as they could well have been,
since we know of some luxuriously decorated legal codices from the time and the circle of Charles the Bald—this would be the more likely interpretation. However, the manuscript is a Psalter, indeed a private Psalter of the sort that could be and presumably was intended to be used for private devotions by the king.

The image of David and Bathsheba is certainly an appropriately devotional image, a call to humility and penance, Psalm 50 being one of the seven penitential Psalms. Hence, it seems more than likely that the invocation of Theodosius in connection with Charles the Bald’s portrait should share the same theme and reflect the identification of Theodosius I as not only the doer of great deeds but also the shining example of a ruler’s humility and penance, as cited by Augustine in the City of God and reiterated by such contemporary authors as Sedulius Scottus, as already mentioned.

Augustine praises both the great deeds and the humility of Theodosius in the same chapter, and that chapter deserves further scrutiny for four additional themes that connect it to the artistic decoration of Charles the Bald’s Psalter. First, Augustine also praises Theodosius for having consulted the prophetic hermit John for advice before proceeding against the tyrannical Maxentius, a theme analogous to that on the ivory cover of David hearing the prophet Nathan, and one of obvious attractiveness for a clerical program designer. Second, Augustine praises Theodosius for casting down the statues of Jupiter that had been set up in the Alps by his enemies, recalling Josiah’s actions in casting down the idols from the high places, as described in the Old Testament. Third, Augustine praises Theodosius for not having confiscated the property of his defeated enemies’ heirs, a theme recalling the sin of David and Nathan’s parable and gently evoking Carolingian churchmen’s claims for the inviolability of church property against the actions of some rulers’ attempts to reclaim land. Finally, the overarching theme of Augustine’s discussion, in which Theodosius serves as an exemplum, is the idea of personal salvation far outweighing any earthly good:

These and other similar good works, which it would be long to tell, he carried with him from the world of time, where the greatest human nobility and loftiness are but vapour. Of these works the reward is eternal happiness, of which God is the giver, though only to those who are sincerely pious. But all other blessings and privileges of this life, as the world itself, light, air, earth, water, fruits, and the soul of man himself, his body, sense, mind, life, He lavishes on good and bad alike. And among these blessings is also to be
reckoned the possession of an empire, whose extent He regulates according to the requirements of His providential government at various times.  

How appropriate a thought to be evoked by the reference to Theodosius in the portrait miniature in a royal Psalter! Surely this section of Augustine's *City of God*, which has been termed by a recent scholar "*the Christian Fürstenspiegel par excellence,*" would have been known to Charles the Bald himself, as well as to the as-yet-unidentified designer of the program of images for his Psalter. The Augustinian passage articulated a fundamental conception underlying the intended significance of the portrait of Charles as "like Josiah and Theodosius."

In what context would such a program of images, such a concatenation of themes and allusions, have been particularly appropriate? The themes include the death of a favored son, to be supplanted by another borne by a new wife; rejection of idolatry; protection, rather than confiscation, of the property of the "poor and defenseless," however those might be construed; and the defeat of the righteous king because of God's anger at his ancestors and people. Many of those themes must have had contemporary resonance. The king's duty to protect rather than confiscate ecclesiastical property is a major theme of ninth-century writers; indeed that duty was sometimes linked with the often reiterated call to defend the rights of widows and orphans.

Such frequent reiteration suggests abuse, and Charles the Bald followed a long family tradition in assigning ecclesiastical estates to lay followers. Lupus of Ferrières' many letters over a period of eight years begging for restitution of the cell of Saint Josse are only one of the best known examples of this phenomenon. The possibility that the Lord's anointed king might be defeated in battle by infidels, as happened to Josiah, cannot have been a point of merely antiquarian interest in Charles the Bald's kingdom. The Viking raids and indeed invasions had already begun in earnest in the early days of Charles's rule, in the 840s, and grew in intensity thereafter, with the great invasions of 856-62 providing a high or low point, depending upon the point of view.

The prophecy of Nathan concerning the sons of David must also have been a reference with special resonance for one of the sons of Louis the Pious, as was Charles the Bald. A dominant factor in Carolingian history during the second quarter of the ninth century was the revolt of Louis's sons, who had indeed, like David's son Absalom, repeatedly rebelled against paternal authority, causing their father to be deposed, imprisoned,
and humiliated—a revolt, also in an analogous manner, prompted in very large part by the father’s new marriage to a beautiful woman, in this case Charles’s own mother, Judith. Although the first child of David and Bathsheba died as a result of God’s anger at David’s sin, it is also true that the second son of that union was Solomon, the great future king destined to succeed to the throne of all Israel and to build the Temple.

In terms of the narrative situation, Judith’s son Charles the Bald thus stands as a parallel to Bathsheba’s son Solomon. Are we really to imagine that no such connection ever occurred to the man who designed the program of this cover, or to Charles the Bald, for whom it was intended? To take such a view seems to me to require that we imagine a particularly dense stupidity on the part of the Carolingian king and court, and in my view the surviving evidence suggests nothing of the kind. Indeed, it has been observed by Joachim Gaehde and others that the frontispiece miniature for the Book of Kings in the great Bible given by Charles the Bald to the pope in 875, on the occasion of his imperial coronation in Rome (now preserved in the monastery of San Paolo fuori le mura in that city), shows Solomon seated upon his throne (fig. 12) looking very much indeed like portraits of Charles the Bald in such works as the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeran, produced likewise in the early 870s.80

I must admit that I have used such usefully vague terms as “resonance” to gloss the issue of direct topical political reference in the imagery of the Psalter of Charles the Bald’s ivory cover and portrait miniature.81 I have not been able to uncover any specific evidence that would allow the program to be linked exclusively with a particular event or moment. I could easily imagine it being commissioned in the dark days of 858, when Charles’s kingdom was invaded by both the Vikings and his own brother Louis the German; I could also imagine it being commissioned in celebration of Charles’s survival of the latter threat, with the help of Hincmar of Reims and other churchmen who refused to abandon their king. The problem is that the imagery is not strictly allegorical, but rather more loosely allusive—as it were, metaphorical. The program is also unusual and difficult to interpret, thereby nicely reflecting the fact that it must have been unusual and difficult to interpret in the ninth century. The combination of Psalms 50 and 56, each reflecting a quite different evocation of the king’s relationship to God, his people, and the church, with the citation of Josiah and (unspecified) Theodosius cannot have been thought to be straightforward by the program’s designer. Evidently the program was meant to provoke extended thought, or perhaps one should say reflection, on the part of its prime audience, the king himself. In fact, the audience for
such a work was most severely restricted, numbering no more than the
king and intimate members of his family and court, who would have been
in the fortunate position, which we do not share, of knowing the date and
context of the commission and therefore being able to interpret the manu-
script's imagery in that specific context.

We are in a double bind in trying to determine the context (that is, on
the simplest level, the date) and the interpretation at once, when the two
are interdependent. Only a terminus ante quem seems to be securely fixed,
as the manuscript was given by Charles the Bald to the cathedral of Metz
(together with the so-called Vivian Bible) in 869. The Vivian Bible was at
that time nearly twenty years old, so there is no reason to think a date near
869 either likely or unlikely for the Psalter. The circumstances of the gift
do, however, suggest that the Psalter was thought of by the king in a polit-
cical context. It is probably not an accident that the donation to Metz fol-
lowed upon Charles's coronation there, by Bishop Arnulf of Toul and by
Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, as king of Lothair II's realm. The trium-
phant outcome of Charles's ancient desire to possess his nephew's king-
dom no doubt encouraged him to believe, incorrectly as later events
proved, that he was one of the lucky few chosen rulers who would be suc-
cessful in his earthly career and also merit heavenly salvation thereafter.
The monitory content of the imagery of the Psalter that he offered as a gift
on the occasion suggests that he humbly recognized his shortcomings and
had been exalted in part for that reason, as David and Theodosius before
him.

The monitory content of the cover of Charles the Bald's Psalter is not an
isolated example of an image embodying a monitory or implicitly critical
address to a Carolingian monarch that may perhaps be closely related to a
specific historical situation. One of the most famous and most beautiful
artworks of the Carolingian period is the magnificent rock crystal of King
Lothair II (fig. 13), decorated with a series of narrative scenes from the
Old Testament story of Susanna, beginning with the two evil Elders peer-
ing over the garden wall at the young woman preparing to take her bath. At the center of the crystal in a medallion appears the enthroned judge,
usually interpreted as Daniel, vindicating the innocent young woman
against her perjured accusers. This scene is clearly unusual, not being
called for by the biblical text and given special prominence by its central
location and framing. Since the inscription Lotharius Rex Francorum . . .
[me] [f]ieri iussit (Lothair King of the Franks ordered me to be made) ap-
pears immediately above this scene, it seems more than likely that some parallelism between Lothair and the just judge of the Old Testament is intended, the royal connection of the image being further underscored by the compositional similarity of the canopy-like coffered vault on four columns above the scene to a similar feature in the portrait of Charles the Bald from the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeran.84
Since the early years of this century it has become traditional for scholars to see a link between the production of this quite extraordinary work of art and the attempt by Lothair II—younger son of Emperor Lothair, ruler from 855 to 869 of the central Carolingian territories (stretching along the western bank of the Rhine from the Low Countries to Switzerland), and Charles the Bald's nephew—to win a divorce from his barren wife Teutberga. This notorious cause célèbre of the period involved the accusation that, prior to her marriage to Lothair, Teutberga was guilty of committing incest with her brother and inducing an abortion, and although once vindicated by ordeal, the queen was ultimately pressured into confessing to her crimes before an ecclesiastical council and was sent to a nunnery. The actions in this matter of Lothair and of the Council of Aachen of 860 were condemned most outspokenly by Hincmar of Reims in a treatise already mentioned, De divorcio Lotharii regis et Tetbergae reginae, and by Pope Nicholas I, and Lothair was compelled by the church—very much against his will—to take back Teutberga and to repudiate his much-loved mistress. Obviously, the cases of Teutberga and Susanna, two women unjustly accused of sexual transgressions by "seniors" of considerable stature but ultimately vindicated, are at least in broad terms similar.

Although Genevra Kornbluth has rightly pointed out a number of differences between the Old Testament and contemporary legal cases, has justly criticized the superficiality of the analysis devoted to the connection between the Susanna crystal and this contemporary political situation in previous scholarly literature, which treats it as virtually self-evident, and has indicated the extreme implausibility of the view that the crystal was made at the order of Lothair as a kind of public apology to his aggrieved queen, it nonetheless seems to me that the crystal need not then be simply interpreted as a rather abstract exemplum of royal justice. It may well be that, through the crystal's iconographic program, Lothair is urged to be like Daniel in justice, as Kornbluth argues, but clearly the program at the same time warns him to be unlike the Elders and provides the linked positive and negative models for the Carolingian ruler propounded in such texts as Hincmar's De cavendis vitiis et virtutibus exercendis (On vices to be avoided and virtues to be practiced), which was dedicated to Charles the Bald. Given the contemporary political situation, this allusion cannot have failed to be a pointed, albeit (thinly) disguised, reference to Lothair's personal difficulties, even though it is equally true that the relationships are not to be seen as fully developed allegories to be read as if the judge represents Lothair, Susanna represents Teutberga, and the two Elders represent
the archbishops of Trier and Cologne, the key figures in condemning Teutberga.

The proper and, I think, intended reading of the work by contemporaries would have been more indirect and ironic, as is also indicated by formal qualities of the crystal. It is noteworthy that the compositional arrangement undercuts the closeness of the parallel between the just judge of the crystal and the Carolingian king, since despite the formal analogy to near-contemporary Carolingian ruler portraiture already adduced, it can hardly be merely coincidental that the judge of the crystal does not occupy the central space, here given over to Susanna, and is presented in profile. Carolingian ruler portraits, including not only those already mentioned but many others as well, habitually portray the king frontally in some variation of the “majesty” formula, and disguised portrayals of Carolingian rulers through Old Testament prototypes use the same formula. Thus when, in the Bible of San Paolo fuori le mura, the frontispiece miniature for the book of Proverbs shows Solomon enthroned beneath just such a canopy-vault as is the judge on the Susanna crystal, Solomon, who is providing wise and just judgment for the two women quarreling over a child depicted below him, is portrayed frontally at the center of the image (see fig. 12). Evidently, had the Carolingian artist wished to make a similarly direct association between contemporary ruler and Old Testament prototype he could have done so, and we are entitled to suspect that when he used a different manner of presentation he wished to make a rather different point.

The Susanna crystal is clearly not an insult to Lothair II nor an apology by him but remains, in my view, a pointed warning to him of the danger of failing to execute properly his royal responsibilities. Surely, if simple flattery and praise were intended by the designer of the Susanna crystal, they were managed very awkwardly indeed, and Lothair II of all men is unlikely to have been unreservedly delighted with a gift telling him of his duty to vindicate women against unjust accusations of sexual misconduct!

Scholars today, including art historians, are well aware of the difficulties in establishing the original intention of the artists and patrons of any historical moment, including the present one, to say nothing of the Carolingian past. I am sufficiently old-fashioned to think that, impossible as it may be fully to recapture creative intention, it is possible to deduce at least some portion of avowed conscious intention, and very likely something of unconscious significance as well. In any event, the search seems to me well
worth the effort, and I am not apologetic for sharing with you some examples of what appear to me the intent of Carolingian artists and patrons to reflect and convey specific and occasionally complex and subtle political messages through works of art. At the same time, we cannot confuse intent of the artist with reception by contemporary audiences. We must not too simply and schematically reduce the diversity and complexity of the Carolingian audience, or indeed audiences, for works of art, which were presumably and, in my view, demonstrably as variable as those today. Complex meanings and programs may well have been incomprehensible to contemporaries, even to the relatively learned, to say nothing of later observers. Perhaps an example will clarify my point.

The majority of the profile portrait coins of Charlemagne with which I began my remarks bear on the reverse an image of a Roman temple (fig. 14), derived demonstrably from late antique Roman series, such as the example of a coin of Maxentius of about 308. Here, clearly, we have a reference to Rome, but with a cross replacing the cult image of the ancient coins, another cross surmounting the temple façade, and the legend Cristiana Religio, all testifying to the importance of regarding Charlemagne's assumption of the imperial title and style as a Christian conversion of the originally pagan Roman tradition.89 This idea of Hugh Fallon, who showed the origin of the Cristiana Religio term and theme in the Libri Carolini text, is to me not only a just assessment but an important one. These coins bear a coherent political program uniting obverse and reverse in a meaningful way, and I think they were intended to do so, having been elaborated in some official setting, presumably at the court, for manufacture at the important mint at Frankfurt, where all were produced. Yet already in Charlemagne's reign, other mints copied the obverse portrait but replaced the meaningful reverse image and legend with a local emblem, such as the ship of the port at Quentovic and the city gate of the old Ro-

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**Figure 14.** Carolingian coin (reverse of fig. 3): image of a Roman temple. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Reproduced by permission of the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz.
man city of Trier, destroying the meaning of the program. Evidently even highly placed contemporaries either failed to receive or deliberately rejected the political program or message intended by the original issue of the series, or the figures at the court who designed the original program were resigned to its significance being opaque in the provinces in any event, so that alteration of the reverse image would not actually be a loss.

The original intent was not lost altogether, however, and could be recovered and restated by later issues, as on the temple coins with profile portraits issued by Charlemagne’s son Louis the Pious. Even here, however, the reproduction of the same image and legend types was very likely intended to carry a rather different meaning. Fallon suggested, I think persuasively, that the Charlemagne temple coins carried a sharply anti-Byzantine message still in the tradition of the diatribes of the Libri Carolini, but it would be difficult to see such a meaning being intended by Louis the Pious roughly two decades later, if I rightly understand important recent work by Thomas Noble on Louis’s relations with Byzantium. The interpretive and historical ground here provides very tricky footing, in other words, and we should tread upon it with great circumspection.

If Aristotle is right in defining man as “by nature a political animal,” then even Carolingian art must be in some sense political too; the difficulty is apparently in defining politics and manner. Recently Janet Nelson has argued that Carolingian politics was more than a matter of parties and campaigns, but “an affair of the guts and of the soul.” Specifically addressing Carolingian royal ritual, which seems far less varied and changing than Carolingian art, she held that it was indeed political. Perhaps, as well as reflecting the hoary historiographical tradition of holding the “dark ages” in low regard, the denial of the political relevance of Carolingian art bespeaks a narrower definition of politics than she would allow. Documentation of artistic works as immediate responses to particular political events is very difficult in this period, but probably not only because of the quantity of our evidence. Works of art are abundant, as are written sources, bearing upon such issues as the imperial coronation of Charlemagne, the revolts of Louis the Pious’s sons, or the attempted divorce of Lothair II, but the two can seldom be brought together in a relationship so exclusive as to rule out alternative explanations. Carolingian thinking is not, I would argue, vague and unfocused, but it is elastic and often multivalent, repeatedly employing familiar concepts and stories drawn from Scripture and the Fathers but deploying them in new contexts to carry new mes-
sages. Carolingians might in this sense be regarded as postmodernists before their time, as rejecting the modernist univocal hermeneutic attitude. It was therefore not troubling to Carolingian authors, and presumably artistic patrons, that, for example, the David and Bathsheba story might be authoritatively interpreted both as royal sin and abuse of power and as the marriage of the Savior with Ecclesia.  

Notes

This essay has been extensively revised since it was given as a lecture at The Ohio State University in 1989, but I have tried to maintain the essential structure and something of the tone of the original lecture. A few important publications that appeared in and after 1992 have been noted here, but the text has not been revised again to respond to their contributions. I am grateful to members of the original audience at Columbus for their helpful comments, as well as to an anonymous reviewer of the early written version. Biblical quotations are from the Douay Rheims Version.

1. **See Karl der Grosse: Werk und Wirkung, nos. 12–25, and the illustration on the cover of the catalogue.**

2. **For a brief discussion of the Renaissance question, see Lawrence Nees, A Tainted Mantle: Hercules and the Classical Tradition at the Carolingian Court, pp. 3–17, with further literature.**


4. **It should be noted, however, that although the coin portrait seems to presuppose the imperial coronation, it does not directly follow that event and may have other, more immediate causes; for a finely balanced discussion of this work and of the entire class of royal images, see Donald A. Bullough, “‘Imagines Regum’ and Their Significance in the Early Medieval West,” esp. pp. 247–48.**

5. **The interesting study of Stanley Morison, Politics and Script: Aspects of Authority and Freedom in the Development of Graeco-Latin Script from the Sixth Century B.C. to the Twentieth Century A.D., makes useful comments about the Carolingian reform of script but makes this a parallel to a very general political development rather than a response to specific individuals and events.**

6. **No studies are wholly devoted to the question of the imperial coronation’s impact upon art, although the issue was addressed by John Beckwith, “Byzantine Influence on Carolingian Art,” and there are important cautionary remarks in Bullough, “‘Imagines Regum,’” pp. 244–49. One interesting example of the problem is presented by the Gatehouse or Torhalle of Lorsch. Richard Krautheimer made this an important point in his justly famous article seeking to connect various aspects of early Carolingian architecture with the imitation of Rome, dating it close to 800 because it was so Roman; see “The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian
Architecture." More recently, Werner Jacobsen has persuasively proposed a much later date and different interpretation; see his "Die Lorscher Torhalle: Zum Problem ihrer Datierung und Deutung."

7. Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*, p. 30. The miniature is Utrecht, Bibliothek der Rijksuniversiteit, cod. 32 (olim cod. Script. eccles. 484), fol. 90v, for which see Koert van der Horst and Jacobus H. A. Engelbrecht, eds., *Utrecht-Psalter: Vollständige Faksimile Ausgabe in Originalformat der Handschrift 32 aus dem Besitz der Bibliothek der Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht.* A more convenient reproduction may be found in Jean Hubert, Jean Porcher, and Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, *The Carolingian Renaissance*, trans. James Emmons, Stuart Gilbert, and Robert Allen, fig. 88, along with an interpretation that the artist "selected, assembled [from earlier Mediterranean models], and dashed down his vivid figurations, in which nothing was really new but the zest giving them such vibrant life" (p. 105).

It is interesting to note that since these remarks were written, this same miniature has been the subject of an important study by Celia Chazelle, presented as a lecture at the 26th International Congress of Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo in 1991 and to be published in the near future. Chazelle offers a strong argument that the miniature contains specific details of costume and setting that connect it with Carolingian ecclesiastical ceremonies and political contexts.


9. Ibid., p. 178. It should be noted that in a series of important recent works Kessler has in fact vigorously propounded the importance of the cultural and political content of several Carolingian images. See his "An Apostle in Armor and the Mission of Carolingian Art"; "A Lay Abbot as Patron: Count Vivian and the First Bible of Charles the Bald"; and "Facies bibliotheca revelata: Carolingian Art as Spiritual Seeing."


11. A recent study of Carolingian arms and armor argues, against the earlier prevailing view, that Carolingian imagery usually depicts contemporary weaponry with considerable accuracy, and does not simply follow earlier iconographic models; see Simon Coupland, "Carolingian Arms and Armor in the Ninth Century," esp. p. 50: "Carolingian ivories and manuscript illumination are a more reliable guide to contemporary armament than has hitherto been believed . . . even though certain features may have been influenced by late Roman or Byzantine pictorial traditions, ninth-century Frankish illustrations depicted current forms of helmets, shields, swords, sword-mounts and spears." I have, in another recent study, attempted to address the issue of "invented" images; see Nees, "The Originality of Early Medieval Artists."

12. Two recent studies that deserve mention are Joan S. Cwi, "A Study in Carolingian Political Theology: The David Cycle at St. John, Müstair"; and the important article by Kessler, "An Apostle in Armor," p. 35.

13. See Bullough, "'Imagines Regum,'" p. 243 and n. 88; and Bullough, "Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven: Liturgy, Theology, and the
Carolingian Age,” esp. pp. 13–15. For the Vienna manuscript, see Kurt Holter, ed., Der goldene Psalter “Dagulf-Psalter”: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat von Codex 1861 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. For the dates of the manuscript and more on its credal collection, see my review of Holter’s Der goldene Psalter in Art Bulletin 67 (1985): 681–90. On the date of the Libri Carolini and related questions, see Ann Freeman, “Carolingian Orthodoxy and the Fate of the Libri Carolini.”

14. For more on this theme, see chap. 7 in this volume, by Thomas F. X. Noble.


16. For a thorough discussion of the ivories’ sources, see Thomas P. F. Hoving, “The Sources of the Ivories of the Ada School,” pp. 71–78. Although he notes that the Dagulf images in fact diverge from those few earlier works that treat the same subject, and that some of its features are “purely Carolingian,” Hoving assumes that the ivories must follow a lost model. Since he thinks the style of the ivories indicates a model of the Theodosian period, Hoving suggests that the Carolingian work closely copies a lost original of that period.

17. In general on the political context of the image and Adoptionist controversies, see McKitterick, The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751–987, p. 59; and Bullough, “Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven,” pp. 31–40. See also Freeman, “Carolingian Orthodoxy,” pp. 90–91, on Libri Carolini, bk. 1, chap. 6, which gives an unprecedented statement of papal authority and in fact illustrates this theme with Jerome’s appeal to the pope even on a grammatical point.


20. See Wolfgang Braunfels, “Karolingischer Klassizismus als politisches Program und karolingischer Humanismus als Lebenshaltung.”


22. For the former, see Nees, Gundohinus Gospels, pl. 35, and for the latter, see Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, fig. 78.


24. For the Calendar of 354, see Henri Stern, Le Calendrier de 354: Etude sur son texte et ses illustrations, including a discussion of the Carolingian copies of this lost manuscript.

25. Florentine Mutherich and Joachim E. Gaehde, Carolingian Painting, p. 9.

26. On the absence of flanking angels: Nees, Gundohinus Gospels, fig. 70; and

27. The miniature is reproduced in Peter Bloch, "Das Apsismosaik von Germigny-des-Prés: Karl der Grosse und der Alte Bund," fig. 5. For the manuscript's presence at Tours, see Grabar, "Fresques romanes copiées sur les miniatures du Pentateuque de Tours," showing the presence of the manuscript at Tours by the eleventh century; and Bezalel Narkiss, "Towards a Further Study of the Ashburnham Pentateuch (Pentateuque de Tours)," esp. p. 58, for the suggestion that the erasure of the heterodox "second Creator" by ninth-century monks in the Tours scriptorium may have been a response to the Adoptionist controversy. For a more recent study of the manuscript, see Franz Rickert, _Studien zum Ashburnham Pentateuch_ (Paris, Bibl. Nat. NAL. 2334).


29. _Libri Carolini_, bk. 1, chaps. 15 and 20, and bk. 2, chap. 26, which specifically reject the equation of making images with making the images of the cherubim for the Ark; see _Libri Carolini sive Caroli Magni Capitulare de Imaginibus_, ed. Hubert Bastgen, _MGH, Concilia_ 2, Supplementum (Hannover, 1924), pp. 34–37, 45–48, and 85–86, respectively. For a discussion of the _Libri Carolini_’s view of those things that can properly be described as holy, see Chazelle, "Matter, Spirit, and Image in the _Libri Carolini_," esp. pp. 165–70. For a convenient illustration and a brief discussion of the Germigny mosaic, see Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, _Carolingian Renaissance_, pp. 11–14 and figs. 10–11. The Germigny mosaic itself probably carried a more pointedly political message than is generally recognized. Bloch, "Apsismosaik," pp. 258–59, touches upon this in linking it to a broader tendency to appeal to and evoke the Old Testament in Charlemagne’s circle, especially linking Charlemagne to David and Solomon and, in a broader sense, the Franks to the Israelites as God’s chosen people. It is important that, in praising the special character and power of the ark and not of images, Theodulf in _Libri Carolini_, ed. Bastgen, bk. 2, chap. 26, pp. 85–86, speaks of the ark’s ability to defeat God’s enemies, and mentions that the king and prophet [David, at 2 Sam. 6:14–23] was not ashamed to dance before the ark. Not previously noted is the passage in Isaiah 37:16–38 in which King Hezekiah prays to the "Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who sittest upon the cherubim," for help against the Assyrians, singling out as the Assyrians’ crime their worship of gods that “were not gods, but the works of men’s hands, of wood and stone.” The ark is the visible sign of God’s military support for his chosen people; on the early Frankish emphasis on prayers for military victory, see Michael McCormick, _Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early_
arguing that Theodulf himself on several occasions referred to and promoted this linkage, which became a regular practice in the 790s.

30. For this text, see Paul Meyvaert, “Excerpts from an Unknown Treatise of Jerome to Gaudentius of Brescia,” attributing the work to Jerome; and Yves-Marie Duval, “Le ‘Liber Hieronymi ad Gaudentium’: Rufin d’Aquitée, Gaudence de Brescia et Eusèbe de Crémone,” arguing rather for an attribution to Rufinus. Meyvaert has informed me that he accepts the correction.


32. Goldschmidt, Elfenbeinskulpturen, no. 5; Karl der Grosse: Werk und Wirkung, no. 519; and Volbach, Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters, no. 221.

33. Goldschmidt, Elfenbeinskulpturen, no. 1; and Volbach, Elfenbeinarbeiten, no. 217. For recent literature and an interesting and plausible suggestion that the ivory might have been executed in the southeastern part of the Carolingian territories, see Carol Neuman de Vegvar, “The Origin of the Genoeis-Elderen Ivories.”

34. Goldschmidt, Elfenbeinskulpturen, no. 13; Karl der Grosse: Werk und Wirkung, no. 521; and Volbach, Elfenbeinarbeiten, no. 223.

35. For these ivories, see Volbach, Elfenbeinarbeiten, nos. 112 and 113. The relationship was noted by Goldschmidt, Elfenbeinskulpturen, p. 10 and fig. 6.

36. Hoving, “Sources,” p. 31, notes the six pots and states that this is the “common number from the sixth century.” Thereby Hoving implies that although we in fact have the Carolingian artist’s direct model before us, with four jugs, he carved six, not because he corrected his model by reference to the text, but because for this specific feature he followed a different model.

37. Ibid., p. 32, noting the displacement.

38. Ibid., p. 34.

39. Weitzmann, Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illustration, pl. 29, the figure at the lower right being Isaiah. For a facsimile of the manuscript, see Guglielmo Cavallo, Jean Griomont, and William C. Loerke, Codex purpureus Rossanensis: Museo dell’Arcivescovado, Rossano Calabro (Rome and Graz, 1987), esp. p. 122 for discussion.

40. Mütherich and Gaehde, Carolingian Painting, pl. 3.


42. I am forced to imagine the basis for separating the book from its cover; in Karl der Grosse: Werk und Wirkung, no. 519, it is simply asserted that “die Handschrift ursprünglich wohl nicht zugehörig.”

43. Goldschmidt, Elfenbeinskulpturen, no. 5, p. 10.

44. Karl der Grosse: Werk und Wirkung, no. 519, with literature.

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English is in Stephen Allott, _Alcuin of York, His Life and Letters_ (York, 1974), nos. 87–91, 93–94.


47. Bernhard Bischof, “Die Kölner Nonnenhandschriften und das Skriptorium von Chelles.”


52. Paulinus of Aquileia, _Contra Felicem_, PL 99:343–468; citations at cols. 371b–72a, 393c–94a, 394d, and 447c.

53. Goldschmidt, _Elfenbeinskulpturen_, no. 40; Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, _Elfenbeinkunst im Mittelalter_, no. 54.

54. That miniatures should be based upon the _tituli_ of the Psalms rather than upon the Psalm text itself is neither unprecedented nor uncommon; for a discussion of the issue in the context of the later Carolingian Psalter, Saint Gall cod. 22, whose miniatures consistently illustrate the _tituli_, see Eggenberger, _Psalterium aureum_, esp. pp. 9–11.


57. See Goldschmidt, _Elfenbeinskulpturen_, no. 40; and Gaborit-Chopin, _Elfenbeinkunst_, p. 62.

58. The standard publication remains Hugo Buchthal, _The Miniatures of the Paris Psalter: A Study in Middle Byzantine Painting_. For a useful tabulation of the subjects in early medieval Psalter illustrations, see Suzy Dufrenne, _Tableaux synoptiques des 15 psautiers médiévaux à illustrations intégrales issues du texte_.

59. Goldschmidt, _Elfenbeinskulpturen_, p. 24 and fig. 11.

60. See van der Hoerst and Engelbregt, eds., _Utrecht-Psalter_.


62. Goldschmidt, _Elfenbeinskulpturen_, nos. 3 and 4; for discussion, see also Holter, ed., _Goldene Psalter_.

63. On this important genre of texts in the Carolingian period, see Hans
Hubert Anton, Fürstenspiegel und Herrschertodos in der Karolingerzeit. For the image of the Carolingian ruler’s humility in art, see the fundamental article by Robert Deschman, “The Exalted Servant: The Ruler Theology of the Prayerbook of Charles the Bald.”


65. See n. 55, above, for reference.


68. For the text of this poem, see Contra indices, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH, Poetæ 1 (Berlin, 1881), pp. 493–517; and Nicolai Alexandrenko, “The Poetry of Theodulf of Orleans: A Translation and Critical Study,” p. 161. I discuss this poem in A Tainted Mantle, pt. 2. For other examples of the citation of Josiah in connection with Carolingian kings, see Anton, Fürstenspiegel.

69. Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CLXV; see Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, Europe of the Invasions, fig. 158.

70. Paris, B.N., cod. lat. 4404, fols. 1v–2; for a color plate, see Porcher, “La Peinture provinciale,” p. 63 (a rather bizarre diatribe against the perceived poor quality of the painting style) and pl. 27.


75. Anton, Fürstenspiegel, p. 99, speaking of the influence of the immediately
preceding chapter of the same book upon Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi* terms the section "dem christlichen Fürstenspiegel par excellence."

76. See Nees, *A Tainted Mantle*, pp. 83–84 and 238, on the knowledge of Augustine's *City of God* in the Carolingian period. In the present context it is especially noteworthy that Hincmar of Reims in his treatise of 879 addressed to Charles the Bald, *De regis persona et regio ministerio*, PL 125:833–56, esp. cols. 839–40, transcribes most of Augustine's bk. 5, chap. 24, on the happiness of the Christian ruler.

77. Discussed by Nelson, "Kingship and Empire," p. 220. Here also (pp. 217–19) for a discussion of the *Prospice* prayer used in royal consecrations and other contexts, which emphasized the royal duty to comfort churches and monasteries. Unfortunately I received too late for consideration in this study the important new book by Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London and New York, 1992).

78. For a brief discussion and sources, in the context of the broader problem of the royal need to secure military and political support through the bestowal of benefices upon which the king could lay his hands, see McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, pp. 181–82. See also Nelson, "Charles the Bald and the Church in Town and Countryside" (repr. in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, esp. pp. 77–82).

79. For a summary of events and literature, see McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, pp. 231–36.


81. I have not attempted to address the issues raised by the other two miniatures in the book. The portrait of David shows him not enthroned as a king and prophet, perhaps in part because the portrait of Charles occupies that iconographic niche, but dancing with his musicians; for a convenient reproduction, see Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, *The Carolingian Renaissance*, fig. 134. This image is complex but evidently shows David, surrounded by four musicians, dancing and playing his psaltery. One famous biblical text evoked by the image is of David "leaping and dancing before the Lord" when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem, and his rejection of his wife Michal, who castigated him for appearing so undignified and unkingly. David responded (2 Sam. 6:20–21), "Before the Lord, who chose me . . . I will both play and make myself meaner than I have done; and I will be little in my own eyes." For discussion of the related iconography in the Saint Gall Psalter, see Eggenberger, *Psalterium aureum*, pp. 39–53. The image of St. Jerome on the facing page poses even more difficult interpretive problems, which will not be addressed here; the Saint Gall Psalter also has a Jerome image (Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, *The Carolingian Renaissance*, fig. 136) and is discussed by Eggenberger, *Psalterium aureum*, pp. 54–60, with
literature, and most recently by Diebold, "Verbal, Visual, and Cultural Literacy."


83. For this work, see the illustrations and earlier literature in Percy Ernst Schramm and Florentine Mütterich, Denkmale der deutschen Könige und Kaiser, no. 31, pp. 125–26; and the study by Hans Wentzel, "Der Bergkristall mit der Geschichte der Susanna." The Carolingian engraved rock crystals were studied as a group by Genevra A. Kornbluth, "Carolingian Treasure: Engraved Gems of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," no. 1 and pp. 278–306. I am grateful to the author for having provided me with a copy of her dissertation, and I have learned even more from the preliminary draft of her article recently published as "The Susanna Crystal of Lothar II: Chastity, the Church, and Royal Justice."

84. Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, fig. 137; Schramm and Mütterich, Denkmale, no. 92; and more recently Horst Fuhrmann and Mütterich, Das Evangelar Heinrich des Löwen und das mittelalterliche Herrscherbild, pl. 3. For royal portraits in Carolingian books, see most recently John Lowden, "The Royal/Imperial Book and the Image or Self-Image of the Medieval Ruler."

85. P. Lauer, "Le Joyau carolingien de Waulsort-sur-Meuse."


87. For a discussion of this complicated affair, see Peter R. McKeon, Hincmar of Laon and Carolingian Politics, pp. 39–58.


89. For this coin type, see esp. Hugh C. Fallon, "Imperial Symbolism on Two Carolingian Coins." For this and related coins, along with some related seals and other material, see Schramm, Die deutschen Kaiser und Könige in Bildern ihrer Zeit, 751–1190, esp. pp. 148–50, with earlier literature.

90. For a discussion of the various types and an assessment of the chronology and issues of this series, see Grierson, "Money and Coinage under Charlemagne," esp. pp. 518–27.

91. Thomas F. X. Noble, "Louis the Pious, the Papacy and the Byzantines in the Second Iconoclastic Controversy," presented as a lecture at a meeting of the Delaware Valley Medieval Association held at the University of Pennsylvania in 1986.


94. For this interpretation, see S. Gregorii Magni Moralia in Job, bk. 3, chap. 28, para. 55, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 143 (Turnhout, 1979), pp. 148–50. The passage was discussed by Morrison, The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West, p. 102.