Tradition and Learning in Search of Ideology: The Libri Carolini

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The text called by modern scholars the \textit{Libri Carolini}, the Caroline books, that is to say, Charlemagne's books, is puzzling in many ways.\footnote{1} It is not clear, for example, in what sense this treatise can be ascribed to Charlemagne. It is hard to say exactly what kind of treatise the \textit{Libri Carolini} really is. Sometimes the work is called the \textit{Capitulare de imaginibus}, but it is not a capitulary.\footnote{2} François Louis Ganshof refused to accept the \textit{Libri Carolini} as a capitulary in his authoritative treatment of those quasi-legislative texts.\footnote{3} It was published by the Monumenta Germaniae Historica in the Concilia series as a supplement, not in the Capitularia series, but this is not helpful either because the treatise was not the product of conciliar deliberations. Is the work actually about images? Is one of its customary titles at least half right? This deceptively simple question requires investigation too, but it can be said right away that much of what is most important in the \textit{Libri Carolini} has nothing to do with images. The oldest surviving manuscript of the \textit{Libri Carolini} lacks all titular and prefatory material, but a slightly later and complete text calls the work, if I may be permitted some nondistorting abridgement, \textit{Opus Caroli contra synodum}.\footnote{4} Here is Charles again, but now he has issued neither \textit{libri} nor \textit{capitularia}, but rather an \textit{opus}. And this time it is \textit{contra synodum} not \textit{de imaginibus}. The synod referred to is the Second Council of Nicaea, held in 787, and it is perfectly clear, on the plain and copious testimony of the text, that that synod figured largely in the discussions that produced the
**Libri Carolini.** But, once again, there is much in the *Libri Carolini* that is only loosely connected with Second Nicaea. Confusing titles by both original authors and modern editors have sent readers scurrying down several divergent paths in their attempts to understand the *Libri Carolini*.

The *Libri Carolini* is a big book by any measure that might be applied to it: 228 quarto pages in the standard printed edition. It has, I think, been more often characterized than read, more often interpreted than studied. There have been battles over who wrote it, although it appears that the guns have been stilled on at least this field of contention as a result of Ann Freeman's compelling demonstration that Theodulf, the later bishop of Orléans, was the author. It has been suggested that the Carolingians completely misunderstood the subtleties of the theological positions embraced at Nicaea and that they responded with a misguided and intemperate diatribe that was largely irrelevant to the issues at hand. Some have tried to exculpate Charlemagne and his associates by saying that they worked from such a bad translation of the conciliar *acta* that they could not possibly have come to grips with the issues that had been raised in 787. There are those who think that the *Libri Carolini* was mainly a proud assertion by Charlemagne of his regal and sacerdotal position, while others counter by saying that Charlemagne did not wish to embarrass Pope Hadrian I and that he laid his great book aside without publishing it.

It would be easy, and perhaps instructive, to go on and on pointing out puzzles, but it is more important to try to solve at least a few of them. In the process of offering solutions, some bold claims will be advanced on behalf of the *Libri Carolini*. In defense of such claims, I can say only this: I am going to try to tackle the *Libri Carolini* as a whole and in its historical context. I take my lead from a remark by Walter Goffart in his brilliant study of early medieval historical writing. He says that "like us, Jordanes, Gregory and the others meant to write what they did and were well aware of what they said and why." Although poststructuralist critics have warned us that texts can be polysemic and that authorial intent may be an illusion, I proceed on the assumption that Theodulf had both the means and the will to articulate his own views and those of his contemporaries and associates. The central purpose of this study, therefore, is to work out what Theodulf said and why he said it. I am confident that this investigation will demonstrate that the *Libri Carolini* is a work of great power and sophistication that must be understood as a whole and on its own terms, and that it is a book that reveals a great deal about the cultural life of the Carolingian world in the last decades of the eighth century.

My discussion of the *Libri Carolini* will proceed along three paths. First,
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I shall say a little about how the book came to be written and how the circumstances surrounding its composition provide some clues as to its meaning. Second, I shall give my reading of the text itself, laying particular stress on the organization of the work and on the several major lines of argument that it develops. In the course of this discussion, I shall attempt to assess the kinds of learning on which the Libri Carolini depended. Third and finally, I shall offer a series of interpretations of the Libri Carolini based on its preparation, historical setting, and intellectual foundations.

Ostensibly the Libri Carolini represents a response of some kind to the issues involved in the Second Council of Nicaea of 787. Let us, as a beginning, make a brief investigation of how that synod came to be called, what its central concerns were, and how the synod and its concerns came to the attention of the Franks.

Byzantine Iconoclasm, inaugurated in the 720s by Emperor Leo III, proceeded through two distinct phases in the eighth century. First, during Leo's reign and the early years of that of his son and successor, Constantine V, icons were destroyed on imperial orders. The principal objection to icons in this early period of Iconoclasm was that they were idolatrous. Orthodox theologians, chiefly John of Damascus, were able to show that idols and icons were fundamentally different, and also to assert that there were profound theological grounds, to be found in the realms of soteriology and Christology, for defending the use of icons in the church. At this juncture, a major council was held at Hierieia in 754, and icons were now condemned on ecclesiastical and theological authority with, of course, complete imperial approval. The charge of idolatry was not abandoned, but it was now supplemented by arguments whose bases were Christological, and which sought to respond to the defense of images advanced by John of Damascus. In 775 the arch-Iconoclast Constantine V died, and five years later he was followed to the grave by his son and successor, Leo IV. Leo left behind a minor son, Constantine VI, and a remarkable and resourceful widow, Irene.⁸

Almost immediately upon assuming her regency, Irene embarked upon a series of diplomatic initiatives. Her efforts toward the East are of no direct concern to us here, but highly significant was her opening to the West, which took the form of a proposed marriage alliance between her son Constantine and Charlemagne's daughter Rotrud. Irene and the old patriarch Paul IV had already been making some subtle moves against Iconoclasm, and without these the empress could have had no hope of
reconciliation, let alone of alliance, with the pope and the Franks. For two generations the popes and their protectors and allies, the Carolingians, had steadfastly opposed Byzantine Iconoclasm. That opposition had played a role in the papal alienation from Byzantium, the Franko-papal alliance, and the reconfiguration of the political map of Italy. Apparently, then, Irene was signaling her willingness to recognize the permanent loss to the Byzantine Empire of all of northern and central Italy, while also hoping to make Charlemagne guarantor of the continued imperial possession of the duchy of Naples and of Sicily. Where the pope was concerned, Irene primarily wished to tell him that as soon as possible there would be an end to Iconoclasm. Essentially, Irene was leading the Byzantine state out of the diplomatic and ecclesiastical isolation in which it had found itself for a half century.9

It is frustrating that, because of lack of sources, we cannot know more precisely the momentum and motivations of change in Constantinople. The approach to Charlemagne and the first one to Rome came in 781. By 784 Irene had decided to call an ecumenical council to condemn Iconoclasm, and in 785 she duly notified Pope Hadrian of her intentions and invited him to attend or to send representatives to the council.10 Hadrian responded in October of 785 with a long letter in which he expressed his pleasure at the forthcoming condemnation of heretical Iconoclasm, raised a number of ecclesiastical concerns, and agreed to send legates to a council.11 Hadrian also received, perhaps along with Irene's letter, a synodal letter and profession of faith from the newly elected (25 December 784), and firmly iconodule, patriarch Tarasius.12 Irene convened her council in Constantinople in 786, but it was almost immediately disbanded by troops loyal to Iconoclasm.13 About a year later, and well outside the capital, at Nicaea, the council assembled again and this time completed its work in six full sessions, with a brief final session in the Magnaura Palace in Constantinople.14 Leaving aside rituals and protocols, the work of the council consisted of two major accomplishments. The first was a review of the place of images in Christian history, with a view to showing that ancient and authentic traditions approved their use. The second was a detailed and systematic refutation of the heresies, the definition, and of the biblical and patristic proof-texts advanced at Hieria in 754. The council did not offer anything new. Its intention from the outset was to restore the status quo ante Iconoclasm.

Hadrian's representatives brought the conciliar acta back to Rome, probably very late in 787. According to the Liber Pontificalis, a Latin translation of the Greek acta was prepared and placed in the Lateran archives.15
Two things only are known with certainty about that translation: it was poorly done and it somehow found its way into Charlemagne's hands. There is not a scrap of surviving evidence to the effect that Hadrian sent the *acta* to the king, and there are hints that Charlemagne thought he had gotten his text directly from Constantinople.\(^{16}\) While I am not optimistic that we shall ever know exactly how Charlemagne got his copy of the Nicene *acta*, I am quite convinced that it cannot have been later than 788 when the king first heard of the proceedings of Nicea and Constantinople. Let us note that from 781 to 789 Charles's daughter was affianced to Irene's son. In addition, the Franks and the Greeks were involved in a complicated set of political and diplomatic intrigues in southern Italy. Finally, the papal and Frankish courts were in almost constant contact throughout the period that concerns us. In 789 the Franko-Byzantine marriage alliance was broken off, probably as a result of the decisions taken, or thought by the Franks to have been taken, at Nicea. Much was going on in these years that has left no trace in the scanty records.

By 790 or 791 Theodulf had begun work on a text that would come to be known as the *Libri Carolini*.\(^{17}\) In 792 a decision was made at the Frankish court to send the recently condemned Adoptionist heretic, Felix of Urgel, to Rome in the custody of Angilbert of Saint-Riquier. Apparently it was also decided, rather hastily, to inform Hadrian about the deliberations at the Frankish court concerning Second Nicea. A very brief version, perhaps involving no more than chapter titles, of the *Libri Carolini* as a work-in-progress accompanied Angilbert to Rome. This document is usually called the *Capitulare adversus synodum*.\(^{18}\) In, probably, 793 a massive response from Hadrian arrived at the Frankish court.\(^{19}\) In angry and exasperated terms Hadrian rejected point after point the Frankish condemnation of Second Nicea. This response appears to have been wholly unexpected, and its immediate result was to put an end to the discussions at court surrounding the *Libri Carolini*.

The *Libri Carolini* is, therefore, a book prepared at the court of Charlemagne between about 790 and 793. A happy accident has preserved the actual, working copy of the *Libri Carolini*: MS Vaticanus Latinus 7207. Close studies of that original manuscript, plus some scattered bits of ninth-century evidence, make it possible to form a reasonably good impression of how the book came to be composed.

It is to Ann Freeman, and to a lesser degree to Walter Schmandt, that we are indebted for our understanding, not only of the composition of the *Libri Carolini*, but also for precious insights into the way in which Charlemagne's court theologians attacked the problems posed by the council of
Theodulf of Orléans was assigned the task of preparing a first draft of the Frankish response to the Byzantines. That draft was pretty well advanced when the *Capitulare adversus synodum* was dispatched to Rome. Meanwhile, serious work continued, apparently in two stages. Theodulf's draft, now the Vatican manuscript, a text that lacks the preface and the beginning of book 1 as well as the whole of book 4, was subjected to intense scrutiny at court. This truncated manuscript contains no fewer than 3,400 corrections. The heavily corrected sections stop at book 2, chapter 29, and after book 3, chapter 13 there is a marked decline in the quality of the parchment and script. These changes almost certainly betoken the arrival of Hadrian's disheartening response. At some point in the proceedings, actual argumentation was carried out in Charlemagne's presence, and his reactions were recorded in marginal notations that were subsequently erased and replaced with Tironian notes. Thus, in sum, there was a three-step process: composition by Theodulf, review by other theologians, and approval by Charlemagne. The work can, therefore, be said to be official in the sense that it had the king's explicit endorsement, but it must be remembered that it was the intellectual product of a series of spirited and sophisticated exchanges.

Manuscript Vat. Lat. 7207 arrived in Rome in 1784 and was already mutilated. In its tattered and corrected state, it had been put in the palace archives, where Hincmar saw it in the 820s and where it might have been consulted in connection with the renewed image controversy that culminated in the Council of Paris in 825. Around the middle of the century Hincmar had a copy made for himself, and this manuscript, containing the complete text of the *Libri Carolini*, survives as Paris Arsenal 663. Angelo Mercati was able to trace the presence in the papal library of a copy of the *Libri Carolini* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but it is not known what happened to this manuscript. A few years ago, Bernhard Bischoff discovered on the flyleaf of a Paris manuscript a single folio from another copy of the *Libri Carolini* that was made at Corbie in the middle of the ninth century. All in all, then, only four copies of the book can be shown to have been in existence. This represents an extremely limited dissemination indeed for a book of such evident importance and powerful associations. It has been published a number of times since the middle of the sixteenth century but never satisfactorily. A new and truly critical edition by Ann Freeman is presently in press at the Monumenta Germaniae Historica.

It will be clear now why I spoke at the outset of puzzles. A full consideration of the *Libri Carolini* would require a careful assessment of all the evi-
dentary problems that I have only alluded to here. Obviously this is not the place for that assessment. But there is one puzzle that cannot be passed over in silence. It is this: why was so much effort and such great learning lavished upon a work that seems never to have been published and never to have been disseminated? And why was this work so apparently uninfluential until, ironically, it was embraced by Protestants in the sixteenth century and placed on the Index of Forbidden Books until 1900? Most of the rest of this paper will constitute an attempt to answer those questions.

Schmandt has quite correctly called the Libri Carolini a Staatschrift (political tract), but the implications of his observations have often been missed. An old tradition holds that the Libri Carolini and the Synod of Frankfurt in 794 represented the high point of Carolingian Caesaro-papism and a deep humiliation for the pope. Another tradition holds that the Libri Carolini was, in fact, shelved—this accounting for its weak dissemination—either because the Franks did not wish to embarrass the pope or because Hadrian commanded the Franks to give up their opposition to his official position.

Each of these views is anachronistic. Charlemagne never treated the popes in the haughty way that Roman or Byzantine emperors did, and the plain testimony of the Libri Carolini speaks respectfully of the papacy. Moreover, no early medieval pope possessed or claimed the kind of jurisdictional primacy in matters of dogma that high medieval popes routinely asserted. It was only with the professionalization of theological learning and the hardening of jurisdictional lines by the canonists and decretalists that there emerged a sharply Rome-centered source of dogmatic definition. In the very period that concerns us, the Franks and the popes agreed to disagree on a doctrinal matter of some significance: the procession of the Holy Spirit, or the filioque controversy. Charlemagne and Hadrian had some rather sharp differences of opinion about the nature and dimensions of the territorial settlements in Italy that resulted from the demise of the Lombard kingdom, but here also they managed to work together amicably to achieve a just and lasting solution.

Amicable cooperation is indeed the spirit that I detect in the whole period when the Libri Carolini was being prepared. Let us consider some of the relevant actions of both the king and the pope. The preface to the Libri Carolini, a section written in 790 and never revised, says that when the Franks learned of the synod of the Greeks and its horrible decisions, they immediately set to work in defense of the faith and the church. It is interesting to note that the procedure followed was exactly the same as that used in the Adoptionist and filioque controversies. That is, when a problem
was brought to Charlemagne's attention, he, as a loyal son of the church, gathered his clergy so that they, with his blessing and under his authority, might assemble the necessary scriptural and patristic texts to settle the matter. As in the cases of Adoptionist and Trinitarian strife, so too in the matter of images; the results of Frankish deliberations were sent to Rome. Nowhere in any of the pertinent sources is there a remark to the effect that the Franks were, in any of these instances, attempting to dictate to the pope. Nor is there anywhere a hint that the Franks felt in some sense legally obligated to lay their work before the pope. They had acted in defense of the church and the faith, and their recourse to Rome was a mark of profound respect.

After Hadrian's response to the *Capitulare adversus synodum* arrived at court, plans were continued for the great synod and public assembly of Frankfurt that was held in 794. Papal legates did attend Frankfurt. The *acta* say that the council was held "with apostolic authority," and that the council's second canon pronounced a condemnation of sorts upon Second Nicaea. Thus, it might seem that the Franks imposed their views upon Rome. Closer inspection shows that such was not the case, however. In the first place, Frankfurt was one of the most significant councils held in the whole of Charlemagne's reign and it dealt with a huge agenda of business. Nicaea was certainly not the first item on that agenda. Indeed, the initial topic was Adoptionism, and Nicaea came second.

That is significant by itself, but two further aspects of Frankfurt's treatment of Nicaea are even more revealing. The first of these concerns the language of the canons themselves. Canon one, dealing with Adoptionism, says "sanctissimi patres...contradixerunt atque...statuerunt" (the most holy fathers...contradict and...declare), and canon two, dealing with Nicaea, says "sanctissimi patres nostri...contemperunt atque...condempnaverunt" (our most holy fathers...despise and...condemn). Canon three handled the affairs of the rebellious Duke Tassilo of Bavaria. Its dispositive language says that Tassilo was "made to stand up in the midst of the most holy council" and that after all the charges were read "dominus noster" (our lord), that is, Charlemagne himself, pronounced his punishments: "indulsit" (he indulged), "concessit" (he conceded), "precepit" (he instructed), and "iussit" (he ordered).

The dispositive language in subsequent canons is more like that of canon three than of canons one and two. For example, canon four reads "Statuit piissimus domnus noster rex" (Our most pious lord king declared), and canon six says "Statutum est a domno rege et sancta synodo" (It was decreed by the lord king and by the holy synod). It appears that a
clear distinction was being drawn between the first two canons and all the
others. As Hans Barion argued long ago, “dogmatic issues were being in­
dependently decided legally by the bishops.” In the very canons where
papal authority is emphasized, episcopal authority is much to the fore. An­
other structural aspect of these canons is striking. Canon one says that
Adoptionism “exortum est” (arose), while canon two says that the image
question “Allata est in medio” (was brought forward), and, finally, canon
three says of Tassilo that “definitum est capitulum” (a decision was spelled
out). Each of these cases was complex, and so the language dealing with
them does not reflect the clear, crisp, business-like dispositions of the rest
of the canons. Here it is as if crucial issues were decided openly and only
after due deliberation.

The second issue that requires careful analysis touches the actual words
used at Frankfurt concerning Nicaea. In a slightly tortured bit of Latin,
the council fathers accused their Nicaean counterparts of anathematizing
anyone who would not pay to images of the saints exactly the same honor
that was to be accorded to the Trinity. At Nicaea, Bishop Constantine of
Cyprus had explicitly condemned a statement that the same honor should
be paid to images as to the Trinity, but his words had been garbled in the
translation sent to the Franks. At Frankfurt, only Constantine’s words
were condemned, and it cannot have been too difficult for the pope’s
legates to agree to this condemnation. The Latin translation of the text
had been prepared in Rome, after all, and it may have been that all parties
thought that Constantine of Cyprus had indeed said something reprehens­
ible in the midst of a council that otherwise met with papal, but not Frank­
ish, approval. Thus, at Frankfurt, one remarkably minute issue was fixed
upon for condemnation. The pope, through his legates, was not asked to
condemn all that was done at Nicaea, and the Franks got at least a measure
of papal approval for their dissatisfaction with Nicaea.

The papal legates went home laden with gifts, and the Franks do seem
to have taken at least some of Hadrian’s objections to heart in carrying out
their revisions of the *Libri Carolini*. Here again one detects a spirit of
cooperation and compromise. This same spirit is evident in Hadrian’s mas­
sume letter to the Franks. It contains no less than two diplomatic safety
valves for the Franks. In one, Hadrian promised Charlemagne that he
might yet declare the Greeks heretics if they did not restore to the church
provinces and revenues that had been seized many years before by Leo
III. Hadrian did not promise to repudiate Nicaea, but the Franks got
some hope of a condemnation of the Greeks. In the other, Hadrian at­
tempted to dissociate Charlemagne from the totality of the *Libri Carolini*
and to associate him personally with only a very limited reading of the fa­
mous letter of Gregory I to Serenus of Marseilles concerning images. Hadrian was saying, in effect, that Charlemagne was surely correct in all
his thinking, but his bishops had gotten a bit carried away in the heat of
the argument.  

The pope gave Charlemagne, in other words, a diplomatic opportunity
to distance himself from the very documents he had dispatched to Rome
in the first place, while telling the king that his understanding of the papal
view of images was impeccable. Finally, it has been suggested recently that
Hadrian may have taken Frankish views on sacred art into consideration in
Rome in the years after about 790. When, before Hadrian's pontificate,
the Liber Pontificalis makes one of its numerous mentions of images, it does
so with no reference to aesthetic considerations. The spiritual, or theologi­
cal, significance of images was stressed. In Hadrian's time, however, mod­
ifying adjectives denoting size, color, or beauty begin to appear to signify
aesthetic or even decorative, but not spiritual, value attached to images.
This was the argument of the Libri Carolini.  

Einhard says that Charlemagne wept when he heard of Hadrian's death
in 795.  

Well might he have done so. He and the old pope had been
friends and allies for more than two decades. They sometimes disagreed
with one another but they never had a major break in relations. The whole
affair surrounding the Libri Carolini did not provoke a rift in Franko-papal
relations because it was not meant to do so and because the pope and the
Frankish king knew very well how to compromise and cooperate.

The Libri Carolini was a Staatschrift in the sense that it represented a
core of ideological values and ideas that were prominent at the Caro­
lingian court in the 780s and 790s. But it was more like a treatise, like a
liber, than like a capitolary or other public act of the will of the king. It
received no wider dissemination than other treatises written in the Caro­
lingian period, for example, the books on kingship written by Jonas of
Orléans, Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, Hincmar of Reims, and Sedulius
Scottus, or the volumes of ethical advice prepared by Paulinus of Aquileia,
Alcuin, Hrabanus Maurus, and Hincmar. But the Libri Carolini was offi­
cial because it reflected the views of Charlemagne and his most influential
associates at a key moment in the reign.

Let us turn now to what the Libri Carolini actually says or, more precisely,
to the major themes it develops. There are four of these, and each is tied
closely to a particular type of tradition. For purposes of discussion I shall
call these themes biblical, ecclesiastical, papal, and Christian-imperial. Although these labels are notionally accurate, none actually appears in just this way in the *Libri Carolini.* The four traditions are woven so tightly into the text that it is not easy to disentangle them without rending the fabric. With due care, then, we shall attempt in what follows to trace four particular threads.

The *Libri Carolini* was composed in four books, the original intention having been to produce books of thirty chapters, each book preceded by a preface. The surviving version departs slightly from this scheme, but the discrepancies are not such as to require comment. Book 1 begins with an attack on the eastern emperors and goes on to say that the Greeks misunderstand images in a fundamental way. The flaws in their reasoning are particularly attributable to a deficient understanding of the Old Testament. Patriarch Tarasius is also severely criticized, and then more scorn is heaped on Byzantine misunderstandings of the Old Testament. Book 2 begins by carrying on the attack against Byzantine mishandling of the Bible and then turns to a series of searing indictments of the mistakes of a number of Greek Fathers and of the misuse of those Fathers at Nicaea. Book 3 begins with a Frankish *confessio fidei* and then goes on to another condemnation of Tarasius, which blames him for misleading his church. Next there are several rejections of Byzantine theological errors, followed by sharp criticisms of the theological positions of a group of eastern theologians. After this we find a neat bit of ecclesiological criticism of Second Nicaea, a pointed attack on Irene, and then a remarkable set of observations on what images are, what they are not, and what place they hold in the church. The fourth and last book continues the theological reasoning begun in book 3 but is, in a sense, more systematic and less historical, exegetical, and ecclesiological—at least until the very end. Here we read that the Byzantines do not understand what an image truly is or what images are for and do not know how to establish or to verify evidence concerning images. The work ends with a ringing denunciation of the failure of the Byzantines to adhere to the universal traditions of the Church.

Again and again the *Libri Carolini* refers to Second Nicaea, and the problem of images appears in some fashion on almost every page. But I believe that Nicaea provided an opportunity, and images provided an issue, that enabled the Carolingians to crystallize their thinking on a host of concerns that reached far beyond the immediate historical circumstances that had set Theodulf and his colleagues to working in the first place. An investigation based upon the four traditions enumerated above will enable us to test the validity of that belief.
First, then, let us look at the biblical tradition. The first two books especially of the *Libri Carolini* contain a series of specific and programmatic condemnations of Byzantine readings of the Old Testament. In specific terms, they reject a long set of passages that were adduced at Nicaea in defense of images. For example, they say that Abraham did not adore the sons of Heth, Moses did not adore Jethro, and Jacob did not adore pharaoh. Likewise, Jacob did not erect his pillow stone as an image, nor did he treat Joseph’s cloak in this way. Jacob’s staff was not an image, and neither was the Ark of the Covenant. Bezeleel did not build images, and the story of Moses and the hyacinths has no more to do with images than does the tale of Moses’ bronze staff. The account of Joshua and the twelve stones does not authorize images. Extensive attention is paid to the alleged misuse of the psalms by the Byzantines. In particular, Eastern interpretations of eleven psalms (4, 9, 11, 25, 29, 47, 73, 74, 84, 98, and 124) are explicitly criticized. The minute attention devoted to the psalms in this section of *Libri Carolini* is probably attributable to the prominent place occupied by these biblical prayer-poems in the public worship of the Western church.

The more programmatic comments are of two kinds. In one, the Byzantines are hectored for failing to understand the vocabulary and grammar of the Old Testament. The second kind is more serious and sustained. Again and again the Franks condemn the Byzantines for reading passages in the Old Testament literally and for quoting those passages in connection with images when, in reality, all such passages are to be understood typologically as referring to Christ or to the church. The Byzantines certainly did not need a lesson in typological exegesis, and at least some of the Carolingians’ criticisms of the Greeks were occasioned by misunderstandings of their own prompted by the poor translation of Nicaea’s *Acta* from which they were working. To some extent the controversy was created by the fact that the Byzantines generally hewed close to the more literalist Antiochene school of exegesis while the West had a preference for the allegorical school of Alexandria. But it takes very little imagination to see that Theodulf and his associates were really giving voice to a central set of preoccupations in the Carolingian court. It is to those concerns that one must turn in order to understand the context and meaning of the exegetical and interpretive arguments that fill most of the first two books of the *Libri Carolini*.

At just the time when the *Libri Carolini* was being prepared, Charlemagne’s massive program of educational reform and spiritual revival was coming into full swing. It would be no exaggeration to say that that pro-
The whole idea of the reform was to communicate biblical truths to the people so that all might be led to salvation. In order for the clergy to preach the Bible, and for the people to understand what was being preached to them, books had to be obtained and copied, teachers had to be trained, schools had to be formed, and pupils had to be recruited. In many respects, the whole program demanded that the right things had to be taught and understood. Where the Old Testament was concerned, this meant that it had to be seen as having foreshadowed the New Testament and also, as we shall see below, the Frankish people and their kings.

It cannot be mere coincidence that just in the years when the *Libri Carolini* was being prepared, there arose among Charlemagne's key advisers a potent association between the great Frank and the kings of the Old Testament. In the preface to the *Admonitio generalis* of 789, Charlemagne is compared to Josiah because, like him, he sought "by visitation, correction and admonition to recall the kingdom which God had given him to the worship of the true God" (cf. 2 Kings:22-23). As early as 775 Charlemagne had been addressed as both Solomon and David by Cathwulf, and Charlemagne's throne at Aachen, in the chapel on which construction had begun in about 788, was consciously modeled on that of Solomon. To Alcuin, Charlemagne was like Solomon both because of his wisdom and because he erected a complex of buildings like the Temple once built in Jerusalem. Paul the Deacon called Charlemagne David in about 787, as had Cathwulf earlier, albeit in a numerical riddle. By about 794, however, it had become common to refer to Charlemagne as David. These sources, whether poetic or epistolary, sought to draw a parallel between Charlemagne's and David's prophetic wisdom and strength in defense of Israel and the faith. The precise significance of these references to Old Testament kings can be grasped from the very first chapter of the *Libri Carolini*, where the emperors of Byzantium are accused of failing to rule as David and Solomon had done. It may well have been known at Charlemagne's court that in the East the emperor was called *allos Dabid* (the second David).

The point of the careful Old Testament exegesis in the *Libri Carolini*, coupled with the designation of Charlemagne as David, was precisely to make the Frankish ruler, and him alone, the authentic representative of and heir to the Davidic kingship of Israel. Pope Paul I had called the Franks a "new Israel" and at about the same time, in the second prologue to the Salic Law, the Franks had referred to themselves in the same terms. In the *Libri Carolini* the Franks say, "we are not the carnal but the
Beginning in the late 780s, the Franks are called, in sources of all kinds, the *populus Christianus*. The newly defined “Christian people” was none other than the new Frankish Israel led by the new Carolingian David.

A correct understanding of the Old Testament, therefore, pointed in a palpably historical way to the Franks. At the same time, a proper typological exegesis of the Old Testament pointed to the age of Christ, the apostles, and the church. For purposes of discussion, I label these, taken together, the ecclesiastical tradition to which the *Libri Carolini* draws attention.

The *Libri Carolini* developed its arguments on ecclesiastical traditions in ways that were based on doctrine, practice, and institutions, although it is not always easy to make sharp distinctions between these categories. Where doctrine is concerned, the biblical foundation was crucial. Theodulf says indeed that one must follow the teachings of the prophets, the Lord, and the apostles. The end of book 2 presents an interesting set of arguments to the effect that everything that is needed for every possible kind of knowledge is available in Scripture. Always, priority was given to the word of God. But over a long period of time, God’s word had been interpreted, made accessible, and kept inviolate by a series of authoritative teachers. In fact, the Scriptures could only be understood in the light of the “writings of the holy fathers.” Thus book 3 contains a long series of attacks on various Greek theologians, or the way in which those theologians were understood—or even misunderstood—at Nicaea. But the argument is not carried purely by negation. Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory are repeatedly cited as having held to the correct line in matters of faith, and there is a remarkable statement in book 2 that “after the writings of the prophets, evangelists and apostles we are very content with the teachings of the illustrious Latin doctors whose life and teaching are known to us, as well as with those Greeks who were Catholic and who have been translated by Catholics into our language.” It is perfectly true that the Carolingians sometimes were muddled about what had been said at Nicaea. And on a few occasions they admitted to being unfamiliar with texts and authors cited there. But this is beside the point. What is clear is that Theodulf and those who worked with him saw a straight line of teaching running from the time of Jesus to that of Charlemagne, and as they looked back along that line they could see that the Byzantines had at some point departed from it, that “they had severed the bond of ecclesiastical unity.”

This is also the argument advanced in the matter of practices or customs. To take first a fairly obvious example, images, the *Libri Carolini* takes
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We do not reject images put up to remind us of great deeds or to beautify churches since we know they were put up thus by Solomon and Moses, although only as type figures, but we object to their adoration which is contrary to custom and indeed more than superstitious; and we cannot find this worship ever to have been instituted by patriarchs or prophets or apostolic men.84

The Byzantines cannot seem to get this straight. They think the Old Testament talks about images when it does no such thing.

Byzantine failures in this regard are twofold. First, they do not study the Old Testament correctly. If they did so, they would know that every passage has three levels of meaning: historical, spiritual, and allegorical (or mystical).85 Thus they are led to suppose that when the psalmist spoke (Ps. 4:7) of the “countenance” (vultus) of the Lord, he meant an image, when he simply cannot have been referring to a manufactured thing.86 Or when the psalmist said, “Lord I have loved the beauty of your house” (Ps. 25:8), he supposed an image to have been implied, whereas “the house of the Lord is to be understood according to allegory as the church, or according to anagogy as the celestial homeland, or according to tropology as the soul of man.”87 Their second failure is to reject the universal tradition of the church, which refuses to worship God in images.88 The Greeks also misread the Fathers, who never command or even permit the worship of images.89 Theodulf and his associates could even be a bit devious in separating the Byzantines from patristic tradition. For example, Theodulf gives an extensive citation from one of the famous letters of Gregory I to Serenus of Marseilles on images but only to argue that Gregory forbade the adoration and destruction of images. All the rest of Gregory’s highly nuanced argument for the didactic values of images is silently omitted.90 And of course Byzantium spent a half century destroying images only to turn around and command worship of them.

Other religious practices are brought up as well. The Franks understand the customary place of relics and why they are holy. They are the actual, physical remains of the saints, or else objects closely associated with them during their lives.91 The Greeks think images are holy when they are merely senseless objects made by men.92 It has never been the universal practice of the church to worship God through mere objects, and only...
God is to be worshiped in the first place. The Franks, apparently alone, understand that certain objects are actually in some sense holy: relics, the cross, and the sacred vessels, for example. These objects are holy because they are consecrated by prayers, used in the worship of God, and approved by tradition. But they are never worshiped for themselves, as the Greeks insist that images can, indeed must, be.

The Carolingian position was that, ever since apostolic times, there had been certain universal traditions with respect to customary Christian practices, and that time and time again the Byzantines had departed from those traditions and then, having departed, had had the temerity to insist that others join them on their wayward path. The Carolingian view was somewhat less than fair to the Greeks and somewhat less than accurate in its reading of Christian history but, once again, that is beside the point if our goal is to understand the argument of the Libri Carolini.

Insofar as ecclesiastical tradition refers to institutions, similar points were made, although in this realm some very new, and heretofore poorly understood, arguments were advanced. Actually, it seems to me that a minor and a major argument are made on the institutional front. The minor one turns on the position of Tarasius. On two separate occasions, the Libri Carolini addresses the election of the patriarch of Constantinople. In book 1 Tarasius is criticized because he "was promoted extraordinarily from the lay state to the sacerdotal dignity, from the military habit to the religious, from the circus to the altar, from the forum to the pulpit, from the clash of arms to the performance of sacred mysteries." Not surprisingly, therefore, Tarasius was unprepared for his office and thus led his people "from spiritual to carnal, from invisible things to visible ones, from the truth to images, from a body to a shadow, from the living spirit to a dead letter." Later Tarasius is accused of fabricating the whole image controversy to cover up his irregular election. At this point, Theodulf is less concerned with images per se than with drawing a comparison between Tarasius and a proper bishop. Book 3, after telling of Tarasius's theological misadventures, quotes St. Paul and then Gregory I on how a bishop ought to be chosen and on what sort of person a bishop ought to be. A comparison of Tarasius and a hypothetically correct bishop was inevitably a comparison between the Greeks and the Franks.

Ever since the commencement of the Bonifatian reforms, the Carolingians had been working hard and successfully to erect a proper ecclesiastical hierarchy. The major Frankish ecclesiastical legislation, from the 740s to the great capitularies of Charlemagne in 789 and 794, called for
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bishops who were learned, wise, and humble; bishops who would be both leaders and models for those entrusted to their care. In other words, only the bishops of Charlemagne's realm represented the ideal bishop of both St. Paul and Pope Gregory I. The irregular situation of Tarasius, as the Franks wished to view it, indicated yet again a Byzantine departure from the traditions of the church and marked the precise Frankish adherence to those traditions.

The major and much more historically significant institutional issue turned around a central ecclesiological problem, namely, the nature of synods and the relationship of synods to the *catholic fides*. A generation or two ago it was customary to argue that the Franks were offended because the Byzantines called Nicaea universal and they had not been invited. Then, in a more refined view, it was maintained that what the Franks objected to in Nicaea was its departure from what they believed the Catholic faith to be and to demand of its adherents. In other words, Nicaea falsely called itself universal, not because the Franks were absent, but because it was untrue to the universal faith. In reality, the *Libri Carolini* sketches out a fascinating and new conciliar theory that constitutes nothing less than a recasting of a whole series of traditional positions.

It is true that some of what the *Libri Carolini* says is quite conventional. A couple of points, however, at first reading suggest something a little odd. We are told that Nicaea was held "carelessly" and "indiscreetly," and that a synod should only be held to deal with "serious" problems and should confine itself to taking only those actions that are strictly necessary. What can this mean? Was not the removal of the Iconoclastic heresy serious and necessary? Yes and no. Constantine VI and Irene, as Wilhelm de Vries has astutely pointed out, were in a precarious position. They wished to restore images, but the Iconoclasts were still numerous and powerful. Moreover, the official Byzantine church was completely isolated from all the other churches of the East and West. Nothing less than a properly ecumenical council would solve their theological and political problems. But for the Franks, and, perhaps initially at least, for Hadrian as well, Iconoclasm was merely a local heresy. No official council, Hieria having been roundly condemned, had proclaimed it, and so no ecumenical council was needed to renounce it. The Byzantine church needed only to put its own house in order. This alone might well explain why the Franks considered the Greeks arrogant for calling Nicaea ecumenical, but there is even more to it than this.

Theodulf and his colleagues took the opportunity to engage in a bit of
reflection on ecumenicity and universality. The ancient church had built up a conciliar theory that had both “vertical” and “horizontal” dimensions. The vertical ones involved authoritative, accepted teaching reaching back through the Fathers to the Bible. The horizontal ones meant representation and acceptance by the “pentarchy” of ancient patriarchates (Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome) and the churches they represented. The Franks accepted the vertical argument but added a new twist. They raised an argument based on the twin principles of scrutiny and ratio. As we have seen, they sharply rejected the Byzantine reading of Scripture and patristic teaching. In other words, they said it is not enough merely to cite precedents or to claim adherence to tradition. No, every text adduced must be examined closely to see what it means and if it is truly relevant. This will explain why the Franks submitted text after text to their own powerfully reasoned scrutiny.

The vertical conciliar theory was not a static measure but a constantly evolving and rationally founded standard. As to the horizontal theory, the Franks found its received version inadequate. They complained that the issues raised at Nicaea, if they had to be discussed at all, ought to have been submitted to “each and every part of the church.” The Franks were adjusting conciliar theory to historical reality. The old pentarchy had arisen before the Franks had come on the scene. They did not feel that their “monarch,” the pope, adequately represented them. They deserved representation of their own. They were not offended materially at having gotten no invitation to Nicaea, but formally at the idea that the pope alone could represent the whole Western church. In the end there are two issues here: the very different views the Franks and the Byzantines had of what a synod was and of how the church was organized in the world.

So the Old Testament had pointed to the New, and the New had pointed to the church. Only the Franks had so far been faithful in all respects to these two links in an unbroken chain of tradition. The Byzantines had fallen away in both instances. Christ himself, in his words to Peter (Mt. 16:16–18), had instituted a guarantor of his traditions. We turn now to a third tradition, the papal, to which, according to the Libri Carolini, the Franks had been faithful and the Byzantines, faithless.

Very early the Libri Carolini sets about emphasizing the importance of communion with Rome. At the end of the fifth chapter of book 1 we read that “among all other churches, the Holy Roman Church is held in special veneration concerning matters of the faith.” The following chapter is the most rigorously papal of the whole treatise. It makes three very simple, direct arguments: the Roman church has from the beginning been set be-
fore all other churches; only books used in Rome and teachings that hold authority there are to be admitted; and although many people have at some time broken from Rome's communion, the Franks never have. Indeed, they struggle mightily to bring new peoples, such as the Saxons, into the Roman fold. Elsewhere in the text, on one occasion the teaching authority of Pope Sylvester is affirmed, while on another occasion some debating points are scored against the Byzantines by pointing out that even so great a scholar as St. Jerome did not hesitate to turn for instruction to Pope Damasus. Pope Gregory I was cited as an authority on images and the ordination of bishops. The citation at Nicaea of the alleged correspondence between Jesus and Abgar of Edessa was rejected on the authority of Pope Gelasius. Theodulf also mentions St. Peter's leadership of the apostolic church. The position of the papacy as the culmination and guarantee of ecclesiastical traditions can be set off neatly against the irregular and schismatic situation of Tarasius.

The broad context within which Theodulf was writing serves to shed even more light on the relationship between the Franks and the Roman church. In book 1, Theodulf said that the Franks had turned to Rome for instruction in liturgical chant "so that there would be no difference in singing between those who were alike in believing." What Theodulf is referring to, of course, is the extraordinarily lively liturgical exchange between Rome and the Frankish court that began under Pepin III in the 760s and carried on well into the ninth century. In 774, or shortly after, Charlemagne got from Rome a copy of the Dionysio-Hadriana, which was then regarded by the Franks as the definitive collection of canon law. In around 787, Charlemagne turned to Rome for an authentic copy of the Rule of St. Benedict in order to promote monastic reform in his realm. In about 791, while Theodulf was drafting the Libri Carolini, Charlemagne ordered a collection to be made of his and his predecessors' correspondence with Rome. The result was the book known as the Codex Carolinus. In 794 Charlemagne requested from Rome a copy of the letters of Pope Gregory I, another sure sign of the Frankish adherence to Roman and papal traditions. A few years earlier, Charlemagne showed his attachment to Roman and Petrine traditions by commissioning Paul the Deacon to write a history of the bishops of Metz. Paul stressed, as no one before him had done, the connection between the Carolingians and the see of Metz and the connection between Metz and St. Peter, the see allegedly having been founded by a disciple. This passion for doing things more Romano (in the Roman fashion) was not confined to liturgy and law, in other words to books. It has long been recognized that Carolingian architecture, whether
the rebuilding of Saint-Denis with occidentation and an annular crypt, or the modeling of parts of the Aachen complex on the Lateran baptistery, owed a great deal to genuine or putative Roman exemplars.\textsuperscript{122}

The remarks in the \textit{Libri Carolini} about the papacy are in perfect agreement with what was going on at the Carolingian court. Donald Bullough has sagely observed that the massive Carolingian educational reform sought authentic books and that, to those associated with Charlemagne and his court, authentic meant "Roman" and Roman meant "papal."\textsuperscript{123} Josef Flechenstein has also shown that the Carolingian emphasis on authentic books and proper traditions, as well as correct (or corrected) books and teachers, had its source in papal Rome. Zachary had written to urge Pepin to adhere to the "norma rectitudinis," a phrase that surely needs no translation and very little explanation.\textsuperscript{124} The synod of Verneuil in 755 referred to a need to get back to "rectissima norma."\textsuperscript{125} In promoting his religious reforms, Chrodegang of Metz often used such phrases as "norma rectitudinis" and "linea rectitudinis."\textsuperscript{126} The \textit{Admonitio generalis} of 789, the circular letter \textit{De litteris colendis} (which must date from around 789), the correspondence of Alcuin, and the \textit{Libri Carolini} are replete with the word \textit{recte} (rightly) in all its various forms. And doing it right, whatsoever "it" happened to be, meant doing it more Romano, the way the pope did. In all their words and deeds, the Franks clung steadfastly to the traditions of papal Rome, while the perfidious Byzantines attacked the popes, ignored their teachings, and challenged their authority. Those who have argued that Charlemagne somehow set out to humiliate Hadrian or to subordinate him to the Frankish royal power have simply ignored the radically papalist current in Carolingian thought and action in the 780s and 790s.\textsuperscript{127} It is ironic but nevertheless true that the Carolingians, much more than the popes themselves, placed the pope at the center of the church, enhanced papal powers, and evoked papal pretensions.

One final line of historical development is worked out in the \textit{Libri Carolini}. It might be called Christian-imperial. The \textit{Libri Carolini} talks fairly often about rulership, and virtually everything it says involves implicit or explicit comparisons of good and bad rulership. The Byzantine rulers, often derisively titled "kings," are called arrogant and uncharitable.\textsuperscript{128} The point of these criticisms is to drive home the distinction between the Byzantines and the Franks, whose royal theory demanded that rulers be humble, loving servants of God and his people.\textsuperscript{129} At one point, Theodulf remarks that David was a humble minister of God, and even of Christ, whose type he bore.\textsuperscript{130} The Old Testament kings, as we have seen, were in many respects appropriated as models by Theodulf and the Carolingians.
The reason why the Byzantines got their image of rulership out of focus was that they drew their inspiration from the world of pagan Rome. This led them to call themselves divas and their official acts divalia. They had the hauteur to compare their own images to those of Christ, and to call themselves the "equal of the apostles" (isapostolos). These were traditional epithets and protocols at Byzantium, inheritances from antiquity. Theodulf and his associates fixed upon them with a vengeance, however, because they provided a pretext for elaborating a new view of history. By viewing the Bible as the record of salvation history, the Franks could insist that the old sequence of kingdoms running from Babylon to Rome had been broken. Theodulf explicitly stated that Rome, by which he meant Byzantium, was the heir of Babylon. Byzantium was, in other words, the heir to the order that had been overthrown. Charlemagne was the true heir of the salvation history first revealed in the Bible.

Rome's pagan inheritance from Babylon was not, however, the only potential Frankish legacy from Rome. There was also the Rome of Constantine. It was Constantine's Rome, not that of the Caesars, that Charlemagne sought to evoke. This was a Rome whose first emperor turned for instruction to Pope Sylvester and whose most recent ruler, Pope Hadrian, had addressed Charlemagne himself as a "new Constantine.” Charlemagne's chapel at Aachen, which is almost exactly contemporary with the Libri Carolini, expressed well the program of that treatise and its contrasting of Byzantium and the Franks. It can be compared with the imperial Chrysotryklinos, a room almost certainly known to at least some at the Carolingian court through diplomatic exchanges. In Constantinople, the emperor's throne was placed in the east, behind the altar and before a maiestas image. At Aachen, the altar was in the east, but the throne—modeled, as we saw earlier, on that of Solomon—was in the west. A mosaic of Christ in Majesty (or possibly an image of the Lamb of God) was placed in the cupola, regnant over the whole scene. These comparisons served to demonstrate, first, that only Christ truly ruled; earthly potentates acted in his name and on his behalf but never reigned. Second, Constantine was a complex and ambiguous symbol for the Carolingians. It may be true, as Richard Krautheimer said, that “it seems as though Antiquity were epitomized in the Christian Rome of Constantine and Sylvester.” But Constantine was an Arian heretic and a Roman. It was not until the ninth century, a generation after Charlemagne, that the Carolingians became comfortable with the ideal of the first Christian emperor. What was not ambiguous at all was that, according to the Libri Carolini and the ideas prevailing at the Carolingian
court, only the Franks had been true to the correct ideal of Christian rulership.

It is time to conclude. The *Libri Carolini* represents one masterfully designed strategy in the Carolingian fight for history. It was only natural that the Carolingians felt compelled to wage that fight. Ever since the fourth century, Christians had been obliged to locate themselves in history. The very fact of conversion meant the discovery of a new history, which began with Adam and Eve and continued down to current events. For a long time, Christian and Roman universalism converged. Then the western provinces of the old Roman Empire were divided among gentes who had had no previous place in biblical or classical schemes of temporal reckoning. As these peoples were converted to Christianity, they learned to think in universal terms while separating those terms from the referents of the vanished Roman order. The Byzantine view of history was paradoxical, implying at once a dramatic change, represented by the adoption of Christianity, and a total absence of change, implicit in Roman continuity. So it was that the *Libri Carolini* “proclaimed, on biblical-typological grounds, a Christian universalism which directly opposed the constitutionally fixed Byzantine claims upon world rulership.” For the Carolingians to take their place as Christians in the roll of nations, they had to battle the Byzantines. To do this, they contested them on every field that really mattered; the biblical, the apostolic, the ecclesiastical, and the institutional.

A few widely chosen examples may help to show that the historical concerns evidenced by the *Libri Carolini* were by no means unique to that book. We have already mentioned the parallels drawn between the kings of the Old and New Israels. Notice was taken, too, of Paul the Deacon’s history of the see of Metz. The Sacramentary of Gellone, written in the last decade of the eighth century, contains a litany for the dead that begins with Noah and goes down to Peter and Paul. The point of these prayers was to create a sense of community “not only among the attendants at the death, but between them and those who had preceded them in sacred history.” Carolingian collections of canon law tended to be “historical” rather than “systematic.” That is, they organized their material chronologically according to the councils from which the canons were taken instead of topically according to the subject matter treated. An episcopal statute from the early ninth century mentions four great epochs of law giving: natural law before the fall; the Mosaic law of the Old Testament; Christ’s
law and the New Testament; and the legislation of the Frankish Church. Even Carolingian library collections were organized historically. There is need for a big study of the Carolingian idea of history, and the intense historical-mindedness of Charlemagne and his key advisers will doubtless play a key role in that inquiry.

The *Libri Carolini* constitutes an elegant metahistory that can in every way bear favorable comparison with the more famous works of Eusebius and Orosius and even, in a way, with that of Augustine. It is a metahistory that seeks to locate the Franks in their own time but also in all time. This is why I insist that Nicaea and the issue of images merely provided an opportunity for deeper reflections on larger themes. Can anyone be surprised that a few years after the *Libri Carolini* was written Charlemagne was crowned emperor? This magnificent book had already prepared for that event by demonstrating that God's covenant with Abraham had been communicated to the church, preserved by the popes, and transferred to the Franks. The Byzantines, who alone in the late eighth century could have competed with the Franks on grounds of spiritual and historical universality, had to be written out of history, as it were. This was done in two ways. First, they were made objects of almost unspeakable scorn. They and their teachings were called arrogant, contemptible, damnable, laughable, stupid, foolish, silly, inadequate, inappropriate, incautious, superficial—I could go on and on. At Byzantium, a physical mutilation rendered a person ineligible for high office. The Franks rendered the Byzantines ineligible for historical participation by verbal mutilation. Second, and more significantly, the *Libri Carolini* neatly sets aside all possibility that the Byzantines could be regarded as the heirs of Israel, the Old Testament, apostolic traditions, the ancient councils, the Roman papacy, and the Christian Roman Empire. When Theodulf laid down his quill, all of history had been made to point to the very court in which he had been working.

What is the argument of the *Libri Carolini*? It is a simple one that goes like this: Abraham was a Frank, and David was a Carolingian. God in heaven rules the world and his agent on earth is Charlemagne. This book was not put on the shelf for fear that it would humiliate Hadrian, because there was little in its central thesis, quite apart from its details, that would have offended the pope. And it was in a sense published and disseminated because its basic arguments were preached from the pulpits of the cathedral and monastic and parish churches that played in all ways so decisive a role in spreading the Carolingian reform. If the events of Christmas Day, 800, have any meaning at all, then certainly the ideas contained in the *Libri Carolini* were official. The book has been called a *Staatsschrift* and a
Both characterizations are accurate but incomplete, for the Libri Carolini went beyond politics and polemics to become an exceptionally learned work of history that contained nothing less than the fullest single expression of the ideological program of the court of Charlemagne during the most creative years of his long reign.

Notes

1. Libri Carolini sive Caroli Magni capitulare de imaginibus, ed. Hubert Bastgen, MGH, Concilia, pt. 2, Supplementum (Hannover, 1924), hereafter LC. A new edition is being prepared for the MGH by Ann Freeman.

2. This is the title given to the work by Bastgen (cited n. 1) and often adopted by modern scholars.

3. François Louis Ganshof, Recherches sur les capitulaires.

4. Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 663, fol. 1. For a reproduction of this manuscript's title page, see Karl der Grosse: Werk und Wirkung, pl. 33 and p. 193.

5. See Ann Freeman, “Theodulf of Orléans and the Libri Carolini”; “Further Studies in the Libri Carolini I–II”; “Further Studies in the Libri Carolini III: The Marginal Notes in Vaticanus Latinus 7207”; and “Theodulf of Orléans and the Psalm Citations of the 'Libri Carolini.'” Freeman’s great opponent was Luitpold Wallach, whose studies are conveniently assembled in his Diplomatic Studies in Latin and Greek Documents from the Carolingian Age. Wallach maintained, at different times, that Alcuin was either the author or the editor of the Libri Carolini. For an assessment of the authorship problem, see Paul J. Meyvaert, “The Authorship of the 'Libri Carolini': Observations Prompted by a Recent Book.” Donald Bullough has taken a slightly different line, arguing that Alcuin played a role in the revision of the text at the court. His evidence consists primarily of a demonstration that texts prepared by Alcuin in his campaign against the Adoptionists found their way into, at the least, book 4 of the LC; see his “Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven: Liturgy, Theology, and the Carolingian Age,” esp. pp. 34–38 (repr. in Bullough, Carolingian Renewal: Sources and Heritage, esp. pp. 180–87). Freeman, “Additions and Corrections to the Libri Carolini: Links with Alcuin and the Adoptionist Controversy,” says that Bullough’s approach “commands respect.” There is another intriguing problem discussed by John Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre: Logic, Theology, and Philosophy in the Early Middle Ages, pp. 35ff. The problem is that the so-called dicta Albini, some philosophical fragments of Alcuin, turn up in the Libri Carolini, where they are, in one instance, attributed to Augustine. The questions are: Where did Theodulf get this material? Did he know it was by his contemporary and fellow courtier? Did it enter the LC during revision? Answers to these questions will have to await further research.

6. The most valuable studies of the LC are Wolfram von den Steinen,


8. This is hardly the place for a full bibliographical assessment of the first period of Byzantine Iconoclasm. The interpretation offered here is based on my study, "John Damascene and the History of the Iconoclastic Controversy," which cites much older literature. Not mentioned in my earlier work but very valuable are Hans-Georg Beck, *Von der Fragwürdigkeit der Ikone*; Paul Speck, "Ikonoklasmus und die Anfänge der makedonischen Renaissance"; Speck, "Weitere Überlegungen und Untersuchungen über die Ursprünge der byzantinischen Renaissance"; Antonio Carile, "L'iconoclasmo fra bisanzio e l'Italia"; and Peter Schreiner, "Der byzantinische Bilderstreit: Kritische Analyse der zeitgenössischen Meinungen und das Urteil der Nachwelt bis heute."


13. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 49–81, with full references at p. 400, n. 9; and Treadgold, "The Empress Irene's Preparation for the Seventh Ecumenical Council."

de Vries, "Die Struktur der Kirche gemäss dem II Konzil von Nicäa (787)"); and Vittorio Fazzo, "Il II Concilio di Nicea nella storia cristiana ed i rapporti fra Roma e Bisanzio." There is a valuable English translation of, and commentary upon, the sixth session (which gave the _horos_ of 754, its refutation, and the _horos_ of 787) in Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm.*


16. Gero, "Libri Carolini," has emphasized (and perhaps exaggerated) the importance of the poor translation. He also believes that the Franks may have had no more than extracts of the _acta_ of the council. In the ninth century, Hincmar of Reims said that Charlemagne had gotten his copy of the _acta_ from the pope; see *Opuscula et epistolae quae spectant ad causam Hincmari Laudanensis*, PL 126:360a–b. Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy," p. 68, thinks that Hincmar based his account of events on the entry in the *Annales regni Francorum* pertaining to the Synod of Frankfurt in 794 (ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH, SS rer. Germ. [Hannover, 1895], p. 94). I suspect that she is right in general, but the *Annales* say nothing about the _acta_. Hincmar was either guessing or else he had another source of information of which we are ignorant. (Pseudo-) Simeon of Durham, *anno 792*, ed. R. Pauli, MGH, SS 13 (Hannover, 1881), says "Karolus rex Francorum misit sinodalem librum ad Britanniam sibi a Constantinopoli directum" (p. 155). Scholars have concluded that the York annals as quoted above are substantially reliable (for a full discussion, see Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy," pp. 77–78, with nn. 42–48), but Constantinople cannot have been the direct source for Charlemagne. The LC, a letter of Hadrian to Charlemagne (discussed below), and documents from the renewed discussion of images undertaken at Paris in 825 all cite the Latin translation, itself no longer extant, to which the *Liber Pontificalis* refers. The preface to the LC merely refers to "textus . . . ad nos usque pervenit" without elaboration (p. 5).

17. *LC*, Praef.: "Gesta praeterea est ferme ante triennium et altera synodum" (p. 3). As Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy," p. 71, carefully reasons, this statement dates only the preface. Because the word "ferme" is imprecise, it is possible to think of Theodulf as having begun work in about 790 or 791, though Freeman would prefer 790.

18. This is Freeman's reconstruction of the chronology of events; see her "Carolingian Orthodoxy," pp. 71–75. She points out, and I agree, that the most difficult of all problems concerns precisely why the Franks went to work at all on the _LC_ if they had known Hadrian had embraced the decisions of Second Nicæa. Given that Theodulf did labor so assiduously on the text, it would seem that the Franks either did not get their copy of the _acta_ directly from the pope, or else they did not think the copy that had
been sent to them bore the official stamp of papal approval. For an ingenious but unpersuasive reconstruction of the chronology of these years, consisting essentially of an attempt to move the LC to around 794, see Arnaldi, "La questione dei Libri Carolini."


20. See the studies cited above, nn. 5 and 6, esp. those by Freeman.


22. Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy," p. 86.

23. Such was the belief of the bishops who gathered in Paris in 825 for a new discussion of images; *Concilia aevi karolini*, no. 44, ed. Albert Werminghoff, MGH, Concilia, pt. 2 (Hannover, 1908): "Eandem potro synodum cum sanctae memoriae genitor vester [this was addressed to Louis the Pious] coram se suisque perlegi fecisset et multis in locis, ut dignum erat, reprehendisset" (p. 481).


25. Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy," p. 96 and n. 125.

26. Hincmar's testimony is cited by Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy" (from Paris, B.N., lat. 2865): "Non modicum volumen, quod in palatio adolescentulus legi" (p. 96, n. 121).

27. Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy," pp. 100–105, points out that nowhere in the rich testimony from 825 is there a single reference to LC.


29. Angelo Mercati, "Per la storia del codice Vaticano dei Libri Carolini," pp. 112–19. Freeman argues, plausibly, that this manuscript was destroyed in the riot after the death of Paul IV in 1559, when a mob sacked the Holy Office and burned all the books they could find; see "Carolingian Orthodoxy," p. 97, n. 127.


32. Hampe and Hauck, as in n. 6, above; and Johannes Haller, *Das Papsttum: Idee und Wirklichkeit*, 2:15. Haller's highly influential work is still in print, recently in paperback.

33. See the works of von den Steinen, Freeman, and Arnaldi (cited n. 6, above).

34. Charlemagne and Hadrian were allies and cooperated in many ventures. On this alliance, see my *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State*, 680–825, pp. 256–76. A quick consultation of Jaffe, RP, no. 2467ff, will suffice to show that Charlemagne and Hadrian carried on all sorts of routine business during the whole period when the LC was in preparation. For some representative statements from the LC on the papacy, see, LC 1.5–6, pp. 19, 20–22.


43. Ibid., pp. 165–66.
45. Freeman, “Carolingian Orthodoxy,” offers the interesting speculation that “there is reason to think that when the Council assembled the image question was not on the agenda” (p. 92). It is certainly true that it was not emphasized.
46. *Concilia aevi karolini*, no. 19, ed. Werminghoff, MGH, Concilia, pt. 1: “Allata est in medio de nova Grecorum synodo, quam de adorandis imaginibus Constantinopolim fecerunt; in qua scriptum habebatur, ut qui imagines sanctorum ita ut deificam trinitatem servitio aut adorationem non inpenderent, anathema iudicaverunt” (p. 165).
47. Freeman, “Carolingian Orthodoxy,” pp. 92–95, gives a very careful reading of these events.
51. Ibid., pp. 55–56.
52. Maria Andoloro, “Il Liber Pontificalis et le questione delle immagini da Sergio I a Adriano I.” Her views will have to await confirmation, but if there is anything to them, they would point to an extremely politic gesture on Hadrian's part, particularly because, as Florentine Mutterich and Henry Mayr-Hartung have argued, it is very difficult to show that the *LC* had any clear impact on Frankish art; see, respectively, “I Libri Carolini e la miniatura carolingia”; and “Charlemagne as a Patron of Art.”
54. The work has a general preface, and then books 2 through 4 have briefer individual prefaces. The books contain the following number of chapters: bk. 1 = 30; bk. 2 = 31; bk. 3 = 31; bk. 4 = 28.
55. *LC* 1.9, pp. 26–28.
57. *LC* 1.22, 1.23, 1.25, 1.26, 1.29, 1.30, 2.1–2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7–8, pp. 50–52, 53–54, 54–55, 56–57, 57–59, 60, 63–64, 64–65, 65–66, 66–68,
69. For a discussion of the extensive corrections in this section of the LC, see Freeman, “Further Studies I–II,” pp. 214–15.

58. For some examples: LC 1.9, 1.29, 2.1, pp. 26–28, 57–59, 63.

59. LC 1.5, 1.15, 1.17, 1.18, 1.19, 1.20, pp. 18–19, 34–37, 39–42, 42–44, 44–45, 48. Most of the passages cited in n. 57 are relevant here as well. In fact, virtually every chapter in books 1 and 2 concerns exegetical matters.


61. The three sources that spell out most clearly the contours of Charlemagne’s program are: the preface to the Admonitio generalis (MGH, Capit., no. 22, ed. Alfred Boretius, vol. 1 [Hannover, 1883], pp. 53–54); the Epistola de litteris colendis (ibid., no. 29, p. 79); and the cyclical letter sent out with Paul the Deacon’s revision of the lectionary (ibid., no. 30, pp. 80–81). For the wider context of Charlemagne’s educational program, see Contreni’s chapter in this volume, chap. 3, and the literature cited by him.


69. LC 1.1, p. 9.


75. *LC* 2.25, pp. 84-85.

76. *LC* 2.30-31, pp. 92-102, esp. 95-96. The ultimate source for this point of view is the work of Augustine, esp. *De doctrina christiana*.

77. So McKitterick, "Text and Image in the Carolingian World."

78. *LC* 1.5, p. 19.


80. *LC* 2.17, p. 77.

81. For example, in *LC* 2.27, p. 87, Theodulf criticizes the Greeks for claiming that the body and blood of Christ were images. In fact, at Second Nicea the Council of Hieria was condemned for this teaching. Another example concerns the refutation in 787 of the 754 teachings by the deacon Epiphanius, who was taken by the Carolingians to have advanced the very argument he was refuting; see *LC* 4.15, pp. 201-2.

82. *LC* 2.17, p. 76, contains an admission that the Franks know neither Gregory of Nyssa nor his works, while 2.20, p. 79, admits unfamiliarity with a book of Cyril of Alexandria.

83. *LC*, *Praef.*, p. 3.

84. *LC* 2.9, p. 70. This is the basic argument of *LC*; cf. *Praef.*, p. 3; 2.13, 3.16, pp. 73, 138.

85. *LC* 1.17, p. 41.

86. *LC* 1.23, p. 51.

87. *LC* 1.29, p. 57.


89. *LC*, *Praef.*, p. 4.

90. *LC* 2.23, pp. 81-82. On the actual meaning of Gregory's letter, see Celia M. Chazelle, "Pictures, Books and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Serenus of Marseilles." For a brilliant discussion of a thousand years of interpretation of Gregory's letters, see Lawrence G. Duggan, "Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?

91. *LC* 1.18, 2.21, 3.16, pp. 40-42, 80, 136-38. For an illuminating
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discussion of this subject, see David Appleby, “Holy Relic and Holy Image: Saints’ Relics in the Western Controversy over Images in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries.”

95. *LC* 4.16, p. 203, is a clear presentation of this argument, but it comes up again and again. For an interpretation of the place of these holy objects in the *LC*, see Chazelle, “Matter, Spirit and Image in the *Libri Carolini*,” esp. pp. 165–70.
96. Bullough, *The Age of Charlemagne*, p. 111, stresses that the Carolingians could, and here probably did, engage in willful misunderstanding.
101. Barion, “Der kirchenrechtliche Charakter des Konzils von Frankfurt 794,” esp. pp. 148–51; and Werner Ohnsorge, “Orthodoxus Imperator: Vom religiösen Motiven für das Kaisertum Karls des Grossen.” This is perhaps the reigning view today. Often it is coupled with the observation that no Frank had been present at the earlier ecumenical councils and yet the decisions of those councils were fully accepted by the Franks.
103. de Vries, “Die Struktur der Kirche.”

There is an interesting puzzle here. The Synod of Frankfurt seems not to have embraced the synodal theory of the *LC*; see Wilfried Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frankenreich und in Italien*, pp. 105–10. Certainly not all Frankish bishops would have accepted such a novel view, and the *LC* was directed more against the Greeks than against a traditional Western reading of the Christian past. It may be that the views expressed in the *LC* were Theodulf’s own and very much rooted in Spanish traditions; see Elisabeth Dahlhaus-Berg, *Nova Antiquitas et Antiqua Novitas: Typologische
Exegese und isidorianisches Geschichtsbild bei Theodulf von Orleans, pp. 199–200; and Consuelo Maria Aherne, “Late Visigothic Bishops, Their Schools and the Transmission of Culture.” Be that as it may, the argument that was developed in the LC is still plainly to be seen and, although the last chapter of the work adopted a slightly more traditional line on conciliar history (4.28), the earlier and more radical chapters were neither altered nor expunged; they must have won some adherents.

105. LC 4.6, 11, 12, pp. 187–88, 190–92, 192–93. These are good, representative examples of “scrutiny.” Ratio (see bk. 4, praef., p. 169) is what drives the whole scrutiny. It is the “reason” for it, the “reason” that guides it, and the goal or objective toward which it tends.

106. LC 3.11, p. 123: “Uniuscuiusque partis ecclesiae.”

107. LC 1.5, p. 19.

108. LC 1.6, pp. 20–22.

109. LC 2.13, p. 73. It is significant that the story being told is first of all challenged as potentially inauthentic and then held up as an example of an emperor properly deferring to the teaching office of the pope.

110. LC 2.10, p. 189. Of course, the “Gelasius” in question was the pseudo-Gelasian decree De libris recipiendis et non recipiendis, but the Franks, like everyone else, regarded this text as both authentic and authoritative. See McKitterick, The Carolingians and the Written Word, pp. 202–4.

111. LC 1.6, pp. 20, 22.

112. LC 4.10, p. 189. For general discussion of these liturgical exchanges, see Cyrille Vogel, “Les Echanges liturgiques entre Rome et les pays francs jusqu’à l’époque de Charlemagne”, and Vogel, “Les Motifs de la romanisation du culte sous Pépin le Bref (751–768) et Charlemagne (774–814).” The greatest product of these interactions was the so-called Gregorian Sacramentary sent to Charlemagne by Hadrian in 786/7. The text has been edited with copious commentary by Jean Deshusses, Le Sacramentaire gregorian: Les Principales Formes d’après les plus anciennes manuscrits (2nd ed., vol. 1, 1979). Against the traditional date of 784/5, see Bullough, “Ethnic History and the Carolingians: An Alternative Reading of Paul the Deacon’s Historia Langobardorum,” p. 102, n. 6 (repr. in his Carolingian Renewal, pp. 99 and 116, n. 6). The redating itself depends on the redating of Codex Carolinus, no. 89, ed. Gundlach, MGH, Epp. 3:626. In light of all else, it is surely not without significance that the Carolingians requested not only a Roman but indeed a Gregorian sacramentary.

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114. Hubert Mordek, “Kirchenrechtliche Autoritäten im Frühmittelalter.” Substantial extracts from the collection were promulgated in 789 as part of the Admonitio generalis; MGH, Capit., no. 22, ed. Boretius, 1:52–57.

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118. *Codex Carolinus, Praef.*, ed. Gundlach, MGH, Epp. 3:476. The text says it was also intended to collect the letters "de imperio," but none of these survive in the two extant manuscripts of the *Codex Carolinus*. It seems safe to suggest that the plan was to contrast good and bad rulers in their faithfulness and faithlessness to Rome. Dahlhaus-Berg, *Nova Antiquitas*, pp. 187–88, has drawn an explicit connection between the *LC* and the *Codex Carolinus*. So too Walter Mohr, *Die karolingische Reichsidee*, p. 47.


120. Pauli Warnefridi Liber de episcopis Mettensisibus, ed. George Henry Pertz, MGH, SS 2 (Hannover, 1829), pp. 260–70.


122. I owe most to Richard Krautheimer, "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture." See also Carol Heitz, "More Romano: Problèmes d'architecture et liturgie carolingiennes." Artistic and architectural connections between Aachen and Rome are given their fullest, though by no means definitive, treatment by Mario D'Onofrio, *Roma e Aquisgrana*. Issues pertaining to Aachen have not been comprehensively revisited since Ludwig Falkenstein, "Zwischenbilanz zur aachener Pfalzforschung." For general details, see Kenneth John Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture, 800 to 1200*, pp. 43–55.

123. Bullough, "Roman Books and Carolingian Renovation."


130. *LC* 1.22, p. 50.


135. *LC* 2.13, p. 73.


137. Fichtenau, "Byzanz und die Pfalz," pp. 7–16. The existence in
Charlemagne’s time of a maestas in the Aachen cupola was challenged by Hermann Schnitzler, “Das Kuppelmosaik der aachener Pfalzkapelle.” Schnitzler’s arguments were refuted by H. Schrade, “Zum Kuppelmosaik der aachener Pfalzkapelle.” The existence of the maestas is accepted by J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent, pp. 194–95; and by Bullough, “'Imagines Regum' and Their Significance in the Early Medieval West,” pp. 241–42 (repr. in his Carolingian Renewal, p. 57).


140. The key study remains Ewig, “Das Bild Constantins des Grossen in den ersten Jahrhunderten des abendländischen Mittelalters.”


144. A. J. Gurevich, Categories of Medieval Culture, p. 140.


148. McKitterick, Frankish Church, p. 66.
