

## Imitator daemonum dicor

### Adalhard the seneschal, mistranslations, and misrepresentations

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Unlike Napoleon, who could righteously assert that catastrophes occurred due to prudent policy gone awry – an unforeseeable process he described as “la nature des choses”<sup>1</sup> – people in Carolingian society of the ninth century understood adversity as the product of sin.<sup>2</sup> In the difficult years following the death of Charlemagne (d. 814), several individuals were identified by contemporaries as having been particularly sinful, so much so as to be held personally responsible for the troubles and apparent “decline” of the realm. Charlemagne himself, through remarkable strategies of indirection (such as ‘dream criticism’), was posthumously reproached for the poor moral example he had provided with his numerous concubines.<sup>3</sup> Yet, because of the great risks involved in such royal criticism, it was more often those close to the king that were held directly responsible for current woes.<sup>4</sup> For example, Duke Bernard of Septimania, the influential chamberlain of Charlemagne’s son Louis the

- 1 Letter to A. M. Fouché, 31 December, 1806, Correspondance de Napoléon I<sup>er</sup> publiée par ordre de l’empereur Napoléon III, XIV, Paris 1863, 158, no. 11529.
- 2 For example, see the excellent analysis of ninth-century Carolingian perceptions of Viking attacks in S. Coupland, “The Rod of God’s Wrath or the People of God’s Wrath? The Carolingian Theology of the Viking Invasions,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42 (1991) 535–554; see also J. Kroll/B. Bachrach, “Sin and the Etiology of Disease in Pre-Crusade Europe,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 41 (1986) 395–414. For an inventory of Carolingian calamities, see Coupland’s article, “‘A Tale of Misfortune’: The Hardships of Life in Ninth-Century Europe,” *Medieval History* 3 (1993) 178–183.
- 3 See, for example, the *Visio Wettini* [D. A. Traill, Walafrid Strabo’s *Visio Wettini*: Text, Translation, and Commentary, (Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters, I) Bern 1974] or the *Visio cuiusdam pauperulae mulieris* [H. Houben, “*Visio cuiusdam pauperulae mulieris*: Überlieferung und Herkunft eines frühmittelalterlichen Visionstextes (mit Neuedition),” *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 124 (1976) 31–42]. For commentary on these visions, see P. E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire*, Lincoln/London 1994, 50–80.
- 4 See J. L. Nelson, “Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regiment?,” in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. J. C. Parsons, New York 1993, 43–61, reprinted in J. L. Nelson, *The Frankish World 750–900*, London/Rio Grande 1996, 223–242; D. Ganz, “The *Epitaphium Arsenii* and Opposition to Louis the Pious,” in *Charlemagne’s Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, ed. P. Godman/R. Collins, Oxford 1990, 537–550; P. E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming*, 81–112; K. Brunner, *Oppositionelle Gruppen im Karolingerreich*, Vienna/Cologne/Graz 1979.

Pious, was accused by contemporaries of bringing ruin upon the kingdom, allegedly having committed adultery with the seemingly iniquitous Queen Judith.<sup>5</sup> He and his family<sup>6</sup> would ultimately pay a heavy price for this “scandal”: his brother Heribert was blinded,<sup>7</sup> another brother, Gozhelm, beheaded,<sup>8</sup> and his sister Gerberga placed in a barrel and drowned as a witch in the river Saône.<sup>9</sup> Bernard himself was later ambushed and assassinated (843–844), Louis’s son King Charles the Bald deeming the powerful-but-treacherous chamberlain to have outlived his “usefulness.”<sup>10</sup>

While many of these scapegoats have been rehabilitated by scholars in recent years, thanks to both the benefit of hindsight and an increased sensitivity to the dynamics of medieval historiography, nevertheless one such “villain” of the ninth century has continued to retain his poor reputation – Adalhard “the seneschal.” An important member of several royal households, Adalhard was responsible for accommodations and victuals during the reigns of Louis the Pious, Lothar, and Charles the Bald.<sup>11</sup> However, as the ninth-century historian Nithard pointed out, he was also responsible for the perdition of the realm:

- 5 For contemporary criticism of Bernard and Judith, see E. Ward, “Agobard of Lyons and Paschasius Radbertus as Critics of the Empress Judith,” *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990) 15–25.
- 6 On Bernard and his family, see J. Wollasch, “Eine adlige Familie des frühen Mittelalters: Ihr selbstverständnis und ihre Wirklichkeit,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 39 (1957) 150–188; and now M. Thiebaux, Dhuoda, Handbook for her Warrior Son. *Liber Manualis*, (Cambridge Medieval Classics, VIII) Cambridge 1998, 1–37.
- 7 The “Astronomer,” *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, cap. 45, ed. E. Tremp, MGH SSrG in usum scholarum, seperatim editi, LXIV, Hanover 1995, 460.
- 8 Nithard, *Historiarum Libri IV*, I, 5, ed. P. Lauer, Nithard. *Histoire des Fils de Louis le Pieux*, Paris 1926, 22; The “Astronomer,” *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, cap. 52, ed. E. Tremp, 496. See also J. Calmette, “Gaucelme. Marquis de Gothie sous Louis le Pieux,” *Annales du Midi* 18 (1906) 166–171.
- 9 An action which caused considerable shock at the time. See Nithard, *Historiarum Libri IV*, I, 5, ed. P. Lauer, 22; The “Astronomer,” *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, cap. 52, ed. E. Tremp, 496; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, cap. 52, ed. E. Tremp, MGH SSrG in usum scholarum, seperatim editi, LXIV, Hanover 1995, 244; *Annales de Saint Bertin* 834, ed. F. Grat, J. Vieillard, S. Clémencet, Paris 1964, 16.
- 10 L. Malbos, “La capture de Bernard de Septimanie,” *Le Moyen Age* 76 (1970) 5–13. Cf. the exhortation of Lupus, the learned abbot of Ferrières, who reminded Charles that very year (843): “Do not admit advisers... lest they share with one another your glory and alienate you from the better people.” *Servati Lupi epistulae*, ed. P. K. Marshall, Leipzig 1984, 70, no. 64; trans. by G. W. Regenos, *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières*, The Hague 1966, 47, no. 31.
- 11 For studies on Adalhard, see B. von Simson, *Jahrbuch des fränkischen Reichs unter Ludwig der Frommen*, II, Berlin 1876, 199–200; F. Lot, “Note sur le sénéchal Alard,” *Le Moyen Age* 21 (1908) 185–201, reprinted in *Recueil des travaux historiques de Ferdinand Lot*, II, Geneva 1968–1973, 591–607; K. F. Werner, “Untersuchungen zur Frühzeit des französischen Fürstentums (9.–10. Jahrhundert),” *Die Welt als Geschichte* 18 (1958) 274–276; ders., 19 (1959) 155–156; ders., “Die Nachkommen Karls des Grossen. Exkurs 2. Königin Adelheid,” in *Karl der Grosse*, ed. W. Braunsfels/P. E. Schramm, “Das Nachleben,”

Acceptit quidem Karolus, uti praefatum est, in coniugio Hirmentrudem Uodonis et Ingeltrudis filiam et neptem Adelardi. Dilexerat autem pater eius suo in tempore hunc Adelardum adeo ut quod idem vellet in universo imperio, hoc pater faceret. Qui utilitati publice minus prospiciens placere cuique intendit. Hinc libertates, hinc publica in propriis usibus distribuere suasit ac, dum quod quique petebat, ut fieret effecit, rem publicam penitus annullavit. Quo quidem modo effectum est ut in hac tempestate populum qua vellet facile devertere posset, et hac de re Karolus praefatas nuptias maxime iniit, quia cum eo maximam partem plebis sibi vindicare posse putavit.<sup>12</sup>

Charles [the Bald], as I said before, took a wife, [E]rmentrude, daughter of Odo and Ingeltrud, who was a niece of Adalhard. Charles's father [Louis the Pious] in his time had loved this Adalhard so much that he did anything in his whole empire that Adalhard wanted. Adalhard cared little for the public good and tried to please everyone. Again and again he advised Charles's father [Louis] to distribute liberties and public property for private use and, since he knew how to manage it so that everyone got what he asked for, he ruined the kingdom altogether. This is how he was easily able at this time to coax the people to do whatever he wanted. It was for this reason above all that Charles married [E]rmentrude, because he believed that with Adalhard's help he could win over a large part of the people to himself.<sup>13</sup>

In an insightful article, Janet Nelson did much to exonerate Adalhard of this pivotal role in the dissolution of the royal fisc. By revealing the personal bonds and associations of the historian Nithard, she showed that his vilification of Adalhard was the product of disappointed patronage;<sup>14</sup> Adalhard was both patron and kinsman of Nithard, but had failed to speak to the king on his behalf for the purpose of regaining lost property.<sup>15</sup> As Nelson perceptively noted,

IV, Düsseldorf 1967, 429–441; C. Fabre, “Deux Planctus rythmiques en Latin vulgaire du IXe siècle,” in *La Chanson de Geste et le Mythe Carolingien: Melanges René Louis, I*, Saint-Père-sous-Vézelay 1982, 228–252; P. Depreux, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781–840)*, Sigmaringen 1997, 80–82; P. E. Dutton/H. L. Kessler, *The Poetry and Paintings of the First Bible of Charles the Bald*, Ann Arbor 1997, 21–22, 35–38; together with the various studies by Janet Nelson cited below. The duties and responsibilities attached to the office of a seneschal are described by Hincmar of Reims, *On the Governance of the Palace*, cap. 23, trans. by D. Herlihy in P. E. Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization. A Reader*, Peterborough, Ontario 1993, 493–494.

12 Nithard, *Historiarum Libri IV*, IV, 6, ed. P. Lauer, 142.

13 Trans. by B. W. Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, Ann Arbor 1972, 173.

14 J. L. Nelson, “Public *Histories* and Private History in the Work of Nithard,” *Speculum* 60 (1985) 278–281, reprinted in ders., *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, London/Ronceverte 1986, 222–225. See also Nelson, “The Intellectual in Politics: Context, Content and Authorship in the Capitulary of Coulaines, November 843,” in ders., *The Frankish World 750–900*, London/Rio Grande 1996, 157; Nelson, “The search for peace in a time of war: the Carolingian Brüderkrieg, 840–843,” in *Träger und Instrumentarien des Friedens im hohen und späten Mittelalter*, ed. J. Fried, Sigmaringen 1996, 111.

15 Certainly Lupus of Ferrières could sympathize with Nithard's frustration, for he would suffer the same problem when relying upon Adalhard as a patron and intercessor for the

“What Nithard resented was his own absence from Adalhard’s honours list. His sour grapes should not be mistaken for an accurate impression of the flavour of Charles’s court in December 842.”<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, much of the good that Nelson did to amend Adalhard’s tarnished reputation has been undermined by a series of mistranslations involving the seneschal, often occurring at pivotal moments in the primary texts. For example, at the battle of Fontenoy in 841 between the four sons of Louis the Pious – an event which later medieval (as well as many modern) historians would perceive as marking the beginning of Carolingian “decline”<sup>17</sup> – Nithard recorded that,

Pars autem exercitus quam Karolus in loco qui Fagit vulgo dicitur excepit protinus fugit; pars vero quae in Solemnat Ahelardum ceterosque, quibus haud modicum supplementum Domino auxiliante prebui, appetiit strenue confligit; quo et utrique vicerunt, sed novissime omnes a parte Lodharii fugerunt.<sup>18</sup>

In a widely-used English translation of this passage by Bernhard Scholz, Nithard’s prose has been misunderstood, and thus Adalhard misrepresented as fighting on the side of Lothar’s army – against Nithard: “But the part of our army which attacked Adalhard and the others at Solemnat, and to which I [Nithard] gave vigorous assistance with God’s help, fought bitterly.”<sup>19</sup> Janet Nelson was quick to point out this error, which Paul Dutton would later emend in his reprint of Scholz’s translation: “But the part of [Lothar’s] army which attacked Adalhard and the others at Solemnat, to whom I gave vigorous assistance with God’s help, fought bitterly.”<sup>20</sup>

But while Scholz’s mistranslation placed the seneschal on the losing side of the battle, fighting for a “cowardly” king,<sup>21</sup> it has been Adalhard’s champion

retrieval of his own lost property. See Lupus, *Epistulae*, ed. P.K. Marshall, no. 55, 88, 92; trans. by G.W. Regenos, no. 58, 32, 36; P.E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming*, 162–163. One should note, however, that Janet Nelson has revised her interpretation of the plea by Lupus cited above (n. 10), no longer seeing it as a discreetly veiled criticism of Adalhard for such poor patronage [J.L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, London/New York 1992, 128]. Cf. Nelson, “*Public Histories and Private History*,” 268, n. 70.

16 J.L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 127–128.

17 J.L. Nelson, “The search for peace in a time of war,” 113–114.

18 Nithard, *Historiarum Libri IV*, II, 10, ed. P. Lauer, 78.

19 B.W. Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 154.

20 J.L. Nelson, “*Public Histories and Private History*,” 274, n. 98; P.E. Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization. A Reader*, Peterborough, Ontario 1993, 349; one should note that Lauer, in his edition and French translation of 1926, rendered this passage correctly (p. 79).

21 For Lothar’s “customary” tactic of subornation (*sollicitare*), see K. Leyser, “Three Historians,” in ders., *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, London/Rio Grande 1994, 25–26; J.L. Nelson, “*Public Histories and Private History*,” 267.

Janet Nelson who has misrepresented him most severely, beginning with his less bellicose, but more pernicious, role as royal advisor. Referring to the account of Adalhard's seemingly-impetuous behavior given by Nithard,

Qui utilitati publice minus prospiciens placere cuique intendit. Hinc libertates, hinc publica in propriis usibus distribuere suasit...<sup>22</sup>

Nelson provided the following translation:

Caring little for the public good, he devoted himself to pleasing everyone. He persuaded [Charles] to distribute privileges and public revenues to private individuals for their own use.<sup>23</sup>

Here Adalhard had now become the baleful advisor to Charles the Bald, rather than to *pater eius*, Louis the Pious, in the years prior.<sup>24</sup> This misreading further contributed to Adalhard's sordid reputation, for the seneschal's prodigal influence now spanned the reigns of both kings in the modern secondary literature.

Even as a royal supplicant, Adalhard's notoriety seems to have preceded him. Nelson has recently ascribed to Adalhard a fascinating letter (ca. 840–842) whose author, having learned of attempts to slander his name, begs the attention and forgiveness of his patroness Ermengard, queen of the “Middle Kingdom” and wife of Emperor Lothar, the eldest son of Louis the Pious.<sup>25</sup> If this letter really was written by Adalhard, it is an enormously important document, for it would allow the seneschal to speak for, defend, or perhaps incriminate, himself. Unfortunately, the partial translation Nelson provides with her discussion of the letter misrepresents the author's frank avowal of his motives and actions:

22 Nithard, *Historiarum Libri IV*, IV, 6, ed. P. Lauer, 142.

23 J. L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 127.

24 As noted by P. Depreux in his review of Nelson's book *Charles the Bald*: “l'A[uteur] fait exercer par le sénéchal Adalhard une influence néfaste sur Charles et non sur Louis le Pieux (p. 127), ce qui n'est pas conforme au témoignage de Nithard (IV, 6, éd. Lauer, p. 142).” *Le Moyen Age* 101 (1995) 158.

25 As Nelson notes, E. Dümmler had tentatively suggested the attribution of this letter to Adalhard in 1887. See J. L. Nelson, “The search for peace in a time of war,” 102–104; ders., “Kings with Justice, Kings without Justice: An Early Medieval Paradox,” in *La Giustizia nell'alto Medioevo (Secolo IX–XI)*, [Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, XLIV, 2] Spoleto 1997, 805; ders., *Charles the Bald*, 70, n. 77; ders., “Charles le Chauve et les utilisations du savoir,” in *L'École carolingienne d'Auxerre. De Murethach à Remi 830–908*, ed. D. Iogna-Prat, C. Jeudy, G. Lobrichon, Paris 1989, 44; S. Airlie, “The Political Behaviour of the Secular Magnates in Francia, 829–879,” Oxford Ph. D. diss. 1985, 2. For an examination of the MS. [Paris BN lat. 11379] of which this letter forms a part [f. 17r–17v], see J. J. Contreni, “Le formulaire de Laon. Source pour l'histoire de l'école de Laon au début du X<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Scriptorium* 27 (1973) 21–29.

Et in hac senior meus et fideles eius hactenus persistunt, et perseverare cupiunt, si ex parte illius rite observatum fuerit. Nunc autem versa vice pro amore pacis talibus remuneror praemiis, et qui pro aliorum iustitia laboravi, iustitiam meam perdidit, et ob hoc imitator daemonum dicor, quod tantum iustitiam requiro. Ego denique natu[ram] ceterorum hominum habeo, quia eos, qui mihi bene faciunt, diligo, et eos, qui mihi ubicumque possunt adversantur, refugio atque declino. Propterea ergo de pace eorum studui, ut non deterior, sed melior inde fierem. Quisquis igitur vobis dicit, quod inter filios senioris mei, qui me nutrit, discordias seminem, fallitur. Neque enim in hoc seniorum discordiam et regni perturbationem esse arbitror, si iustitiam meam quaesiero, de qua nequaquam prius silebo, donec eam Christo annuente adipiscar.<sup>26</sup>

My lord [Charles] and his *fideles* are still striving for [peace], and want to continue doing so, if only things are done correctly on his [Lothar's] side. But my reward for loving peace has been just the opposite: I who worked hard for others' rights have lost my own – and because I simply seek to attain them, I am called an imitator of demons! I'm only human, like everyone else: I love those who do right by me, and I withdraw from those who do everything they can to oppose me. My aim was to make peace between them grow stronger, not weaker. Whoever says that I sow discord between the sons of my lord [Louis the Pious] is a liar! I do not think it is making discord between lords if I seek my rights. I kept silent long enough about them before until with Christ's help I could attain them.<sup>27</sup>

In working for peace between the discordant royal siblings, the author explicitly states his motive of self-interest: “...*ut non deterior, sed melior inde fierem*” – “...so that I might be better off, rather than worse off thereby.” The translation, “My aim was to make peace between them grow stronger, not weaker,” incorrectly takes “*pax*” rather than the author as the subject of “*feri*,” and, by doing so, translates “*fierem*” as though it were the third-person singular “*fieret*.” Just a few lines later, the author explains to the queen that his detractors have been deceived if they suggest that he is a sower of discord: “*Neque enim in hoc seniorum discordiam et regni perturbationem esse arbitror, si iustitiam meam quaesiero, de qua nequaquam prius silebo, donec eam Christo annuente adipiscar*” – “For I do not think that it is making discord between lords and disorder in the realm if I shall have sought my “*iustitia*,” about which I shall not at all remain silent, until, with Christ's help, I can attain it.” Once again, the translation, “I do not think it is making discord between lords if I seek my rights. I kept silent long enough about them before until with Christ's help I could attain them,” misrepresents the author's intentions by rendering the future “*silebo*” as the imperfect “*silebam*” (thereby distorting the relationship between his past and future actions as conveyed by the subor-

26 MGH, *Epistolae*, ed. E. Dümmler, K. Hampe, V, Hanover 1899, repr. Munich 1978, 344, no. 27.

27 J.L. Nelson, “The search for peace in a time of war,” 103.

dinate clause of the condition, which is dependent upon the future perfect “*quaesiero*” in the protasis). What is worse, the author’s allegedly professed “patience,” represented in the mistranslation, is then erroneously associated with that conduct suggested by a contemporary biblical quotation cited by Nelson two pages earlier: “The wise man will be silent until the right time” (Ecclesiasticus 20: 7).<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the most serious misinterpretation stemming from a mistranslation occurs in a modern indictment levelled at Adalhard for treachery against the realm. In 861, one of two Viking groups campaigning on the Seine occupied the monastery of St.-Maur-de-Fossés.<sup>29</sup> This was the family monastery of Adalhard and his niece Ermentrude, queen of the western kingdom and wife of King Charles the Bald.<sup>30</sup> I let Janet Nelson narrate the series of events that followed: “In January, 862, the Fossés Vikings went up the Marne ‘with a few ships’ by night and looted the *civitas* of Meaux. This attack is recorded very soon after the event by a contemporary, Bishop Hildegard of Meaux, who makes it the occasion of a vitriolic attack on Charles and his men for allowing the Seine basin, ‘the paradise of his realm,’ to be laid waste. According to Hildegard, not only had the defeat at Oissel in 858 [at the hands of the Vikings] made ‘the realm of the people of the Franks a most shameful laughing-stock,’ but the wintering of the Vikings upstream from Paris in 861–862 was the result of ‘treachery’ [*infidelitas*].<sup>31</sup> He does not say whose.”<sup>32</sup> But Nelson does, for she suspects Adalhard of quartering the Vikings at Fossés – “[It] could surely only have been done with Adalhard’s agreement” – and letting them loose on Meaux as part of a strategic strike by Charles the Bald on his eldest son, Louis the Stammerer, soon after the latter’s rebellion in 862.<sup>33</sup>

The entire theory of Adalhard’s perfidy rests on a misunderstanding of “*infidelitas*” in Hildegard’s text. For when Hildegard spoke of “*infidelitas*,” he was referring not to the “treachery” of any individual, but rather to those Vikings who were ravaging the countryside, and the characteristic way in which they proceeded.

28 J.L. Nelson, “The search for peace in a time of war,” 101. For the contemporary quotation, see P.W. Finsterwalder, “Eine parteipolitische Kundgebung eines Anhängers Lothars I,” *Neues Archiv* 47 (1928) 396, § 22.

29 *Annales de Saint Bertin 861*, ed. F. Grat, et al., Paris 1964, 109.

30 *Recueil des Actes de Charles II le Chauve, roi de France*, ed. G. Tessier, I, Paris 1943–1955, 413–416, no. 157.

31 See Hildegard of Meaux, *Vita Faronis*, cap. 123, 125, 127, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSrG, V, Hanover 1910, 200–201.

32 J.L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 205.

33 J.L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 206. After her translation, Nelson cites (p. 205, n. 86) N. Wylie, “The *Vita Faronis* of Bishop Hildegard of Meaux” (University of London B.A. dissertation 1989), whom she thanks for having helped illuminate an obscure text (p. ix).

Post haec itaque ad hoc nefandissimum huius regni malum vomuit iterum mare ampliozem Northmannorum multitudinem, quam valde extimuit prior multitudo Northmannorum. Priores vero a sequentibus Northmannis obsessi, nomine regis Karoli sunt devicti, statutis tamen donis gravissimis auri et argenti ex regno immensaque adhibita ad haec pro obsidione prioris multitudinis victus abundantia. Sicque tandem aliquando obsessione diutissima nefandi a nefandioribus visi superati astutia acutissima. Ita quoque est ab illis actum et fide vana illorum acceptum est promissum, ut discedendo utraeque partes iam ultra nescirent finium nostrorum introitum.

Quos cum mare recepturos [Karolus] speraret, illi [Northmanni] infidelitatis itinere flexo terminos prioris devastationis adaucti numero praetercurrunt.<sup>34</sup>

As Hildegard stated, King Charles the Bald may have hoped that the invaders would return down river to the sea, leaving the kingdom in peace, but the Vikings had other ideas. Changing their “untrustworthy course” (*infidelitatis itinere flexo*), the band of Vikings increased their ranks, and continued with their devastation of the realm. Certainly Hildegard’s reproach of their “*iter*” as “untrustworthy” is understandable, given the fact that the Vikings had just accepted a bribe from the king, and were supposed to be making good on their promise to withdraw from the kingdom. Indeed, Hildegard’s rebuke of their breach of faith was meant to parallel and qualify further his judgment of their “*fides vana*” mentioned just a few lines earlier. One notes also the title of the chapter, appearing in a tenth century manuscript, which serves to support Hildegard’s opinion of the Vikings and their “*infidelitas*”: “*De Nortmannorum infidelitate et itineris quarto (!) reflexione.*”<sup>35</sup> As for Adalhard, such wayfaring by the Vikings could only bode ill for one whom King Charles had entrusted with the defense of the realm. Summoned by the king in 865, he and his relatives Uto and Berengar were deprived of their *honores*; according to Charles, they had done “nothing of any use against the Northmen.”<sup>36</sup>

Yet, a decade later, Adalhard, though by now an old man, was still an important figure, playing a pivotal role in Carolingian politics.<sup>37</sup> The exact nature of this role, however, is again obscured by problems in translation. In the *Annals of St. Bertin*, Hincmar of Reims reported for the year 873 that, while

34 Hildegard of Meaux, *Vita Faronis*, cap. 126, 127, ed. B. Krusch, 201.

35 Hildegard of Meaux, *Vita Faronis*, index, (cap. 127), ed. B. Krusch, 189; for the MS, 177.

36 *nihil utilitatis contra Nortmannos* *Annales de Saint Bertin* 865, ed. F. Grat, et al., 124–125.

37 After being reprimanded in 865, Adalhard quickly returned to royal grace. A diploma which shows him at Ponthion, near the king (*quia veniens charissimus nobis Adelardus comes*), on 16 June, 866 (Charles gives him the abbey of St. Symphorien in Autunois), allows one to suppose that Adalhard played a role at the colloquy of “Ortivineas” between Charles and Lothar II the following month. For the charter, see F. Lot, “Date d’un Diplôme de Charles le Chauve en Faveur de l’Abbaye de Saint-Symphorien d’Autun,” *Le Moyen Age* 21 (1908) 233–245; *Recueil des Actes de Charles II le Chauve*, II, ed. G. Tessier, 146–149, no. 293.



Charles the Bald was marching against a band of Vikings settled at Angers, the king learned *en route*

quod factione fratris sui Hludowici Germaniae regis Karlomannus caecus per homines quondam suos, consentientibus duobus pseudomonachis, de Corbeio monasterio sublatus et ad Hludowicum fuerit, cohibente ac interveniente Adalardo, in suam contrarietatem perductus.<sup>38</sup>

The difficulty here lies in how one should translate "*cohibere*." Normally, the verb would be translated in the sense of "to prevent or hinder," as reflected by Nelson's recent translation of this passage:

As a result of the scheming of his brother King Louis of Germany, the now-blind Carlomann had been taken away from the monastery of Corbie by some of his former supporters with the connivance of two false monks, and brought to Louis in order to harm Charles' interests, despite the efforts of Adalard to intervene and prevent this.<sup>39</sup>

In their edition of the *Annals*, however, F. Grat, J. Vieilliard, and S. Clémencet noted that a variant reading for "*cohibente*" in this sentence is "*conhibendus*."<sup>40</sup> Although its form makes no sense in the context of the passage, this type of variant is not infrequent throughout the work. For instance, in another section of the *Annals*, Hincmar had written under the year 869 that "Sicque 5. Idus ipsius mensis ab episcopis qui adfuerunt, cohibentibus omnibus, in basilica beati Stephani..." and "Hincmarus Remorum episcopus...iubente ac postulante Adventio ipsius civitatis episcopo et caeteris episcopis Treverorum provintiae, Hattone scilicet ecclesiae Viridunensis episcopo et Arnulfo Tullensis civitatis episcopo, cohibentibus provintiae Remorum episcopis..." again with the appearance of "*conhibentibus*" as a variant in both cases.<sup>41</sup> Georg Waitz, in his 1883 edition of the *Annals*, understood these variants as the result of confusion between intervocalic b and v, and consequently suggested the emendations "*connivente*" and "*conniventibus*," for the passages of 873 and

38 *Annales de Saint Bertin 873*, ed. F. Grat, et al., 192–193.

39 J. L. Nelson, *The Annals of St. Bertin*, Manchester/New York 1991, 183. The most recent editors of the *Annales de Saint Bertin*, F. Grat, J. Vieilliard, and S. Clémencet, agree with Nelson in their interpretation of this clause: "Il s'agit évidemment d'Alard le Sénéchal, le grand-oncle de Carloman, dont les relations avec Louis le Germanique n'ont jamais été bonnes" (p. 192–193, n. 3).

40 *Annales de Saint Bertin 873*, ed. F. Grat, et al., 192, "r" in apparatus. In his edition of 1883, G. Waitz also noted this variant: *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SSrG in usum scholarum, Hanover 1883, 123, "h" in apparatus.

41 *Annales de Saint Bertin 869*, ed. F. Grat, et al., 157, "z" in apparatus; 160, "q" in apparatus; *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, 101, "g" in apparatus; 103, "l" in apparatus.

869 respectively.<sup>42</sup> Certainly such scribal errors were not uncommon; as Waitz noted, the great Charles DuCange had long ago identified the tendency of even Hincmar himself to mistake "*cohibere*" for "*connivere*," citing his misquote of St. Coelestinus as an example: "*Timeo ne cohibere sit hoc tacere.*"<sup>43</sup>

Another clue to the role of Adalhard in the escape of the young prince comes from the meaning of "*intervenire*." Usually this verb carries either a neutral connotation – "to intervene" – or one that implies a more negative intent – "to put a stop to." But throughout the *Annals*, Hincmar consistently utilized "*intervenire*" in a more positive sense, often employing it to express the action by which desired goals were achieved. For example, in his account of the year 865, Hincmar stated that Lothar obtained a treaty with his brother Charles only "on the intervention of Queen Ermentrude."<sup>44</sup> Again, in 871, Hincmar explained that Charles gave an audience to the envoys of his son Carloman "through the intervention of his brother Louis."<sup>45</sup> Finally, in 882, Hincmar noted with some distaste that it was only through "the intervention of certain men" that Charles the Fat was able to reach an agreement with the Vikings.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in light of this usage, and the observations of DuCange and Waitz, Hincmar's statement that the blind prince had escaped "*cohibente ac interveniente Adalardo*" becomes clear; Adalhard was not a loyal man of the king, who acted to prevent the blind prince's abduction, but rather a powerful figure, complicitous in his escape.<sup>47</sup>

Whatever his allegiances, Adalhard the seneschal remains a remarkable, if shadowy, figure – one whose presence consistently appears in so many of the great power struggles of the ninth century. To hear him speak for himself, an opportunity Janet Nelson has recently afforded us by reintroducing that anonymous letter of supplication from the 840s, is thus a great privilege, the value of which is known to any who are familiar with the voice of that other great

42 *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, 101, "g" in apparatus; 123, "h" in apparatus.

43 C. F. Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, II, Paris 1678, repr. 1840, 538, s. v., *cohibeo*. For the quotation, Hincmar, *De praedestione*, ed. J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CXXV, Paris 1841–1864, col. 67; Pope Coelestinus I, *Epistola ad episcopos Galliarum*, ed. J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, L, col. 529, *Timeo ne connivere sit hoc tacere*; Cf. Flodoard of Reims, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae*, III, cap. 16, *Timeo ne connivere sit hoc tacere*.

44 *Ermentrude regina interveniente Annales de Saint Bertin 865*, ed. F. Grat, et al., 121.

45 *interveniente Hludouuico fratre suo Annales de Saint Bertin 871*, ed. F. Grat, et al., 182.

46 *interventione quorundam Annales de Saint Bertin 882*, ed. F. Grat, et al., 248.

47 F. Lot, "Note sur le sénéchal Alard," *Le Moyen Age* 21 (1908) 197, n. 1, understood the text in this way ("*cohibente [sic. pour connivente]*"), as did P. McKeon, *Hincmar of Laon and Carolingian Politics*, Urbana/Chicago/London 1978, 158, "King Charles...learned with alarm that the prince, with the aid of his great-uncle Count Adalard, had escaped..." Moreover, both passages containing the variants appear in the *Mittelateinisches Wörterbuch*, vol. "C", Munich 1967–, 1437–1438, under "*coniveo*," a verb defined as synonymous with "*consentire, adnuere, comprobare.*"

nobleman of the time, Einhard.<sup>48</sup> In this respect, I should like to conclude by reintroducing another letter once thought to have come from the seneschal's pen, but long since forgotten. In his 1882 edition of the various collections of medieval *formulae*, Karl Zeumer noted in a brief aside that the author of a short letter to the abbot of Reichenau (Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek 550, f. 136–137) was perhaps the seneschal Adalhard.<sup>49</sup>

Carissimo abbati ill., omnibus suis sincellites ill. mansuram in Salvatore salutem. Non vos latere suspicor, quod, manente domino imperatore ill. novissime apud illam villam, non longe a vobis consistentem, provocante vestre religionis fama, vestrum mihi libuit adire coenobium; illucque perveni et, visa benignissima vestra sanctitate, placuit, ut me, quamvis sceleribus squalidum, vestri vestrorumque commendarem oracionibus; quod et vos et vestri, sicut caritatis pleni, benignissimo suscepistis affectu. Pro qua munera, quia vobis condignam remuneracionem reddidere nequeo, maximas tamen devotasque grates, quantum quivero, referre non differam. Et nunc vobis lego 30 solidos argenti, flagitoque pronus et summissus posco et acclinis postulo, ut in vestra solertissima permaneat oracione illa eius memoria nostri, et ego quantum potero incontaminatam vobiscum observabo amicitiam. Et ni leudes nostri et equi fierent fessi ob nimitatem itineris, quod nos hoc anno Romam eundo Romaque redeundo peregrimus, nullo modo omitterem vobiscum colloqui pacemque cum meis patribus, qui sub vestra paternitate degunt, mutuam habere. De quorum salubritate et salubri prosperitate et de vestra, queso, rescribas, ni grave fuerit calamum tinguere tinctumque in vitulino campo ovinoque trahere. Ereniseona vobiscum!

Premia perpetui sumpturi maxima regni

Est, qui vita suum Deum colite.<sup>50</sup>

Me, precor, et vestris precibus mandate Tonanti,

Vobiscum ut partem, regna poli capiam.

Kere, kyri agapite.<sup>51</sup>

Wishing everlasting salvation in the Savior for that dearest abbot, [and] for all his companions. I do not suppose that you are unaware, that, when the Lord Emperor [Louis] was recently staying at that [royal] domain<sup>52</sup> [in Bodmann], standing not

48 See P.E. Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard*, Peterborough, Ontario 1998; certainly a medieval compiler recognized at least the letter's stylistic value, for he included it within a unique group of epistolary formulae. See J.J. Contreni, "Le formulaire de Laon. Source pour l'histoire de l'école de Laon au début du Xe siècle," *Scriptorium* 27 (1973) 21–29.

49 MGH, *Formulae Merovingici et Karolini aevi*, ed. K. Zeumer, Hanover 1882–1886, 342, 374, n. 1.

50 The verse does not scan. Cf. the emendations ventured by Zeumer, MGH, *Formulae Merovingici et Karolini aevi*, 374, "o, q" in apparatus.

51 MGH, *Formulae Merovingici et Karolini aevi*, ed. K. Zeumer, 374, no. 21.

52 See H. Dübeld, "Quelques observations sur le sens du mot *villa*," *Le Moyen Age* 59 (1953) 1–9.

far from you, it was pleasing for me to come to your monastery, being incited [to do so] by the renown of your devotion. I came to that place and, when I beheld your most kind piety, it seemed good that I, however much soiled by crimes, should entrust myself to the prayers of you and yours. And being full of charity, as it were, both you and yours accepted this [request] with the kindest affection. Although I am [presently] unable to repay you a very worthy recompense for this favor [namely, the prayers], nevertheless I shall not hesitate to return however many great devotions and thanks as I can in the future. [But for] now I send to you thirty silver solidi, and bowed I entreat, and humble I beg, and obeisant I request, that our memory may remain in your most skillful prayer, and I, however much I shall be able, will honor immaculate friendship with you.<sup>53</sup> If our faithful men and horses were not wearied because of the length of the journey, which we travelled in this year, going to and returning from Rome, in no way might I have neglected to speak with you and hold a shared [moment of] peace with my fathers, who live under your paternal care.<sup>54</sup> I [can only] pray that, lest it be a burden to dip [your] pen [in ink] and, once it has been dyed, to drag it on to the 'calf-and-sheep-like field' [namely, parchment], you will write back about their health and wholesome well-being, [as well as] yours. Peace be with you!

He, who cherishes his God in [this] life,  
 [will gain?] the greatest rewards of the coming eternal kingdom.<sup>55</sup>  
 I beg, recommend me in your prayers to the 'Thunderer'<sup>56</sup>  
 so that I will gain with you a place in the kingdom of Heaven.

Hail, dear Lord.

Given the letter's contents, and the whereabouts of the emperor at the time, Zeumer was able to conclude that it was written likely towards the end of 839,

53 Perhaps it is the seneschal's name that appears in the memorial book from Reichenau on f. 115: "*Adalhart comes.*" See *Das Verbrüderungsbuch der Abtei Reichenau*, ed. J. Autenrieth, D. Geuenich, K. Schmid, MGH, *Libri memoriales et necrologia, nova series*, I, Hanover 1979, 216 [f.115C1]; also, f. 99D1: "*Adalhart.*"

54 Adalhard's reference to *meis patribus* was likely meant as a metaphorical expression of his affection, humility, and respect for those monks (priests?) whom he considered his spiritual "fathers." See J. H. Lynch, "*Spiritale vinculum: The Vocabulary of Spiritual Kinship in Early Medieval Europe*," in *Religion, Culture, and Society in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. T. F. X. Noble, J. J. Contreni, Kalamazoo 1987, 186–187; ders., *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe*, Princeton 1986, 165–169; P. E. Dutton/H. L. Kessler, *The Poetry and Paintings of the First Bible of Charles the Bald*, Ann Arbor 1997, 36. For the possibility of canons at Reichenau, see M. M. Hildebrandt, *The External School in Carolingian Society*, Leiden/New York/Cologne 1992, 95–97.

55 This translation is meant to serve only as an approximation of the sense intended by the author. The Latin of the couplet is corrupt.

56 For the currency of this metaphor in the ninth century, see H. Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire*, trans. by P. Munz, Oxford 1957, 48.

sometime after Louis and his retinue had left the royal "villa" at Bodmann.<sup>57</sup> A key figure among this contingent had been the emperor's faithful seneschal, as attested by a pair of charters drawn up by him (*Adalardo ambasciante*) at the Bodmann sojourn.<sup>58</sup> If Adalhard had also drawn up the letter to the abbot of Reichenau, Walahfrid Strabo,<sup>59</sup> certainly the extent of his learning far surpassed that of any formal notarial training. For the letter, replete with Hellenisms, verse, and metaphorical flourishes, exhibits a familiarity, if not complete facility, with the epistolary art of begging pardon and favor. Whether such a poetic style is consonant with that demonstrated by the other "Adalhard letter," however, remains problematic – much like the fascinating career of the seneschal himself.

57 K. Zeumer, "Ueber die alamannischen Formelsammlungen," *Neues Archiv* 8 (1883) 501–502. For the Bodmann residence, see T. Mayer, "Die Pfalz Bodman," in *Deutsche Königspfalzen: Beiträge zu ihrer historischen und archäologischen Erforschung*, I, Göttingen 1963, 97–112.

58 T. Sickel, *Acta regum et imperatorum Karolinorum*, [Regesten der Urkunden der ersten Karolinger (751–840)] II, Vienna 1867, 199–200, no. 370 (839, 21 Apr.); no. 371 (839, 23 Apr.). See P. Lauer, "La formule 'N. ambasciavit' dans les diplômes carolingiens," *Bulletin philologique et historique* (1922–1923) 187–196.

59 After nine years of tutoring the young prince Charles the Bald, Walahfrid was appointed abbot of Reichenau in 838. For a concise sketch of Walahfrid's career, see E. S. Duckett, *Carolingian Portraits*, Ann Arbor 1969, 121–160, together with P. Godman, *Poets and Emperors: Frankish Politics and Carolingian Poetry*, Oxford 1987, 129–155.



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