

3. Monks on the *Via Regia*: The World of Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel

The *IC* and the 813 councils show a debate in full swing. The *acta* composed in their wake reveal an idealized world in which both the emperor and his bishops accepted each other's advice, and were willing to act upon it. It was a world which accepted the imperial court as an instigator and arbiter, but only on the condition that the emperor would accept the role of the episcopate as shepherds, guides and, ultimately, as expert authors.¹ The relation between ruler and adviser was not always self-evident and was easily strained as criticism of the ruler could easily be construed as a critique of his entourage, and vice versa.² Nevertheless, the development of Carolingian authority at the time influenced – and was influenced by – the way members of the extended court translated criticism of the ruler into reflections on kingship itself. Commenting on rulership became part of the paradoxical relation between the king, who stood at the undisputed top of the hierarchy, and his entourage, without whom his power would not be supported.³ Conversely, any attempt to aid a ruler in his attempts at improving the *ecclesia* ran the risk of being construed as a critique, as it was impossible to construct ideas about *correctio* without holding a mirror up to the audience.⁴ Therefore, the very existence of texts advising the court on which ecclesiastical policies to implement implies a discourse community that agreed on an end point, but which was all but forced to recognize that there were many ways that led there.⁵

In the early ninth century, it was clear to contemporary observers that the relation between ruler and court was still in full development. Under the weight of far-reaching political processes and exacerbated by internal strife, the goals, aims and ideals of the participants in this competition for favour and influence were continuously shifting.⁶ These phenomena have

1 Suchan, 'Kirchenpolitik', pp. 8-9.

2 For example, the chamberlain Bernard of Septimania bore the brunt of the initial wave of criticism about the policies of Louis the Pious: De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 185-213, and Hummer, *Politics and Power*, pp. 160-163.

3 Innes, *State and Society*, pp. 188-189.

4 Van Renswoude, *License to Speak*, pp. 259-284; Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, esp. pp. 80-131. Cf. also Ruche, 'Miroirs'.

5 Dutton, *Politics of Dreaming*, p. 83.

6 On the role of poetry in the Carolingian competition for royal favour and intellectual standing, see Tignolet, 'Jeux poétiques'.

been researched from many different perspectives, allowing for an image of the Carolingian court that is as nuanced as it is complicated.⁷ Instead of attempting a broad generalization, this chapter will focus on one specific author and his place in the greater scheme of things. Doing this will allow us to regard one individual's advice of dealing with the complications of everyday life for the elites of the empire as he took his own role as one of the leading intellectual of the *ecclesia* to heart. While not a *pars pro toto* for the entire elite culture of the early ninth century, his views of the interdependence between individual and society and between worldly and heavenly concerns allow us to relate the reform attempts described in the preceding chapter to the concerns one person would have for the world around him.

This author was Smaragdus, abbot of Saint-Mihiel (r. 805-827/840).⁸ Straddling the line between cloister and court in a way few of his contemporaries could emulate, Smaragdus was an astute observer and commentator on the burdens of power and the wages of *correctio*. He proposed a combination of monastic and imperial ideologies in terms of the image of the *via regia* – the metaphorical 'king's highway' that all good Christians walk on their way to salvation.⁹ This image guided Smaragdus' own thoughts. He develops it in the course of three of his major works, namely his commentary on the *RB* and two moral treatises known as the *Via Regia* and the *Diadema Monachorum*. In what follows, it will be shown how monastic and imperial ideals did not simply occur side by side in his mind, but actually overlapped to a large extent. This chapter works from the assumption that the ideas contained within the works of Smaragdus are reflective of a particular discourse community centred on the court. They were a contemplation on the interaction between ruler and subject while simultaneously remaining the product of one author's individual mind-set and his views on the world around him.¹⁰

7 Among the many works devoted to this subject, Fleckenstein, 'Karl der Große und sein Hof', and the collection by the same author, *Ordnungen und formende Kräfte des Mittelalters* deserve mention; the collected works of Airlie, *Power and Its Problems*, and Nelson, *Courts, Elites, and Gendered Power*, present important insights as well. McKitterick, *Charlemagne*; De Jong, *Penitential State*; and Nelson, *Charles the Bald* give a comprehensive overview of three generations of Carolingian rulers, while MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, and Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, analyse the reigns of Charles the Fat and Louis the German. Most recently, West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*, shows how the Carolingian system continued to make its presence felt after the dynasty had disappeared from the political scene.

8 We know next to nothing about Smaragdus' time of death, save for some oblique references in a later chronicle and the sources that mention him: Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 13-14 and pp. 19-20.

9 Generally, see Wallace-Hadrill, 'Via regia'.

10 Pohl, 'Introduction: ego trouble?', pp. 16-20.

A Life in Context

As with many of his contemporaries, what biographical details we have on Smaragdus are few and far between. It is unclear when he was born or when he died, and although it was highly likely that he was a Visigoth whose roots lay in either Iberia or Septimania, even his provenance has been the subject of intense historiographical debate.¹¹ From these obscure origins, Smaragdus had a distinguished career that we can follow through his extant writings. His initial claim to fame came in 805, when he composed a commentary on the *Ars Grammatica* by Donatus, establishing his name as a *magister* and demonstrating his active involvement in the cultural reforms going on at the time.¹² He next appears in 809, as one of the *missi* sent to Rome to explain the Carolingian position in the *filioque* controversy as decided at a Council in Aachen in that same year.¹³ For the occasion, he also composed a short treatise, *De Processu Spiritus Sancti*.¹⁴

The issue at stake was a deeply theological one, which had everything to do with the nature of Christ, and by extension, of the Church.¹⁵ For Smaragdus, apart from being able to showcase his mastery of theological issues, being involved in this controversy during the reign of Charlemagne allowed him to play a role in the interaction between the imperial court and intellectuals across the empire.¹⁶ It also, essentially, allowed him to make a name for himself at court. Given its importance for Smaragdus' profile as a scholar, it is thus worthwhile to briefly look at the controversy in order to better understand his later vision of the *ecclesia*.

Central to the *filioque* controversy was the question whether the Spirit proceeded from just the Father or from both the Father *and* the Son – hence the focus on *filioque*, which according to some needed to be added to the

11 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 15–19; Riché, 'Réfugiés wisigoths', p. 181; Duhamel-Adamo, 'Poids de l'aristocratie d'origine wisigothique'.

12 Smaragdus, *Liber in Partibus Donati*; his Septimanian roots are clearly explained in the foreword, pp. ix–xi. Generally on the context of this work, see Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse*, pp. 222–245.

13 On this council, its participants and its impact, see the introduction to the edition of the relevant documents in *MGH Concilia 2 suppl. 2*, hereafter referred to as Willjung, *Konzil von Aachen*, pp. 1–232, esp. pp. 139–169; Gemeinhardt, 'The dynamics'.

14 Smaragdus, *Epistola de Processione Spiritus Sancti*; Willjung, 'Zur Überlieferung der *Epistola de Processione Spiritus Sancti*'; Herrin, *Formation of Christendom*, p. 363.

15 Close, *Uniformiser la Foi*, pp. 40–41 and pp. 144–154.

16 For a similar case of intellectual ambition, see Kramer, 'Agobard of Lyon'.

Creed, while others dismissed this notion as heretical.¹⁷ In Frankish sources, descriptions of this debate go back as far as 767: the *ARF* and later Ado of Vienne's *Chronicon* mention that this was an issue discussed at the otherwise undocumented Council of Gentilly, which was organized as part of the Carolingian conquest and integration of Aquitaine.¹⁸ However, as McCormick and Noble have suggested, this is probably a retroactive addition to the *ARF* when it was first composed in the 790s, and which was later used by Ado: it was most likely 'designed to add historical precedent to the theological concerns of a later time'.¹⁹ Similar concerns may have been present, for example, during the composition of the *Libri Carolini*, written in the early 790s in response to the allegedly iconodule position taken by the Second Council of Nicaea (787).²⁰ The Christological content of the *filioque* debate would certainly have reminded those involved of the discussions surrounding the Adoptionist heresy of Felix of Urgell.²¹ Both theological issues ultimately served to strengthen the *ecclesia* through the simple virtue of being addressed at court, and they were also used to provide a basis for further Frankish expansion, be it territorially or ideologically.²² Things did evolve into a full-blown controversy, however, when in the first decade of the ninth century a certain John of Saint-Saba accused the Frankish monks, 'and the books they have', in the community of Mount Olivet near Jerusalem, of being heretical – on Christmas Day, no less.²³

The Frankish monks in Jerusalem had not written to Charlemagne directly about this accusation. Instead, they wrote to Pope Leo III, to tell him the whole story, while also mentioning some more differences between the Greek and Latin liturgies. Their story culminated in the accusation, in a public court, that the *symbolum fidei* used by the Franks was heretical in

17 Pochoshajew, 'Theologische Argumentation'; Herrin, *Formation of Christendom*, pp. 463-466; Siecienski, *Filioque*.

18 *ARF* 767, pp. 25-26; Ado of Vienne, *Chronicon*, p. 319; Hartmann, *Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, pp. 81-82.

19 Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm*, pp. 142-145; McCormick, 'Textes, images et iconoclasm', pp. 116-144. See also Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse*, pp. 76-81.

20 Freeman and Meyvaert, 'Opus Caroli regis contra synodum'; Van Espelo, 'A testimony of Carolingian rule?', pp. 255-256.

21 Willjung, *Konzil von Aachen*, pp. 12-23. On Adoptionism, see especially, Cavadini, *Last Christology*; Chazelle, *Crucified God*, pp. 38-80.

22 Kramer, 'Adopt, adapt and improve'; Chandler, 'Heresy and empire'.

23 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, pp. 64-65: 'Johannes, qui fuit de monasterio sancti Sabae [...] dixit nobis: "Quia omnes Franci haeretici estis" [...] dicendo: "Quod haeretici estis; et libri, quos habetis, haeretici sunt"'. See Borgolte, 'Papst Leo III.', pp. 407-409.

the eyes of their Greek peers.²⁴ However, the monks added, their creed, including the *filioque*, was consistent with the writings of Gregory the Great, the *RB*, and other authoritative works. Both texts had been given to them by Charlemagne himself, so whatever was in there must be correct.²⁵ Moreover, the author justified this liturgical anomaly by stating that he had in fact heard the *filioque* sung in the chapel of Charlemagne himself.²⁶ The monks then asked the pope to intervene on their behalf.²⁷

This had the makings of an international incident, and the monks may have knowingly aimed to open this can of worms by appealing to Rome and not to the local patriarch Thomas, with whom Charlemagne had been in touch.²⁸ Even so, it is indicative of the attraction of the Frankish *ecclesia* and the connection felt by the community to their sponsor, Charlemagne, that they automatically assumed the version of the Creed they claimed to have heard in Aachen was the one that the pope, whom they perhaps knew to be an ally of the Frankish emperor, would defend.²⁹ Their main reason to appeal to the pope may have been that he was better equipped to defend their (and by implication, the Carolingian) point of view. Leo, on the other hand, *did* feel he should inform Charlemagne, and forwarded the letter from Jerusalem to Aachen. Charlemagne responded in 809, by convening a council at the palace to settle this question once and for all.³⁰

How this report reached the Frankish court is telling. The monks had not appealed to Charlemagne directly because, as they explained, the papal see remained 'exalted above all the sees of the Christians', and they saw Rome as the exclusive arbiter in such cases.³¹ Even so, they attempted to convince the pope using the influence and customs of the imperial court as a benchmark. Why Leo III informed Charlemagne about the matter is more ambiguous. He may have wanted to acknowledge the emperor as his equal, or perhaps he

24 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, p. 65.

25 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, p. 65: 'Et in homilia sancti Gregorii, quam nobis filius vester domnus Karolus imperator dedit [...]. Et in regula sancti Benedicti, quam nobis dedit filius vester domnus Karolus, quae habet fidem scriptam de sancta et inseparabili Trinitate, dicit: 'Credo Spiritum sanctum deum verum, ex Patre procedentem et Filio'.

26 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, p. 66.

27 This was not the first nor would it be the last time that the pope was called upon to settle a score with his peers in Byzantium: Gantner, 'The label "Greeks"'.
 28 Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm*, pp. 246-247.

29 On the history of the monasteries involved, see Bieberstein, 'Sancta Maria latina'; Patrich, 'The Sabaite heritage'.

30 *Annales Regni Francorum*, 809, p. 129; Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse*, pp. 146-160; Hartmann, *Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, pp. 127.

31 Leo III, *Epistola* 7, p. 64. Cf. Willjung, *Konzil von Aachen*, p. 28.

appreciated this situation for the diplomatic powder keg it was and wanted to get imperial backing before continuing. In short, he may have seen that this was not just a matter of theology but also of politics.³² The fact that the pope referred to the case as a 'struggle of the Faith, which the monks residing there have had amongst themselves' may be another reason for this decision.³³ If indeed he thought that it was a matter between different monastic communities, the emperor's intervention should count for more than his own, as it was Charlemagne who had established the enclave in Jerusalem in the first place. It was more likely that the emperor would have more success interfering. Whatever the case, Leo III wrote to Charlemagne, informing him that he sent an approved version of the Creed to Jerusalem. For the papal see this seemed to represent an end to this dispute.³⁴ The Frankish court, however, sprang into action, sensing that this matter required their attention – both for the benefit of the *ecclesia* and to enhance its status.

The resulting documents, especially the 'official' version carried to Rome by Adalhard of Corbie, Jesse of Amiens and Bernhar of Worms, demonstrated the capability of Carolingian intellectuals to peruse patristic documents and turn them into new theological treatises.³⁵ However, it is through the other documents composed to prepare the *Decretum Aquisgranensis* and the papal response to it, known as the *Ratio Romana de Symbolo Fidei*, that we may further explore the growing awareness that the emperor functioned as the leader of a Frankish *ecclesia*, and thus also address the question why the monks in Jerusalem referred to his guidance when explaining the situation to the pope. In his contribution to the dossier, Arn of Salzburg referred to the peace and tranquillity that the emperor had wrought in the Church, telling him unequivocally that 'Christ, who possesses your heart, has triumphed through you' over the various pagans and enemies of the Church, and praising

32 De Jong, 'Charlemagne's Church', pp. 115–118.

33 Leo III, *Epistola* 8, p. 66: 'Praesenti siquidem anno direxerunt nobis epistolam monachi, qui in sancto monte Oliveti morantur, fidei contentionem continentem, quam inter se habebant'.

34 Leo III, *Epistola* 8, p. 66: 'Nos vero symbolum orthodoxae fidei illis misimus'.

35 The members of the mission to Rome are described in the *Ratio Romana de Symbolo Fidei*, p. 287. Bernhar should not be confused with Adalhard's brother, a monk in Corbie at the time: Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie*, p. 51, and Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 133–134. Jesse of Amiens would later be implicated in the 'palace revolt' of 830: Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici*, c. 36; Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 172–173 and pp. 408–409, which may be a reason he was left out of the description of the mission in the *Annales Regni Francorum*, 809, p. 129. It is not clear if Smaragdus was part of the group: Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, p. 27, or if only his treatise was brought to Rome, similar to a letter by Richulf of Mainz to the pope carried by the *missi*: Leo III, *Epistola* 9, pp. 67–68.

his leadership over the 'holy crowd of Christians'.³⁶ As was only proper, he composed his book at the emperor's order.³⁷ Similarly, Theodulf, who characteristically started his own *Libellus* with a poem, ordered his 'booklet' to go to the doorstep of Charlemagne to address the emperor directly.³⁸ In the ensuing dialogue between book and ruler, the emperor is called 'a wall and a weapon for the catholic [religion] and faith', and Theodulf assured him that he had obeyed Charles' *imperium* in composing this work.³⁹

These two men of God, who had witnessed the rise of Charlemagne and who had everything to gain by supporting its centralizing tendencies, had wasted no time assuring Charlemagne that it was to him, and to the court, that they looked for leadership in such matters. It was rhetoric they had honed during previous controversies, as it was felt that the integrity of the Frankish church had been at stake, and the court had felt compelled to safeguard its unity.⁴⁰ In 809, this role had been accepted by the bishops and by the ruler himself, as Charlemagne's reputation spread across the Mediterranean.

The *filioque*-controversy therefore must have impressed upon Smaragdus the full scope and importance of the *ecclesia*. Although it is unclear if he was appointed abbot of the monastery of Saint-Mihiel, close to the imperial city of Metz, in recognition of his contribution, or if he already was abbot at the time, it seems that he channelled his experiences into his activities as a leader of his community.⁴¹ If the *Chronicle of Saint-Mihiel*, composed about two centuries later, is any indication, Smaragdus wasted no time bringing the community up to speed with the latest monastic developments in the empire, most visibly by moving the main monastery away from the secluded hilltop sanctuary it had occupied until then, and re-founding Saint-Mihiel in the Meuse valley.⁴²

36 Arn of Salzburg, *Testimonia*, Praefatio, pp. 253-254.

37 Arn of Salzburg, *Testimonia*, p. 254.

38 Theodulf, *Libellus*, Praefatio: 'Perge, libelle, celer Caroli ad vestigia celsi / Regis et 'O pie', die 'induperator, ave!', p. 315.

39 Theodulf, *Libellus*, Praefatio, pp. 316-317: 'Qui decus es mundi, lux regni, tutor et aequi / Catholicae et fidei murus et arma simul'.

40 On this attitude, see generally Close, *Uniformiser la Foi*.

41 That Smaragdus received this abbacy in response to his role in 809 is conjectural: the earliest source that places him in Saint-Mihiel is an immunity charter dated to 816: *Cartularium Sancti Michaelis*, p. 320. On the importance of Metz for the Carolingians, see Oexle, 'Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf'; Parisse, 'Metz: une capitale médiévale'; Kempf, 'Paul the Deacon's *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*'.

42 *Chronicon Sancti Michaelis in pago Viridunensi*, c. 5, pp. 80-81. For the comparable case of the nunnery of Remiremont, Hlawitschka, 'Zur Klosterverlegung', argues that there exists a

His epitaph, cited by the same eleventh-century chronicler, credited him with making the place more 'suitable for humans'.⁴³ Without fully realizing it, the author of the epitaph thereby also touched a recurring theme in the works written by Smaragdus during his tenure as abbot. These themes were particularly addressed within the *Via Regia*, a commentary on the Christian *vita activa* commonly seen as an early example of a *speculum principum*; his *Commentary* on the *Regula Benedicti*, intended to show how the regular life ought to be lived in individual monasteries faced with the Carolingian *correctio* movement; and, finally, within his crowning effort, the *Diadema Monachorum*, a treatise on the contemplative life of monks.⁴⁴

In addition to these monastic works Smaragdus composed grammatical and exegetical works, including his grammatical commentary on Donatus, a *Liber Comitatus*, a *florilegium* of readings and comments on the gospels and letters from the New Testament, and an as yet understudied commentary on the Psalms. Treated separately, Smaragdus' writings represent different aspects of the Carolingian cultural reform movement, and they have been studied as such over the past decades.⁴⁵ Still, the focus in these studies has been on the place of these texts within their respective genres, and less on the works as a product of their time. One noteworthy approach is an article by Jasmijn Bovendeert, who set out to demonstrate how the *Via Regia* and the *Diadema Monachorum* propagated 'two different ethical programmes, defining two different concepts of identity, one royal and the other monastic'.⁴⁶ Thus, she argues, it follows that Smaragdus was aware that not everybody had to live according to the same guidelines, and that the virtues and vices highlighted in each text reflected the different roles rulers and monks should have in the greater scheme of things.⁴⁷

There certainly is truth to this assessment. Smaragdus' choice to write two distinct works was born from his desire to address a problem from several angles, and one is clearly addressed at monks and the other at worldly rulers.

connection between the reforms of Louis the Pious and this type of monastic relocation, but this idea still merits further research.

43 *Chronicon Sancti Michaelis*, c. 5, p. 81: 'Smaragdus vigit istius abba loci / Qui locus humanis quod erat minus usibus aptus / Haud procul hinc sedem transtulit ille suam'. Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 51-78 and pp. 97-143.

44 Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 376-378.

45 The *Liber Comitatus* stood at the centre of Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, whereas the *Via Regia* was the subject of the study by Eberhardt, *Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds*. Of particular importance are three articles by Ponesse, 'Smaragdus of St. Mihiel'; 'Editorial practice'; and 'Standing distant from the Fathers'.

46 Bovendeert, 'Royal or monastic identity?', p. 251.

47 Bovendeert, 'Royal or monastic identity?', p. 250.

However, a more nuanced picture emerges if we treat the work of Smaragdus as the result of the mental productivity of a single member of the court hoping to provide advice to his colleagues, who came from many different backgrounds but who should all be pursuing the same goal. Smaragdus' idea was never to impose a monastic way of thinking on kings, for example, but to present different ways of being a good Christian, tailor-made for people from all walks of life.

The wish to educate is visible throughout Smaragdus' entire oeuvre. In some instances, the advice he provided was quite direct. The *Liber Comitis*, for instance, was essentially a collection of liturgical readings and their commentaries. Primarily meant to elucidate the unity between the Gospel and the Letters in the New Testament, it had the added advantage already of showing how the 'apparent contradictions in the Fathers' were actually reflections of the many different paths that led to salvation.⁴⁸ His *Liber in Partibus Donati*, meanwhile, was meant to make the grammar by Donatus accessible and acceptable to a Christian audience; it addressed the need for a proper knowledge of language already expressed in such capitularies as the *Epistola de Litteris Colendis*, but ensured that its students would gain a wholesome moral education in the process.⁴⁹

The remainder of this chapter will further blur the line between the ethical programs contained in Smaragdus' three other main works, the *Via Regia* (VR), the *Expositio in Regulam Sancti Benedicti* (*Expositio*), and the *Diadema Monachorum* (DM). In doing so, it will show how Smaragdus, an intellectual between cloister and court, was aware of the interplay between these two worlds, and the influence this dynamic exerted over Carolingian society. Instead of separating monastic and secular ideals, the fact that a single person felt at home in a discourse community that encompassed both shows how these were two sides of the same coin, integral parts of the big world he lived in.

Directions for a King: The *Via Regia*

Sometime in the early 810s, Smaragdus decided to help the rulers of the Frankish *ecclesia* on the way, and sat down to describe the 'king's highway' (*via regia*) in a comprehensive attempt to formulate the responsibilities of a typical Carolingian ruler. Even though it is accepted that the VR was

48 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 132-137; Ponesse, 'Standing distant from the Fathers', p. 80.

49 *Epistola de Litteris Colendis*, Löfstedt et al., CCCMLXVIII, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii and pp. l-lviii.

composed in the years immediately following the *filioque* controversy, we are in murkier waters when it comes to the intended audience and its primary recipient.⁵⁰ The *VR* has been seen as a work meant for Charlemagne, for Louis the Pious when he was still king of Aquitaine, or even for Pippin I of Aquitaine.⁵¹ Of these three, Louis seems the most likely option. Smaragdus was a central member of the Carolingian court circle at the time and the fact that he represented Charlemagne's point of view on a contentious Christological issue indicates that he must have been more than an up-and-comer in the early 810s.⁵² It would make perfect sense for someone like him to compose a moral treatise for an apparent heir to the *imperium*. Combined with the repeated insistence that his *rex* would justly inherit his throne from his father, who had also been a good king, it seems obvious that the *VR* was meant for Louis the Pious first and foremost: the 'son of an earthly king who would be confirmed as the son of the King of Heaven' who would inherit an earthly kingdom in preparation for his place in the heavenly realm.⁵³ This was, after all, an obvious occasion to consolidate current thoughts on the imperial authority built by Charlemagne, and to impart some wisdom on the next ruler. A letter by Alcuin, written to Charlemagne between 793 and 800, shows that Louis had already expressed interest in receiving such teachings while he was king of Aquitaine.⁵⁴ Smaragdus rose to the occasion, even if he and Louis had not (yet) met in person.⁵⁵

Searching for the specific recipient of the *VR* may prove to be a fruitless task in any case. Perhaps the decision not to reveal who was the *clarissime rex* was a deliberate choice, enabling Smaragdus to speak to a wider audience, regardless of whether he had Louis or even Charlemagne in mind. Even the two instances where he addresses his reader as *parvulus*, an infant or small

50 Eberhardt, *Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds*, pp. 262-263.

51 The dating, authorship and intended audience of this text have been demonstrated in Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, pp. 161-168, and confirmed by Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, p. 21, reacting against Scharf, 'Studien zu Smaragdus und Jonas', who thought the *VR* was composed in the 820s, for Louis' son, Pippin of Aquitaine. Eberhardt, *Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds*, pp. 195-263, also disagreed with Scharf, but argued that the work was written for Charlemagne around 810.

52 See Dubreucq, 'Smaragde de Saint-Mihiel et son temps'.

53 *Via Regia (VR)*, c. 9, col. 950A: 'hic regis diademata portat, illic gaudio exsultationis resultat; hic terreni regis filius vocatur, illic coelestis Regis filius confirmatur; hic terreni regni decenter magnam capit haereditatem, illic coelestis regni felicem feliciter accipit portionem'. Anton, 'Gesellschaftsiegel und Gesellschaftstheorie', pp. 51-52.

54 Alcuin, *Epistola* 188, p. 316. See Hammer, 'Christmas Day 800', pp. 3-4.

55 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 18-19. Eberhardt argues that the personal nature of the *VR* implies the author knew the recipient. He suggests that Louis the Pious could not have been the intended subject of the text as Smaragdus and Louis did not meet prior to the imperial coronation of 813. Eberhardt, *Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds*, pp. 219-220.

child, could refer to the fact that the one about to receive his teaching was still inexperienced or unenlightened.⁵⁶ Thus, while it is possible that Louis was aware of the contents of the *VR*, it is equally likely that Smaragdus' intention was to instruct anyone in a position of authority: as far as he was concerned, one did not need to be an actual child to receive his wisdom, and one did not need an actual crown to take this road map of the 'king's highway' seriously.⁵⁷ Regardless of whether Smaragdus had any individual ruler in mind for his *VR*, what he composed was much more than a mere summary of the *status quaestionis* of kingship at the start of Louis' reign. It is a work in its own right, containing not only Smaragdus' advice for someone about to take the reins of a kingdom, but also a handbook for the practice of virtues for who felt responsible for the *ecclesia*.⁵⁸

In spite of its universal appeal, the *VR* gives the impression of being highly personal, composed as if it were an admonitory letter directed at one specific person. In 32 short chapters, and an introduction, Smaragdus presents us with the most important tenets of early-ninth-century Christian life. Relying heavily on Scripture and his experience with monastic thought, he presented a coherent work that incorporated, most prominently, Gregory the Great's thoughts, both straight from the horse's mouth and as filtered through the *Sententiae* by the Visigothic bishops Taio and Isidore.⁵⁹ Additionally, he used pseudo-Basilus' *Admonitio ad Filium Spiritualem*, itself a collection of early Christian ascetic thought, including the works of Paulinus of Nola and the *Vita Antonii*.⁶⁰ Together, the sources for the *VR* covered everything from the need for peace and the exercise of *iustitia*, to the treasures to be collected in Heaven if all had been done properly.⁶¹

56 Scharf, 'Studien zu Smaragdus und Jonas', pp. 333-353. A clear example of this meaning of *parvulus* is given in 1 Cor. 13:11: 'Fratres, nolite pueri effici sensibus, sed malitia parvuli estote: sensibus autem perfecti estote', as also recalled by Hincmar of Reims in his first letter against Gottschalk: *Epistola* 37, p. 14. Another quotation, 1 Cor. 14:20, 'Cum essem parvulus, loquebar ut parvulus, sapiebam ut parvulus, cogitabam ut parvulus. Quando autem factus sum vir, evacuavi quæ erant parvuli', is used to a similar effect by Lupus of Ferrières in an 843 letter to Charles the Bald: *Epistola* 64, p. 63.

57 On the term 'via regia', see Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, p. 172; cf. Talliez, 'ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ ΟΔΟΣ'.

58 Leclercq, 'Smaragdus', pp. 38-39.

59 Wood, 'Family affair', pp. 45-47. A convincing case for influence from Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis* is made by Floryszczak, *Die Regula pastoralis*, pp. 359-364; see also chapter 2 of the present work.

60 LePree, 'Pseudo-Basil'. On the influence of Paulinus of Nola in the ascetic movement in the West, see Wieser, "Like a thief in the night".

61 Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, pp. 175-176, and Booz, *Fürstenspiegel des Mittelalters*, p. 17; cf. Anton, 'Gesellschaftsphilosophie und Gesellschaftstheorie', p. 80.

Smaragdus started by reminding his king that it was God who put him on the throne. His work would describe the *via regia*, knowledge of which enabled the king to not displease God and safely follow it into the heavenly *patria*.⁶² After all, it is the same path walked by kings Joshua, David and Solomon, as well as by Hezekiah and Uzziah, all of whom had played a part in the rise of the people of Israel.⁶³ Even more, as made clear in the opening paragraph, the addressee of the *VR* could be considered an heir, an adopted son of Christ on account of his consecration with chrism.⁶⁴ God has given him his ministry through the chrism, and conferred a number of gifts upon the king – including faith, prosperity, and healthy offspring – symbolized by the *diadema* ('diadem' or 'crown') that adorns his head.⁶⁵ All this would be maintained as long as he maintained a steady course on the *via regia*, 'called holy by the prophet [Isaiah]', with Smaragdus' book as a guide.⁶⁶

Then, the *VR* goes on to list the steps the *rex* must take and the things he should avoid while ruling the *ecclesia*. Smaragdus does not refer to the *ecclesia* as such, preferring to use the word *regnum* throughout, with the notable exception of the chapter 'On Peace'. There, he not only acknowledges both meanings of the word, i.e. 'church building' and 'the Church', but also underlines the unity of the king's function as a member of the divine body that is the Church.⁶⁷ It would be his *ministerium* to zealously 'perform his function in the place of Christ', to protect the House of God, and to maintain the peace in the world.⁶⁸ This idea had already been taking shape under Charlemagne, and was visible both in the documents issued from the court and in the reception of said proposals in episcopal capitularies further down the ladder.⁶⁹ Those cases, however, were based in a reality where church

62 *VR*, Epistola Nuncupatoria, c. 934B, 'Et tibi ergo, nobilissime rex, si vis ad supernam feliciter promissionis tendere patriam, diligenter regia quaerenda est via, quia cum sis rex in terra, ad coelorum properans regna per regiam debes currere viam'.

63 *VR*, Epistola Nuncupatoria, c. 934C. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, pp. 51-59, pp. 75-76 and pp. 109-111; Garrison, 'The social world of Alcuin'.

64 *VR*, Epistola nuncupatoria, col. 933B: 'Caput tuum oleo sacri chrismatis linivit, et dignanter in filium adoptavit. Constituit te regem populi terrae et proprii Filii sui in coelo fieri jussit haeredem'.

65 *VR*, Epistola nuncupatoria, col. 933B.

66 *VR*, Epistola nuncupatoria, col. 934D: 'Via etenim regia est, quae per prophetam vocatur sancta [Isa. 35:8]'.

67 *VR*, c. 17, c. 958B: 'Si videris aliquem in domo Dei, quae est Ecclesia, currere ad luxuriam, ad ebrietatem, prohibe, veta, terre, si zelus domus Dei comedit te'.

68 *VR*, c. 17, c. 958C: 'Fac quidquid potes pro persona quam gestas, pro ministerio regali quod portas, pro nomine Christiani quod habes, pro vice Christi qua fungeris. [...] Iste enim zelus salutem tribuit [...] et Ecclesiam Dei gloriosa vivacitate custodit'.

69 Czock, *Gottes Haus*, pp. 208-231.

buildings imposed their meaning on the Church as an institution, whereas Smaragdus extrapolated ideas about the moral obligations of those in a position of authority from the existence of the Church in its many forms. To people walking the *via regia*, the whole (Christian) world should be seen as a sacred space that needed to be ordered and protected.⁷⁰

The *VR* starts, interestingly, with the 'Love of God and kin'. This love, Smaragdus argues, citing 1 Pet. 4:8, may prevent 'a multitude of sins' and helps maintain harmony within the court.⁷¹ Only then is the king exhorted to observe the mandates of the Lord: invoking Lev. 26:3-17, he is reminded that if he 'walks in God's precepts, and keeps [his] commandments', the rains will fall regularly, the harvest will be plentiful, enemies will be defeated, and the salvation of all will be ensured, while the opposite will happen if he refuses to heed the word of God.⁷² These are no uncertain terms. Smaragdus goes beyond the effects of iniquity sketched out in such moral treatises as pseudo-Cyprian's *De Duodecim Abusivis*, composed in the seventh century, for example, and instead goes straight to the source: Leviticus, that most lawful of Old Testament books.⁷³ Moreover, and perhaps more notably, Smaragdus warns his *rex* that he should be performing his duties out of love for God (*dilectione Dei*), and not (only) out of fear for the consequences. Smaragdus' emphasis on the love for God marks a personal approach to the ruler. While the *De Duodecim Abusivis* famously spelled out the cosmological consequences of a ruler's bad behaviour, only the 'argumentative Christian' was exhorted not to let his love for the world stand in the way of his love for God.⁷⁴ Smaragdus went one step further and told the king that this love should be what keeps him from breaking God's laws. The ruler's fear of God should be mitigated by his love and thus be coupled with a willingness to do right that came from the heart instead of being born out of fear. The ruler was, in short, held responsible for the well-being of his subjects not only through his conduct, but also through his personal piety and the strength of his beliefs.⁷⁵ His love for God should be translated into love for the world, and not the other way around.

70 Czock, *Gottes Haus*, pp. 265-270 and pp. 280-283.

71 *VR*, c. 1, cols. 936B and 937C.

72 *VR*, c. 2, cols. 938D-939A. See also Meens, 'Politics, mirrors of princes and the Bible', p. 356; Blattmann, "Ein Unglück für sein Volk".

73 Meens, 'Politics, mirrors of princes and the Bible'; Anton, 'Pseudo-Cyprian'; Breen, 'Pseudo-Cyprian'.

74 Pseudo-Cyprian, *De XII Abusivis*, c. 7, p. 47: 'Mundi enim amor et Dei pariter in uno corde cohabitare non possunt', invoking 1 John 2:15.

75 Depreux, 'La pietas'; Choy, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 148-150.

Then follows an enumeration of personal qualities required for rulers, presented in a somewhat logical sequence: one should fear the Lord in order to gain the wisdom of Solomon.⁷⁶ Having acquired this wisdom, 'it is proper to present him who wishes to happily walk the king's way, if God bestows it, with *prudentia* ('prudence'), as long as it is tempered by *simplicitas* ('candor') and patience, 'if you wish to control your soul in a sweet manner'.⁷⁷ This was necessary, so that 'he who is to perform the royal office may be just and pass judgement' without being needlessly cruel, and so that he may protect the *pauperes* in order to reap the fruits of his labours in the afterlife.⁷⁸ The key to all this was mercy towards his people, which showed honour to the Lord and thus ensured his 'temporal happiness' would be exchanged for the promised 'eternal bliss'.⁷⁹ Smaragdus thus completes the circle as he returns to the necessity to love one's neighbour and honour the Lord. By systematically outlining the qualities a king should possess, the abbot attempted to instil the audience with a sense of personal responsibility, with the idea that his conduct impacted the life of his subjects.

The next part of the *VR* is more practical. In a series of exhortations, geared towards the outward appearance, policy, and behaviour of the ruler, which parallel those listed above, Smaragdus explains how to apply the lessons learned in practice. First, he argues for the importance of tithes for the upkeep of the Church and warns the *rex* to concentrate on the treasures to be gained in heaven rather than worldly riches.⁸⁰ Most importantly, he tells the king to remain humble in spite of such riches:

Humble yourself, king, in your eyes, so that you are exalted in the eyes of the Lord; because the more humble you are in your behaviour, the more glorious you will be in the appearance of the Highest.⁸¹

76 *VR*, c. 3, col. 940C: 'Ipse quippe Salomon de laude boni timoris ait: "Timor Domini fons vitae" [Prov. 14:27]'; c. 4, col. 942C: 'Oramus ergo te, sanctissime rex, diligenter attende quid de se Salomon, quid de laude sapientiae loquatur'.

77 *VR*, c. 5, col. 945B: 'Post illuminationem ergo sapientiae thesaurosque scientiae, oportet illum qui cupit regiam feliciter currere viam, Domino donante, impleri prudentia'; c. 6; c. 7, cols. 946D-947A: 'Posside patientiam si vis tuam dulciter possidere animam'.

78 *VR*, c. 8, cols. 947A-949A; c. 9, col. 947A: 'Quod regale sit officium facere iustitiam et iudicium'.

79 *VR*, c. 10, cols. 950B-952A; c. 11, col. 952D: 'Hic tibi gaudium temporale concessit, illic gaudium aeternum promisit'.

80 *VR*, c. 12, cols. 953A-953D; c. 13, cols. 953D-954D; c. 14, cols. 954D-955B; c. 15, cols. 955B-956B.

81 *VR*, c. 16, col. 957B: 'Humilia te ergo, rex, in oculis tuis, ut exalteris in oculis Domini; quia quantum humilior fueris in conspectu tuo, tantum gloriosior eris in conspectu Altissimi'.

Collecting tithes thus mirrors the admonition to humbly observe the precepts of the Lord, whereas the insistence that worldly treasures are unimportant may be coupled with Smaragdus' ideas on *prudencia*. Patience can be linked with peace, and justice, judgement and mercy with 'the love of correctness', clemency, and the ability to accept good advice when it is offered, 'a royal virtue of which the Bible preaches that it is above gold and silver'.⁸²

Finally, leading into the final part of the *VR*, the king is warned against *superbia*, pride:

Which cast the Devil out of heaven, and men out of paradise; which every day pushes the wretched from a righteous state into infirmity, and which leads to Hell after death.⁸³

Pride, Smaragdus warns, would subvert everything the king stood for. Next there follows a series of short chapters detailing things to be avoided by anyone in a ruling position. It starts with jealousy, which is 'the source of all sins' (c. 22).⁸⁴ Revenge, which follows from jealousy and may lead to discord and end the peace is next, followed by anger, which the king should especially avoid given his exemplary functions because, as Smaragdus writes, 'through anger, wisdom is lost'.⁸⁵ Then, flatterers are mentioned, who should be avoided because it is better to have people tell the truth than to lead one off the straight path by deceiving you (c. 25). Their bad advice may lead to avarice (c. 26) and make the king dependent on others whereas he should only depend on the guidance of God and his parents' inheritance. Smaragdus reminds the king that his parents should have left him plenty to build his own palace instead of relying on somebody else (c. 27). This practice extended towards others as well: bribery of judges was to be avoided, as the judges should do their job not in order to gain riches, but to ensure that everyone, including the poorest, may have justice.

In the world according to Smaragdus, all members of the *ecclesia* were equally responsible for all others. The king, the representative of God,

82 *VR*, c. 17, cols. 957C-957D; c. 18, cols. 957D-958C; c. 19, cols. 958C-959A; c. 20, col. 959C: 'Vides ergo, rex, quam regia virtus est consilium, quam super aurum et argentum esse praedicat Scriptura, quam sicut fontem clamat affluenter manantem'.

83 *VR*, c. 21, col. 961B: 'Grande malum est superbia, quae diabolus de coelo deposuit, et hominem de paradiso projecit; quae et quotidie de statu rectitudinis miseros ad infama premit, et post obitum ad inferna demergit'.

84 *VR*, c. 22, col. 962B: 'De zeli livore fons omnium vitiorum consurgit'.

85 *VR*, c. 23, cols. 962C-963A; c. 24, col. 963D: 'per iram sapientia perditur'.

was tasked with maintaining the natural balance in the world, and if he did his job, gain or loss of status or freedom would reflect the sinfulness of men. A true king, wise, prudent, magnanimous, patient, a father to the poor, a defender of widows, a lover of orphans – Smaragdus repeats the virtues he previously enumerated – supersedes this sinful state, enabling him to teach his subjects to avoid sin and them towards a new Israel.⁸⁶ It is a very abbatial vision of rulership. Inasmuch as a monastic community could be seen as a microcosm for the *ecclesia* at large, it functioned on the basis the idea that monks were servants to the extent that they lived by a holy *regula*, under the discretion of an abbot, but were otherwise responsible for their own salvation as well as that of their brethren.⁸⁷ Smaragdus' world view was steeped in such monastic ideals, and he used what he knew best when formulating his words of wisdom for a man who would be Christ's representative on earth.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, he was also aware that the rules for proper living applied to all within the *ecclesia*. Many of his admonitions thus address everybody living a virtuous life, and not just their rulers.

This explains the title of his work. The *Via Regia* is not merely a way (of life) for kings, but, according to a story in Num. 21:21-22, also the 'king's highway' through the territory of the Ammorhites, which the Israelites wished to use. It is not a road of their own making, so they need permission to traverse it, beseeching the enemy king that they:

May have leave to pass through your land: we will not go aside into the fields or the vineyards, we will not drink waters of the wells, we will go the king's highway, until we cross your borders.⁸⁹

In this, and similar, stories, they would usually be refused, and ended up fighting for their right to take this route anyway. In late antique and early medieval exegesis, this tale was used to denote the difficulties faced by every believer trying not to wander, not to succumb to temptations, not to be defeated by enemies along the way. In the early fifth century, the monastic theologian John Cassian described 'the perfect man' in his *Conferences*.

86 See also Hen, 'Christianisation of kingship'.

87 Noble, 'Monastic ideal', pp. 214-242.

88 Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, p. 355. *VR*, c. 17, 958B.

89 *VR*, Epistola nuncupatoria, col. 634B: 'Misit autem Israël nuntios ad Sehon regem Amorrhæorum, dicens: "Obsecro ut transire mihi liceat per terram tuam; non declinabimus in agros et vineas; non bibemus aquas ex puteis: *via regia* gradiemur, donec transeamus terminos tuos".

This man was clad in 'the armour of righteousness', having secured 'the advantage of his patience and goodness', and obtaining:

A grand triumph of steadfastness by means of those very weapons of his enemies which are hurled against him to kill him [as long as] he is not elated by success or cast down by failure, but ever marches straightforward on the king's highway, and does not swerve from that state of tranquillity [...] when joy overcomes him, nor [...] when misfortunes overwhelm him.⁹⁰

Less martial but equally powerful, Jerome described the *Via Regia* in terms similar to Benedict's principle of doing nothing in excess, invoking Eccl. 7:17 ('Be not over just: and be not more wise than is necessary, lest thou become stupid') in a letter chiding the recipients not to feel superior about chastity or marriage, and 'not to be diverted to the left or the right, but to ascend the *via regia*'.⁹¹ Finally, the pseudo-Cyprianic *De Duodecim Abusivis* – using the same biblical imagery – compared the 'royal way' (*via regalis*) to the law of God, which was abandoned by the *negligentia* of a '*populus* without laws'.⁹² Ultimately, the author wrote, people should aspire to follow the 'way, truth and life' represented by Christ, and not allow their private desires to influence their behaviour and ultimately, their authority.⁹³

In the ninth century, this understanding of *via regia* as a metaphor for Christian life remained prevalent, as shown by its frequent occurrence in the corpus of Carolingian letters. Hrabanus Maurus put it succinctly in a letter to Eberhard of Friuli, writing that 'he who ascends the *via regia* is one who aspires to the eternal life'.⁹⁴ In this, he may have followed his teacher Alcuin, who had a special fondness for the image.⁹⁵ Alcuin had admonished the monks of Murbach in 796, stating:

90 John Cassian, *Conlationes XXIII*, collatio 6, cap. 9, cols. 655B-657A, 'sed itinere plano ac via regia semper incedens'. A similar image is used in the *Liber Comitis*, col. 336D, quoting Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, lib. III, c. 21.

91 Jerome, *Epistola* 48, c. 8, col. 498C: 'ut nec ad sinistram nec ad dextram diuerteret, sed via regia graderetur et illud inpleret: "ne sis multum iustus"'. Cf. Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*, p. 98.

92 Pseudo-Cyprian, *De XII Abusivis*, c. 12, p. 59: 'Quae utique multae perditionis viae tunc inceduntur, cum una regalis via lex Dei videlicet, quae neque ad dexteram neque ad sinistram declinat, per negligentiam deseritur'.

93 Nelson, 'Public histories', p. 485.

94 Hrabanus Maurus, *Epistola* 42, p. 486: 'via regia gradiendum est his, qui ad vitam pervenire volunt aeternam'.

95 Fleckenstein, 'Über Hrabanus', pp. 205-210.

Nothing is more damning for the sheep of Christ than an erring pastor, for if a leader strays from the flock through deceit, how can a traveller ever advance on the *via regia*?⁹⁶

The pastoral duty of keeping the faithful on the straight and narrow is emphasized more acutely in his admonitory letter to the Adoptionist bishops Elipandus and Felix, who caused a major controversy through their errant preaching on the Iberian Peninsula in the late eighth century:

Learn that which pertains to the salvation of your souls, and ascend with wholly catholic feet the *via regia* that was trodden upon by the apostles, frequented by the Fathers, and elected by the whole world.⁹⁷

At the same time, Charlemagne was lauded by him for having done exactly that. He was a ruler who studied the true faith, and inspired his followers to follow in the footsteps of the apostles and to follow the *via regia*.⁹⁸

Against this background, it is clear that while Smaragdus wrote for an unspecified *rex*, his primary concern was to guide his audience along the *via regia*. His text was not a prescription of royal duties, but a description of a way of life that should be accessible to all Christians. The idealized ruler in his work should be an exemplary proponent of a good, Christian life. This was, according to Smaragdus, the ultimate responsibility. Earning the crown, the right to be adopted by Christ, was a matter not just of living under God's watchful eye, but also of being observed by everyone in the *ecclesia*. The burden of the Christian faith weighed equally on the shoulders of all who partook in it, and everybody still expected to clear a path for those behind them. The king, who stood in front of all, had quite a job ahead of him.

Explaining a Way: The *Expositio in Regulam Sancti Benedicti*

If the *VR* was written for a (imagined) king with a view towards teaching all Christians, the *Expositio in Regulam Sancti Benedicti* was undoubtedly

96 Alcuin, *Epistola* 117, p. 172: 'Nulla est ovibus Christi maior damnatio quam pastor errabundus. Et si ductor per devia orbitat, quomodo sequens viator viam incedit regiam?'.

97 Alcuin, *Epistola* 23, p. 64: 'Discite quae ad salutem animarum vestrarum pertinent, et regiam viam ab apostolis tritam, a patribus frequentatam, a mundi latitudine electam, pleno catholicae fidei pede incedite'.

98 Alcuin, *Epistola* 41, p. 84.

composed with monastic communities in mind.⁹⁹ It is an impressive work, divided into three books of roughly equal length, although the number of chapters of the *RB* treated in each part varies greatly. The first book contains a commentary on the Prologue to the *RB* as well as on its first three chapters.¹⁰⁰ The second focuses on the moralistic opening of the *RB*, dealing with chapters 4 to 7 and culminating in the 'exultation and joy' attained when completing the twelve steps of humility.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile the third treats the remaining 66 chapters, starting with the divine office, and ending with Benedict's own famous remark that this is only a 'little rule for beginners', a starting point for those who 'while still positioned in the present life will be able to climb to the heights of the virtues' – an image with which he also opens the metric prologue, bringing his commentary full circle.¹⁰²

Judging by two chapters where Smaragdus explicitly mentions 'the synod [or council] in the kingdom of the Franks', the *Expositio* was a product of the deliberations on the state of the *ecclesia* held at Aachen between 816 and 819.¹⁰³ Even so, the *Expositio* is highly theoretical in nature, to the extent that doubts have been cast about its applicability for the daily life of monks.¹⁰⁴ Still, Smaragdus claimed to have composed this work to aid 'simple' monks in their understanding of the 'many judgements in the Rule concerning faults' while deferring to the expertise of the learned or of the abbot whenever anything remained unclear.¹⁰⁵ This was, in other words, a teaching tool: not an attempt to impose a uniform *consuetudo*, but an explanation to monks how they could maintain their own traditions in the

99 Ponesse, 'Editorial practice', p. 72.

100 *Expositio*, Praefatio and cc. 1-3, pp. 3-85. The English quotations are based on the translation by Barry, *Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel*.

101 *Expositio*, cc. 4-7, pp. 86-193 and p. 193: 'Ibunt enim de virtute in virtutem, id est de uno virtutis gradu ascendunt in alium; et sic Deum deorum videbant in Sion et Jerusalem coelestium exultatione et gaudio'.

102 *Expositio*, cc. 8-73, pp. 194-337 and p. 337: 'si ad coelestem volumus conscendere patriam, hanc minimam prius festinemus inchoationis perficere regulam' and 'felix qui in praesenti adhuc positus vita, ad virtutum potitur ascendere culmina'. In the Praefatio, it is formulated differently, p. 3: 'Quisquis ad aeternum mavult conscendere renem / Debet ad astrigerum mente subire polum / Religione pia vitae perquirere callem / Scandere quo valeat aurea regna celer'. Cf. *RB*, c. 73, pp. 296-297.

103 *Expositio*, c. 15, pp. 203-204: 'placuit tamen synodo in Francorum regno congregata'; c. 53, p. 283: 'Sed modo ab episcoporum, abbatum, et caeterorum Francorum magno concilio salubre inventum est concilium'. On these councils, see Gaillard, *D'Une Réforme à l'Autre*, pp. 133-134 and p. 142.

104 Semmler, 'Benedictus II', p. 25.

105 *Expositio*, Prooemium, p. 6.

face of the reform efforts propagated from the court; it was the *Nachleben* of the *Expositio* which shows that Smaragdus' approach appealed to a broader audience.¹⁰⁶ The work was not intended to provide a definitive design for monastic living, but proposed how to channel Carolingian ecclesiastical diversity onto the best possible highway to Heaven.

Smaragdus carefully navigated a course amidst the discrepancies arising from his support for a central court and his concern to allow monastic communities a certain degree of autonomy. Thus, of the two times he explicitly mentioned the councils of Aachen, he was careful to frame the second time, a decision on the rules governing guests and abbots in the refectory as a *concilium* (counsel) agreed upon by a *concilium* (council).¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, the rule to refrain from singing the *Alleluia* during the pre-Lenten season – contradicting the *RB* – is defended as being the custom of the 'Roman *principes* of the Church', and then specified as pertaining only to those monks 'who are stationed [*constituti*] in that kingdom'.¹⁰⁸ These instances reflect the persisting diversity within the Carolingian Church, on the Roman influence on Frankish liturgical practice, and on the *RB* as a 'Roman rule', all of which requires more in-depth analyses than possible in this study.¹⁰⁹ This is the most explicit case where the author made his concern for the well-being of a *regnum* known, by touching on the liturgical exigencies of the *ecclesia*.¹¹⁰ Despite his insistence, in the spirit of Benedict of Nursia, that communities should be able to make their own decisions regarding their *consuetudines*, he saw this liturgical ruling as a way to bind cloister and court together.¹¹¹ If anything, this remark demonstrates that to Smaragdus, monasteries were not operating in a vacuum.

The *Expositio* is a complex work, which required a lot of preparation by its author – something about which we may learn more by looking at the *Glosae in Regula Sancti Benedicti*, which were recently edited, and show us a glimpse of the compiler at work.¹¹² Interestingly, the *Expositio* is held

106 Ponesse, 'Smaragdus of St. Mihiel', pp. 373-378.

107 On these concepts, see Quillet, 'Community, counsel and representation', pp. 545-554, (albeit from the perspective of high medieval England).

108 *Expositio*, c. 15, p. 204.

109 Ponesse, 'Smaragdus of St. Mihiel', pp. 374-375. On the *Regula Benedicti* as a 'Roman rule' and its role in shaping Carolingian ecclesiastical thought, see Wollasch, '*Benedictus abbas Romensis*'; Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, pp. 114-165.

110 Cf. Nelson, 'Liturgy or law', p. 441.

111 A formulation borrowed from Nelson, 'Liturgy or law', p. 446.

112 The edition of the *Glosae in regula Sancti Benedicti abbatis ad usum Smaragdi Sancti Michaelis abbatis* (CCCM 282) by Matthieu van der Meer unfortunately appeared too late for me to take into account in this book.

together as much by Smaragdus' mastery of the *RB* itself as by the image of the *via regia*, the idea of life as a road towards a higher learning, among other motifs. The imagery can be found already in the metric prologue, when Smaragdus compared the *RB* to the 'narrow path to life' that enabled monks 'to climb swiftly to the golden realms'.¹¹³ It is a 'holy way' – 'harsh and narrow' to beginners, but 'even, pleasant and broad' to seasoned monks.¹¹⁴ The *RB*, Smaragdus writes, would be 'showing its friends how to attain heavenly things', while being 'oppressive to the oppressive'.¹¹⁵ Echoing Cassian, he then described how the Rule, a 'norm for salvation', would equip the devout with 'bow and weapons' enabling them to defend themselves against the wicked with 'piercing darts'.¹¹⁶ 'For those who walk righteously', he concludes, 'our fathers call this way a *via regia*' which shall 'regulate the monk's mind' and 'lead him by the middle path'.¹¹⁷

Although it becomes less explicit as the *Expositio* starts in earnest, this royal way remains in the background throughout the entire text, an indication of how it should guide the monks for whom Smaragdus wrote his commentary. Commenting on a passage in the Prologue to the *RB*, which reads 'See, in his loving *pietas*, the Lord has shown us the way of life', the abbot comments that thus 'the Lord himself [...] has become for us the way, the truth and the life. That is to say: it is a *via regia*'.¹¹⁸ Smaragdus wanted his audience to realize not only that the achievement of happiness was a journey in itself, but also that their journey has an ultimate destination, and that they should do their utmost to get it right on their first and only try. This went doubly so for novices wanting to enter into a monastery: before they were allowed to perform their *professio*, the *RB* already insisted that novices should be made aware of their charges. Smaragdus adds to this in terms well-known

113 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Religione pia vitae perquirere callem / Scandere quo valeat aurea regna celer'.

114 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Est monachis sancti Benedicti Regula Patris / Perfectis palma suavis et ampla via / Aspera sed pueris nec non tironibus arcta / Quos aluit gremio lactea vita diu. / Haec est sancta via praelucida semita coeli / Carpere quam cupiunt castra beata Dei'.

115 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Esto gravis gravibus, suavis et apta bonis' and 'Pandit iter nostris, coelestia pandit amicis / Currere ne pigeat, sed patienter eant'.

116 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Haec est vita bonis, nec non et norma salutis / Arcus et arma piis, fulgida tela malis'. These lines seem to echo the sentiment and metaphors visible in Cassian's *Conlationes XXIII*, coll. 6, cap. 9: see above.

117 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 4: 'Patribus a nostris in sacro carmine legis / Regia rectegradis dicitur ista via'. And: 'Temperet interea monachi discretio mentem / Et via per medium regia ducat eum'.

118 *Expositio*, c. 1, p. 35: 'Ipse ergo Dominus, ut praedictum est, factus est nobis via, veritas, et vita. Via scilicet regia, ut per eum gradientes non declinemus ad dexteram aut ad sinistram, sed ad vitam quae ipse est petveniamus aeternam'. This passage is reminiscent of Jerome, *Epistola* 48, c. 8 (above) and Hrabanus, *Epistola* 42 (above).

to him. When Benedict insists that new monks 'be clearly told all the hard and harsh things by which the journey to God is made', Smaragdus expands this by explaining that the 'way' represented by Christ was 'straight and narrow' indeed.¹¹⁹ Before even attempting to enter the community, novices had better be aware that to be a monk was a permanent profession:

This is a holy way, a pellucid pathway to Heaven
 On which the blessed ranks of God long to enter
 This sublime Rule admonishes all monks
 To do without things, and seek the supernal realms,
 To let go of what is theirs, so that they may have as theirs
 With all their companions, the abiding kingdom of Heaven
 In the sacred song of the law our fathers call this way
 'A royal way' for those who walk uprightly.¹²⁰

This insistence on the *RB* as a means to ascend the *via regia* is characteristic of the way Smaragdus intended his works to be understood. The *Expositio* could even be seen as an extension of the *VR*, in which the author specified how the *RB* would help people on the path to life.

The place of the abbot in the monastery is explained in similar terms. It is emphasized by Smaragdus that an abbot's duty goes beyond the merely pastoral. He was the father of the entire community, who acted 'in the place of Christ'.¹²¹ By virtue of that position, he was supposed to put limitations on the lives of his flock, lest they be ensnared by the Devil. It was a balancing act. The abbot's task was

To fix their [the monks'] steps straight and firm in the *via regia*, so that he may not suffer their loss by defection through overdriving his flock. On the other hand, if he should nurture it with less strictness than is fitting, it may through riotous living slide into hell.¹²²

119 *Expositio*, c. 58, p. 293: 'Praedicentur ei omnia dura et aspera, per quae itur ad Deum'. This particular quotation is from the *RB* directly.

120 *Expositio*, Praefatio, p. 3: 'Haec est sancta via praelucida semita coeli / Carpere quam cupiunt castra beata Dei / Admonet haec monachos sublimis Regula cunctos / Ut rebus careant, regna superna petant / Propria dimittant, habeant ut propria cuncta / Prospera quae sociis coelica regna manent / Patribus a nostris in sacro carmine legis / Regia rectegradis dicitur ista via'. Cf. De Vogüé, 'Les conseils évangéliques', pp. 528-529.

121 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 61: 'Tunc enim abbas in monasterio vicem Christi agit'.

122 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 62: 'Abbatis ergo constitutio in via regia rectum facere debet gressum; ne si plus fecerit, gregem suum laborare in ambulando defectionis sustineat detrimentum. Et si remissius quam decet nutriverit eum, luxuriose vivens labatur in tartarum'.

Abbatial leadership was therefore subject to the Golden Rule of doing nothing in excess, not even discipline. His discretion was only limited by the Lord's precepts.¹²³ Like kings, abbots would be held responsible for all the failings of their flock at the Last Judgement, unless they had done their best to keep disobedience in check. The monks, for their part, were expected to actually be obedient, in order to prevent 'the penalty of eternal death', which, according to Smaragdus, 'prevailed in paradise over the first disobedient humans'.¹²⁴ This key passage serves as a prelude to Smaragdus' treatment of the interaction between leadership, pastoral duty, and the responsibilities of the flock. The ensuing dynamic forms one of the main narrative strands in the first book of the *Expositio*, if not in the work in its entirety.¹²⁵ Coupled with the *VR*, explanations such as these show that for the author, the main task of those in a position of authority was to enable others to walk the *via regia*. To a large extent, this was made possible by a regulated life, by boundaries, and by strict limits to excessive behaviour. Inextricably bound up with these rules was the acknowledgment that those who took this charge should also lead by example. The abbot, for Smaragdus, should be 'a model for the flock', able to adapt to each of the monks' specific character.¹²⁶ Continuing the idea of the abbot, or any leader, as a guide on the path to life, Smaragdus explained that true leadership consisted of 'a twofold teaching' that comprised both good deeds and good communication.¹²⁷

These terms are similar to those used in the *VR* when Smaragdus explained to his *rex* how to lead the kingdom. Still, while the *VR* hardly touches upon the relation between ruler and ruled, the *Expositio* makes up for this. Although this does not necessarily mean that the text should be read as a political tract, it seems that to Smaragdus, the pastoral duties of an abbot and the responsibilities of a king came from the same place.¹²⁸ Both were leaders, and as such, both acted *vice Christi* whilst following their path on the *via regia*.¹²⁹ Both should provide the best possible example to their respective flocks. After all, his *rex* had received his 'gifts' from God,

123 On the virtue of discretion, see Scholl, 'The mother of virtues'.

124 *Expositio*, c. 2, pp. 64-65: 'Quae primis inobedientibus hominibus praevaluit in paradiso, ipsa nunc demum inobedientibus monachis quotidie praevallet in mundo. Reliquerunt enim in paradiso per inobedientiam Adam et Eva Domini praecepta; et tunc primum praevaluit illis fortiter mortis aeternae poena'.

125 Especially considering that the next chapter, *Expositio*, c. 3, pp. 80-85, details this interaction in the chapter house.

126 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 75: 'Quando forma factus gregi'.

127 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 62.

128 Noble, 'Monastic ideal', pp. 243-246.

129 Cf. Born, '*Specula principis*', pp. 593-595.

and ruled his kingdom together with Christ, whom he also should aspire to imitate. Christ was the ‘preacher and the teacher, the example and the pattern, the creator, the governor and the guide’, as Smaragdus explained while telling the king to restrain his *ira regis*.¹³⁰ Following His example, the king should rule with patience rather than with anger – just like an abbot.¹³¹

In the words of the *Expositio*, abbots should heed the counsel of the members of the community, as:

It is becoming for [the abbot] to dispose all things with foresight and justice. For the abbot must always, by means of a subtle scrutiny, distinguish good and evil, think carefully of what is fitting for whom, when, and in what way, and thus arrange all things with foresight and justice; and therefore it is fitting for him to be obeyed by all his disciples as a reasonable father.¹³²

More strikingly, this passage is immediately followed by a quotation from Gregory the Great’s *Moralia in Iob*, commenting on Job 34:18.¹³³ It is from the speech by Eliu, the last of Job’s four friends and the one who comes closest to rebuking Job for having the *hubris* of thinking he understood God’s plan.¹³⁴ In Gregory’s view, Eliu argues that God stands above all, and even ‘crowned kings’ can betray and apostatize from His rulings if they ‘lead by their example those under them to impiety’.¹³⁵ Someone who has authority over others, in short, should take care to ‘live both for himself and for his subjects’.¹³⁶ It was a powerful sentiment, and one that would come back to haunt Louis the Pious during his penance in Compiègne in 833, when the bishops overseeing his penance also assumed the role of Eliu, ‘rebuking Job (or Louis) against any further such attempts to provoke the almighty’.¹³⁷ Conversely, however, it meant that both abbots and emperors were only as good as the counsellors around them – the ones they were in turn leading by example.

¹³⁰ VR, c. 24, col. 963C. See also Althoff, ‘*Ira Regis*’.

¹³¹ VR, c. 24, col. 964A; *Expositio*, c. 3.

¹³² *Expositio*, c. 3, p. 82: ‘Debet enim abbas subtili semper examinatione bona malaque discernere, et quae, quibus, quando vel qualiter congruant studiose cogitare, et sic provide et juste cuncta disponere; et properea a cunctis illi discipulis, ut pote rationali Patri, convenit obediri’. See De Vogüé, ‘Règle de Saint Benoît’, pp. 485–486.

¹³³ Cf. Greschat, *Die Moralia in Job*, pp. 232–241.

¹³⁴ On Eliu in the Book of Job, see Vermeylen, “Pour justifier mon créateur”.

¹³⁵ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 24.xxv.54.

¹³⁶ *Expositio*, c. 3, p. 82.

¹³⁷ Booker, *Past Convictions*, p. 164; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 238–241.

Smaragdus' ideal of interdependent rulership was suffused with monastic ideas. One person decided on important matters, but did so based on the counsel by his community.¹³⁸ In this community,

There is one faith, one baptism, one heart and one soul [Eph. 4:5] in all monks who are living good and upright lives, just as there was earlier in the religion of those who believed rightly and lived good lives.

Even if this particular idea was attached to a *monasterium* and not to a *regnum* or the world at large, Smaragdus seemed to have considered this the ultimate goal of individual *correctio* for everybody.¹³⁹ As argued in the *acta* from the 813 Council of Tours, it became important for monks to ensure that those living around them would follow their example and follow them on the *via regia*. This became a grave responsibility for the abbot, and even more so for the ruler, if he would aspire to live up to this ideal. Abbatial authority depended on his monks' unconditional surrender of their own free will, and their readiness to share responsibilities.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the ability of a king to guide people on the *via regia* depended on the willingness of everyone in the *ecclesia* to acquire a crown of their own: the *diadema monachorum*.

A Crowning Achievement: The *Diadema Monachorum*

When he composed his educational trilogy, Smaragdus was abbot of Saint-Mihiel. Assuming he was indeed willing to practice what he preached, training his monks to become 'perfect' would have been his primary goal. Still, as the overlap between the *VR* and the *Expositio* demonstrates, he cast his net wider. This becomes obvious when we look at the third of his treatises, the highly popular *Diadema Monachorum*, also composed in the context of 816-819.¹⁴¹ While its popularity and manuscript transmission throughout the Middle Ages mirror that of the *Expositio*, the contents of the text echo many of the ideas espoused in the *VR*, albeit more ostentatiously tailored to suit the needs of a monastic audience; the work was intended

¹³⁸ Cf. Blecker, 'Roman law and *consilium*'.

¹³⁹ *Expositio*, c. 3, p. 81: 'cur multorum habitatio in uno positorum monasterium dicatur, nisi forte, ut arbitror, propterea quia una fides, unum baptisma, cor unum et anima una est in omnibus bene et juste viventibus monachis, sicut prius in religione recte credentium et bene viventium fuit'.

¹⁴⁰ De Vogüé, 'Les conseils évangéliques', pp. 536-537.

¹⁴¹ See Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 68-75.

to provide *lectiones* during the evening meal in communities.¹⁴² Here also, the abbot may have had all of Christendom in mind rather than just monks, or, more likely, he wanted to impress upon his monks that they were an intrinsic part of Christendom. More specifically, monks, as paragons of Christian virtue, had the collective duty to show the right way of living to the people around them: above all, to be temperate and do nothing in excess. This is perhaps nowhere more visible than in a chapter dealing with love and its connection to mutual control within a community, which closes with a passage from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, a collection of early Christian sayings by a multitude of Desert Fathers (and Mothers), in which a certain Poimen concludes his explanation of the virtues of temperance to one of his overly zealous colleagues by saying ‘those famous elders have [...] thus shown us the *via regia*, which is more pleasant and easier to walk’.¹⁴³

Even if the recurrent use of the *via regia* is no definite proof that Smaragdus intended these treatises to function as a triptych, the universality of his moral exhortations and the endless possibilities for overlaps between monastic and courtly lifestyles are already visible in the titles given to the treatises. If travelling on the king’s highway and wearing a king’s crown meant temperance and virtue, the highly controlled life of monks ensure that they were deserving of similar regalia. Quoting a sermon of Caesarius of Arles in the penultimate chapter of the *DM*, Smaragdus states that everybody who continuously strives to protect and perpetuate ‘peace, truth, justice and chastity’ would receive a crown from the hand of the Lord, equal to that of the martyrs of old.¹⁴⁴

If nothing else, this once again shows how different interpretations of *ministerium* within the Frankish *ecclesia* could be conflated, how everyone living together should be working towards the same goal, and be content to do so within the order established by the Lord. In the chapter of the *DM* dealing with negligent monks, Smaragdus explains how such a *ministerium* could only be exercised by those who had fully internalized the ‘journey down the holy road’, in whom the ‘right kind of longing’ had grown strong enough to withstand temptations caused by ‘good fortune of the present world’.¹⁴⁵ Those monks would be capable of fulfilling the *ministerium* of

142 *DM*, Prologus, c. 593D.

143 *DM*, c. 41, col. 638C: ‘Sed haec omnia probaverunt senes magni [...] et ostenderunt nobis viam hanc regalem, quia leavior est et facilis’.

144 *DM*, c. 99, col. 689D: ‘martyrii coronam Domino remunerante percipiet’. Caesarius, *Sermo* 41 is quoted; note the use of *corona* instead of *diadema*.

145 *DM*, c. 26, col. 622A.

guarding their own vineyard – an image borrowed from Songs 1:6 through the *Homiliae in Evangeliae* of Gregory the Great, which in turn was filtered through the works of Taio of Zaragoza.¹⁴⁶ In doing so, the community as a whole came to serve as an example.¹⁴⁷ Add to this the use of this particular vineyard by Gregory both in the *Homeliae* and the *Expositio in Canticum Canticorum*, to designate not only worldly challenges facing everyone who wanted to care for one's own soul, but also the soul itself, and the importance of achieving peace through mutual self-reflection within the *ecclesia* is made even clearer.¹⁴⁸

Smaragdus used his knowledge to teach his flock, both the good and the bad sheep: in chapter 65, he explicitly explained that those who have the best interest of all in mind should not expect to be liked by everyone equally, as the *ecclesia* on earth would always be a *corpus permixtum* populated by a mixture of good and bad people, or, as Paul saw it, by vessels of gold, silver, wood and clay, all of whom would eventually be tested by the Lord.¹⁴⁹ This metaphor goes back to Sir. 27:6 ('The furnace trieth the potter's vessels, and the trial of affliction just men'), and its use here indicates that Smaragdus regarded the Church as a *corpus permixtum* as pioneered by such Church Fathers as Origen, Augustine and Gregory the Great.¹⁵⁰ For the monks in his audience, however, this did not mean that they should avoid bad people. Instead, they should simply persist in doing what was 'advantageous' or useful to them, as well as to those around them as if they were their superiors: they served the common interest by being obedient.¹⁵¹ In his *Expositio*, even more concerned with the practicalities of the internal life of a monastery, Smaragdus extended this philosophy to disagreements between the monks themselves, allowing for contentions between brethren as long as they arose over a concern for mutual advantage, and not out of sheer pride.¹⁵² It was for this reason that Smaragdus composed the *DM* as 'a handy bouquet of sweet-smelling flowers' that he plucked from the flowering meadows of the Church Fathers:

146 On the influence of Taio, see chapter 2 of this book.

147 *DM*, c. 26, col. 622D. See Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangeliae* 17, c. 14, p. 128. On the vineyard as a metaphor for the *ecclesia* or the *populus Christianus*, see Dassmann, *Die eine Kirche*, pp. 74-77 and pp. 87-90; Heydemann, 'Biblical Israel', pp. 157-159.

148 Gregory the Great, *Expositio in Canticis Canticorum*, cc. 35-40, pp. 120-131.

149 *DM*, c. 65, col. 661B, invoking 2 Tim. 2:20.

150 Roloff, *Die Kirche im Neuen Testament*, pp. 160-162; Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, pp. 101-103 and pp. 124-126; Greschat, *Die Moralia in Job*, pp. 110-116.

151 *DM*, c. 65, col. 661A.

152 Ponsse, 'Editorial practice', pp. 86-90.

For this reason: that the hearts of perfect monks may be soothed, and that they may be roused towards the heavenly fatherland; whereas the hearts of infirm monks may be strengthened and frightened, so that they may be brought to an improved regular life.¹⁵³

This quotation touches upon another feature of the *DM*, one which illustrates the importance of cooperation in a less obvious, but no less potent way. Smaragdus himself admitted that his *florilegium* should be read as an extension of the *RB* itself. With the *DM*, he put into practice the final exhortation of Benedict to not merely follow his rules, but to peruse ‘the teachings of the holy Fathers, the observance of which leads to the height of perfection’.¹⁵⁴ Smaragdus stood in a long tradition when he followed this advice, but nevertheless managed to put his own spin to it. He did so by presenting choice lectures from the works of, among others, Caesarius of Arles, Isidore of Seville and Gregory the Great, to make his most important points for him – many of which he knew through the anonymous *Glosae in Regula Sancti Benedicti*.¹⁵⁵ Smaragdus did not even shy away from using his own *VR* – itself mostly a collection of patristic texts – thus implying that certain virtues were monkish and kingly at the same time. Like many of his peers, Smaragdus had not merely copied his sources: he hand-picked and edited his quotations, and put them in a different order to make the points he wanted to make, effectively turning what seems like yet another collection of ancient texts into a composition that was ‘original’ in its own right.¹⁵⁶ The *DM* thus presents a number of diverse viewpoints under the guise of a single work: a microcosm of Benedictine communal thinking, for a community that extended beyond the physical walls of the cloister.

Unlike the relatively clear tripartite scheme of the *VR*, the structure of the much longer *DM* is less apparent.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, there seems to be a progression towards ever more advanced studies within its hundred chapters, going from the basics of being a monk to essential questions

153 *DM*, Prologus, c. 593C: ‘Ea videlicet, quae perfectorum monachorum corda demulceant, et ad desiderium patriae coelestis avidius sublimiusque erigant: infirmorum quoque monachorum corda confirmet et terreant, ad regularemque perducant emendationem’.

154 *RB*, c. 73.2.

155 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 71–74 lists all sources used in this text. See also Van der Meer, *Glosae*, pp. lxiii–lxxxii.

156 On this method, see Heil, ‘Labourers in the Lord’s quarry’; Contreni, ‘Carolingian biblical studies’, pp. 84–88; Le Maître, ‘Les méthodes exégétiques de Raban Maur’.

157 Peltier, ‘Art.: Smaragde’, col. 2248, calls the *DM* ‘sans suite bien logique et un peu au hasard’ (‘without a logical sequence and a bit haphazard’).

concerning the relation between body and soul or between Heaven and Earth. In a demonstration of Smaragdus' priorities, the work starts with three chapters on prayer, the correct liturgy, and the importance of reading, before arriving where the *VR* started, the chapter on the love for God and one's neighbour.¹⁵⁸ The function of the work as an attempt to deepen the understanding of the *RB* becomes clear almost immediately in this opening gambit. Chapter 2, which shares its title with *RB* chapter 19 (*De disciplina psallendi*), provides a rather different explanation than the one given in the original Rule for the inclusion of Ps. 47:8, an exhortation to 'sing psalms wisely'.¹⁵⁹ This is the only biblical invocation Benedict and Smaragdus have in common on this particular subject, and it is all the more notable that their interpretations are somewhat different.¹⁶⁰ Whereas the sixth-century abbot invoked this verse as a reminder that God kept a careful eye on his assistants, his ninth-century successor continued where Benedict left off, explaining the many ways 'our mind may be in harmony with our voice', both during the liturgy and elsewhere. To Smaragdus, not only the fact that the monks were singing 'in sight of the Divine and of His Angels' was important, but also that singing 'more with the mind than with the voice' could move many to bewail their faults.¹⁶¹ To sing wisely was to sing in such a way that the power of the psalms would be felt and remembered by all within earshot.¹⁶²

Although the *RB* reverberates throughout the *DM*, Smaragdus went beyond its relatively narrow confines in this book for seasoned monks. The remainder of this loosely defined section of the *DM* therefore lists all virtues a good Christian ought to possess, including fear, patience, prudence, humility and an understanding that wisdom is a gift from Christ. It contains the most echoes of the *VR*, with the notable exception of the chapter on obedience, which is not listed among the kingly virtues.¹⁶³ The next section (cc. 20-43) expands the horizons by detailing the monks' relation with the outside world, again focusing mainly on proving how a well-developed

158 *DM*, cc. 1-4, cols. 594C-601A.

159 *DM*, c. 2, col. 596C: 'Oportet enim nisibus totis obedire illi, qui nos per Prophetam admonet dicens: "Psallite sapienter" [Ps. 47:8]'.

160 *RB*, c. 19.3-6, pp. 156-159: 'Ideo semper memores simus, quod ait propheta [...] "Psallite sapienter"'.

161 *DM*, c. 2, c. 596D: 'Nihil est sola voce canere, sine cordis intentione'; col. 597B: 'Et canere igitur, et psallere, et laudare Dominum magis animo quam voce debemus'. See Leyser, 'Angels, monks and demons'.

162 Mayr-Harting, 'Praying the psalter'.

163 *DM*, c. 611 cols. 602B-608D.

self-discipline is the best defence against threats from without and within, including sins, weakness of the flesh, and talking too much.¹⁶⁴ The section culminates in a series of chapters on the relationship between God, His creation, and the believers that inhabit it (cc. 44-64). He compares the way this relationship is ordered to a wall in which each stone is placed in such a way that the structure comes out strongest, just like the faithful, 'through their teaching' support those that follow them. It was a powerful vision of a community building the *domus Dei* together, with each person working according to his or her own strength, based on the image of 'living stones' (*lapides vivi*) presented in 1 Pet. 2:5 and adapted into an image of togetherness by, among others, Augustine.¹⁶⁵ Finally, in the longest and most complicated section, the author attempts to bring all four elements – God, the right order of things, the world, and the monks – together, by telling his audience who they are and how they are supposed to act with the knowledge they now have. They are the heirs of God, his children, for whom Christ has sacrificed himself just as they should sacrifice themselves for him.¹⁶⁶

This image is reminiscent of that used in the prologue to the *VR*, where, in the opening paragraph, the king is reminded that his authority is a gift from God, and that he 'enriched by these sacred gifts, may bear the king's *diadema* with due reverence'.¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, Smaragdus used *diadema* for this passage, just as he did in chapter 9 of the *VR*.¹⁶⁸ He noticeably eschews the word in the *DM* where, when mentioning headgear at all, prefers to use *corona*. Usually, this invoked the 'crown of wisdom' from Sir. 1:22, but in one instance, the image was of a martyr's crown, signifying the reward the righteous Christians were to receive after a virtuous death and a life during which they had never wavered from the true faith.¹⁶⁹ Earning that

164 *DM*, c. 31, col. 626; cc. 33-34, cols. 627D-630C; cc. 38-39, cols. 633D-636A.

165 *DM*, c. 60, cols. 656D-657C: 'Portant et ipsi per doctrinam et tolerantiam sequentes, et hoc ordine alii ab aliis portantur iusti usque ad ultimum justum'. On this metaphor, see Clancy, 'Augustine's sermons for the dedication of a church', pp. 49-50; Meyer, *Soziales Handeln*, pp. 221-223. See also Czock, *Gottes Haus*, pp. 244-264.

166 *DM*, c. 67, col. 663; c. 81, cols. 675C-676B; *DM*, c. 71, cols. 666D-667C; c. 83, cols. 676D-677C; c. 100, cols. 689A-690A.

167 *VR*, Epistola nuncupatoria, c. 933B: 'His etenim sacris ditatus muneribus rite portas diademata regis'.

168 *VR*, c. 9, col. 950A: 'hic diademata portat, illic gaudio exultationis refulget'.

169 *DM*, c. 6, col. 602D; c. 7, col. 604A; c. 61, cols. 657D, 657D-658A and 658B; c. 76, col. 672A; c. 89, col. 682B. The biblical link is made explicit in the first two instances 'Solomon ait: 'Corona sapientiae timor Domini, replens pacem et salutis fructum: utraque autem sunt dona Dei'; *DM*, c. 99, col. 688D. De Rubeis, 'La corona del martire'; Costambeys, 'Transmission of tradition', pp. 94-96.

crown meant exerting constant vigilance, against hate, vice, and other human weaknesses so that they may earn their rightful place in Heaven, in God's 'eternal mansion'.¹⁷⁰

It had already been noted by the fifth-century priest Julianus Pomerius that true martyrdom, as happened during the Roman persecutions, had become very difficult in a world where Christianity had become commonplace.¹⁷¹ He therefore explained that there was a different, more attainable goal, namely that people should develop a deep-seated love for the rules imposed upon them by their religion.¹⁷² As noted in the *Institutio Canoniorum*, living well remained the best defence.¹⁷³ If nothing else, this ending to the *DM* reminded the monks of the paradoxical reciprocity inherent in their special relation with the Lord: for Smaragdus, every aspect of a monk's life served to thank Christ for the sacrifices He had made. The best way to express this gratitude was to serve as a sacrifice themselves.

While there appears to be a narrative arc to the *DM*, most chapters can actually be enjoyed and explained separately, as *lectiones* to be read during the chapter and the communal meals which were key aspects of communal life. This is perhaps most clear from the fact that Smaragdus invoked either the *Apophthegmata Patrum* or *Vitae Patrum* in almost every chapter, using these collections of sayings from and stories about the Desert Fathers to serve as reminders of what it takes to aspire to their excellence.¹⁷⁴ More than his commentary on the *RB*, which was primarily intended to clarify the Rule itself in the light of the many changes set in motion under the Carolingians, the *DM* was written to reach out and improve the hearts and minds of monks. Thus, it serves as an extension of the *RB*, meant to put the crowning touch to a proper monastic education.

This is how the title of the work should be understood. Going back to the differences between *corona* and *diadema*, the conceptual 'Diadem for Monks' denoted more than mere headgear, in spite (or even: because) of

170 See, for example, Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*, lib. 3, c. 28, on the importance of chastity to be able to reach God's 'eternal mansion'.

171 See, for example, Kinnard, 'Imitatio Christi in Christian martyrdom', or more generally on the changing role of holiness and asceticism in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, Brown, 'Rise and function', but also, by the same author, 'The decline of the empire of God'.

172 On the role of Pomerius in the development of European monastic thought, cf. among others, Devisse, 'Influence de Julien Pomère'; Diem, *Das monastische Experiment*, pp. 156-158; Claussen, *Reform of the Frankish Church*, pp. 184-203; Timmermann, 'Sharers'.

173 This did not stop hagiographers from extolling the virtues of achieving 'red martyrdom' – which in turn may have influenced such missionaries as Boniface: Cubitt, 'Memory and narrative', pp. 37-39.

174 *Vitae Patrum*, ed. J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 73 (Paris 1849); trans. Ward, *Desert Fathers*.

the fact that Smaragdus never used the term in the text itself. He preferred to leave the *corona* mentioned in his sources intact. This shows the intent behind the title of the work, and helps us further understand the author's reasoning. By all accounts, the title had been deliberately chosen and was not given by a later editor. In addition to many manuscripts containing the work which give the title, several medieval catalogues, mention it as *liber ille, quem Diadema monachorum intitulavit*.¹⁷⁵ It was not lost on other medieval commentators, either. According to the eleventh-century *Chronicle of Saint-Mihiel*, for example, the *DM* was Smaragdus' most important intellectual legacy for the community.¹⁷⁶ The early-twelfth-century *Chronicon* by Sigebert of Gembloux, explained that this title was appropriate 'because, like the gemstones in a diadem, so shines this book with virtues'.¹⁷⁷ Clearly, the title was not considered to refer to Isidore's 'ornament for women's heads'.¹⁷⁸ Neither would it be worthwhile to look for an explanation in the many early medieval commentaries on the Book of Revelation, where authors struggled to explain the seven crowned heads of the beast from the sea.¹⁷⁹ Instead, an explanation of Smaragdus' use of *diadema* may be found in the Old Testament, where it confers on its bearer a measure of authority that was divinely approved and religious in nature rather than strictly secular. For example, as told in 1 Chron. 20:1-2 when David seized the *corona* of the Ammonite king, Melchom, following the conquest of Rabba, 'he made himself a diadem of it'. Alternatively, Wis. 18:24 identifies the diadem as the headgear of Aaron, who, according to Isidore, was the first bishop. It was part of the priestly *regalia*, conferring some of the majesty of God on its bearer, but also emphasizing their subordinate status.¹⁸⁰

A similar distinction was made in the *Regula Magistri*, a monastic rule closely related to the *RB*.¹⁸¹ In this text, the author concludes a passage on the usefulness of perseverance by writing that:

175 Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd*, pp. 22-23 and p. 22, n. 3.

176 *Chronicon Sancti Michaelis*, c. 5, p. 81.

177 Sigebert of Gembloux, *Liber de Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*, c. 188, col. 572B: 'Smaragdus scripsit de vitandis vitiis et tenendis virtutibus librum, quem attitulavit Diadema monachorum, quia sicut diadema gemmis, ita hic liber refulget virtutibus'.

178 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 19.31.1: 'Diadema est ornamentum capitis matronarum ex auro et gemmis contextum'.

179 Rev. 12:3-4; See McGinn, 'Turning points', pp. 94-104.

180 *DEO*, lib. 2, c. 5.1-2.

181 Although many scholars now accept that the *RB* has been modelled on the *Regula Magistri*, others argue that the order is reversed or even that they developed in wholly different contexts. For the onset of this controversy, see Jaspert, *Die Regula Benedicti/Regula Magistri-Kontroverse*. For the continuation of the debate, see Dunn, 'Mastering Benedict'; De Vogüé, 'The Master

As gold is tried by the file and the hammer and the fire of the furnace, this is useful for the *diadema* of God and the *corona* of the ruler, because if someone does not act [according to] his own will, he is compelled to do that which we say in our daily prayer: 'Your will be done in Heaven and on Earth'.¹⁸²

A similar interpretation may be found in the *Moralia in Iob*. In the passage commenting on Job 29:14, Gregory the Great, a main source of inspiration for Smaragdus, compares the diadem to the 'judgements of the righteous', noting how those wearing it do not 'covet to find their reward by it in things below and of this Earth, but up above'.¹⁸³ Interestingly, this is a motif we also find in the *De Institutione Regia* by Jonas of Orléans, a contemporary of Smaragdus, who quoted the same chapter 29 from the Book of Job, and interpreted the *diadema* as a reflection 'on the *ministerium* of kings' as exercised by the grace of God.¹⁸⁴ This again drew attention to the diadem as simultaneously conferring authority and responsibility – or even authority *through* responsibility.

It seems a logical conclusion that this implies the monks who had to listen to the admonitions contained in the *DM* during mealtimes should strive for a responsibility akin to that of a secular ruler. Smaragdus encouraged his audience to proclaim the good works of God, and that those who are 'perfect on the Lord's highway' combined all the virtues of the evangelists.¹⁸⁵ However, it should not be forgotten that one of Benedict of Nursia's prime concerns was the internalization of his teachings, rather than limiting them to outward appearances inside monastery walls. The appearance

and S. Benedict: a response'; Dunn, 'The Master and St. Benedict'. See also Dunn, *Emergence of Monasticism*, pp. 128-130 and pp. 182-184. For the purposes of this study, the precise relation between the two Rules, while interesting, is of lesser importance.

¹⁸² *Regula Magistri*, c. 90.47-49, p. 389: 'Et tamquam aurum lima et malleis et igne fornacis probetur, ad diadema Dei et coronam dominicam profuturus, quia cum propriam non fecerit aliquis voluntatem, cogitur facere cui cottidie in oratione dicimus: "Fiat uoluntas tua sicut in caelo et in terra" [Mat. 6:10]; cf. Benedict of Aniane, *Concordia Regularum*, c. 65, which gives a slightly different version: 'Ergo omnia debet pro Domino sustinere qui ejus cupit militare scholae; et tamquam aurum lima, et malleis, et igne fornacis probetur ad diadema Dei, et coronam Dominicam profuturus. Quia cum propriam non fecerit voluntatem aliquis, cogitur facere, cui quotidie dicimus dicimus in oratione: "Fiat voluntas tua sicut in coelo et in terra".'

¹⁸³ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 19.xxi.34-35: 'Iustorum ergo iudicium diadema dicitur, quia per hoc non in terrenis et infimis, sed sursum remunerari concupiscunt'.

¹⁸⁴ Jonas of Orléans, *De Institutione Regia*, c. 4 (Quid sit proprie ministerium regis), pp. 200-201.

¹⁸⁵ *DM*, c. 69, cols. 664D-665C (De eo quod Domini semper a monachis annuntiantur virtutes); c. 93, col. 684 (De eo quod omnis electus atque perfectus monachus et homo, et vitulus, et leo, et aquila figuraliter sit).

of monastic perfection was just the first step. A true, fully trained monk could never be stripped of his *habitus*.¹⁸⁶ As Smaragdus writes at the end of his exposition of chapter 7 of the *RB*, in which the gradual acquisition of true humility is explained:

When all these steps of humility have been climbed, the monk will happily come to the vision of the Almighty, where he may enjoy with his Lord a happiness and joy that can never be taken away from him.¹⁸⁷

Instead of devoting a whole new *florilegium* to this particular issue, Smaragdus could have presented many of the teachings in the *DM* in the context of his *Expositio*. If his goal was to further deepen the understanding of what it meant to be a monk to his students, he could have stressed that point even more emphatically in his *Expositio* – something that happened in the *Commentarium in Regulam s. Benedicti* composed by Hildemar of Corbie a generation later.¹⁸⁸ However, at the time Smaragdus was active, the general acceptance of the *RB* and the Carolingian *correctio* movement in the monastic landscape on the one hand, and the integral education of all people within the *ecclesia* on the other, were still two distinct, if parallel, issues. This apparently necessitated separate compositions: one to explain life within the walls of the cloister, and one reflecting on the consequences of pursuing those same aspirations in the world at large.¹⁸⁹ While this would imply that Smaragdus hoped (or even intended) that his *DM* would also be read by laypeople, perhaps a more immediate goal was to make his monastic audience aware that they were not operating in a vacuum and that the ideal of monastic isolation should not be taken as an exemption from their responsibilities as exemplary Christians. If the *Expositio* was composed by Smaragdus to show how the (re)implementation of the ‘original’ *RB* might be incorporated into the local traditions of individual monasteries, his *DM* aimed directly at what he perceived to be the heart of Christianity

186 The sense of *habitus* developed by Bourdieu in his *Esquisse d'une Théorie de la Pratique* is useful here: Gorski, ‘Conclusion’, pp. 348–349.

187 *Expositio*, c. 7, p. 193: ‘His enim omnibus humilitatis ascensis gradibus, ad visionem Omnipotentis feliciter veniet monachus, ubi cum suo Domino felici fruatur gaudio, quod in sempiternum non auferetur ab eo’.

188 On Hildemar, see De Jong, *In Samuel's Image*, pp. 68–73; De Jong, ‘Growing up’; Zelzer, ‘Von Benedikt zu Hildemar: zu Textgestalt und Textgeschichte’. The best-known version of Hildemar’s commentary has been edited by Mittermüller, *Expositio Regulae ab Hildemaro tradita*; a cooperative online translation project, coordinated by Albrecht Diem, Julian Hendrix et al., may be found at <http://www.hildemar.org>.

189 Contreni, ‘Inharmonious harmony’; Ganz, ‘Conclusion’, p. 271.

itself: anyone aspiring to become the most outstanding examples of the contemplative life. If the *diadema* fits, wear it, regardless of whether you are a monk, a bishop, or a king.

According to a chapter entitled *De vita contemplativa* in the *DM*, becoming a monk and achieving a perfect contemplative life was merely a logical conclusion of taking that particular road, if only because they have the best teachers and thus the know-how on how to achieve the peace and quiet to be able to properly reflect on oneself and one's relation to God.¹⁹⁰ As such, the responsibilities that came with wearing the monk's diadem should not be a monastic privilege: all good Christians should strive to become examples for one another. Not because Smaragdus was an advocate for a monastic model for the *ecclesia*, but because to him, things like prayer and brotherly love were necessary to safeguard the future of Christendom. As was made clear in the *RB*, as well as in the many commentaries and *consuetudines* based on its implementation in the early medieval West, it was not merely the thought that counted. The model provided by those inside the cloister to those living beyond it should never be forgotten.

One of the narrative arcs of the *VR* held that if everybody within the *ecclesia* were comfortable with their place in the greater scheme and would act to the best of their ability, the divinely inspired rules would not feel as such and the teachers explaining them were shepherds, not masters.¹⁹¹ This ethical ideal is present in the *DM* to the extent that Smaragdus hardly dwells on the subject of hierarchy or the function of the abbot. Even though these abbots are present throughout the composition as the protagonists of the *Vitae Patrum* that Smaragdus uses as *exempla*, their function as teachers, 'namely, by words and by deeds', was regarded as a given.¹⁹² In the *Expositio*, Smaragdus dwelt extensively on the position of the abbot, emphasizing his many responsibilities and his exemplary function, as well as the fact that, in guarding others, he is also working on his own excellence. 'The abbot's orders and teaching should spread around the leaven of charity in the minds of the monks', Smaragdus wrote.¹⁹³ He was the example. He helped his monks 'subject [themselves] more than everyone else to obedience and exercise [themselves] in all good works' and thus earn his – and therefore Christ's – approval, which in turn is his

¹⁹⁰ *DM*, c. 24, cols. 619C–620B.

¹⁹¹ Suchan, *Mahnen und Regieren*, pp. 271–304.

¹⁹² *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 62: 'Omnis enim doctrina duobus modis consistit, verbis videlicet et exemplis'.

¹⁹³ *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 63: 'Ergo iussio vel doctrina abbatis in monachorum mentibus fermentum debet conspergere charitatis'.

own salvation.¹⁹⁴ In the *DM*, on the other hand, the closest he gets to an explanation of the position of the abbot is in an exegetical chapter based around Gal. 4:6, where Smaragdus used Paul's writings to show that, by calling Christ *Abba* – father – they had effectively become God's heirs instead of his servants, and should therefore follow his commands not out of a feeling of subservience, but because it was their fate to become 'fit to share the light which saints inherit'.¹⁹⁵ In a paradoxical statement, Smaragdus tells his audience that:

As we have received the Spirit of the Son of God, and have been made sons, we have thus changed from servitude to freedom, we will become heirs of God the Father, and also co-heirs of Jesus Christ his son.¹⁹⁶

For Smaragdus, the choice to put one's self under the supervision of an *abba* was the ultimate way of stepping into the light. Following rules simply because one had to would be supplanted by the freedom of becoming a son of God and accepting guidance from an abbot, who 'takes the place of Christ in the monastery when he rules the flock entrusted to him providently and justly', according to the *RB*.¹⁹⁷ Just like the *VR*'s ideal king, good leadership would lead to a good following.

How this would work to strengthen the community is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in chapter 13 of the *DM*, on obedience – the one chapter that does not also occur in the *VR*. As the final *exemplum*, Smaragdus tells the story of a man who entered into a monastery together with his son. The abbot ordered him to throw his son into a burning oven, which the man does without hesitation. The fire then promptly turned to dew, and the man was subsequently revered like the patriarch Abraham, for it is through such obedience that a community may attain perfection.¹⁹⁸ It is not just the man's obedience that accomplished this, however: it also was the abbot's order, as well as their unquestioning trust in God.

194 *Expositio*, c. 2, p. 68: 'Pro Dei amore se talis monachus prae omnibus obedientiae subdit, et in bonis omnibus actibus exercet; et ideo ab abbate prae omnibus merito diligitur et amatur'.

195 *DM*, c. 67, col. 663D: 'ut pars et sors et haereditas Domini esse mercamur, [...] in aeternum felices permaneamus'.

196 *DM*, c. 67, col. 663C: 'Ut quomodo Spiritum Filii Dei accipientes, facti sumus filii, ita in libertatem de servitute mutati, haeredes simus Dei Patris, cohaeredes autem Jesu Christi filii eius'.

197 *RB*, c. 2.

198 *DM*, c. 13, cols. 608C–609D, col. 609C.

The connection between these elements forms the core of the *DM*, as is made perhaps most clear when looking at the interplay between the chapters 44 ('On the Gifts of God'), 45 ('On the Grace of God') and 46 ('On Good Subjects').¹⁹⁹ In the last of these three, the reciprocal relation between leader and underling is treated once more, with the thrust of the argument being that a good subject should not just follow blindly, but also keep a close eye on his *praepositi*. They should not be afraid to speak out against any wrongdoings perceived: 'If they do not do this, they are just like idle spectators, and remain without a prize after the contest, in that they toiled not in the contest'.²⁰⁰ This proactive stance may, in turn, be achieved through the benevolence of God, as Smaragdus states: 'As grace comes first and good will follows, that which is the gift of God becomes our merit'.²⁰¹

Cooperation among the faithful is elevated to a manifestation of grace in this world. Cooperation, in turn, may only be achieved if everybody is content to act according to the gifts he received. 'The Holy Church is the body of its own heavenly head', Smaragdus states, before quoting a metaphor of the body from Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*, who in turn echoes Paul's famous statement about the Church as the body of Christ in 1 Cor 12:12-14.²⁰² With the help of Isidore of Seville, the metaphor is then brought to its logical conclusion:

When someone receives some good, let him not desire any more than what he deserved, lest, while he tries to appropriate the task of another member, he loses what he deserved. For the entire *ordo* of the body is upset when someone is not content with his office and seizes another.²⁰³

Invoking Paul's letter to the Corinthians once more, Smaragdus reminded his audience that God acts in mysterious ways, including when it comes

199 *DM*, cc. 44-46, cols. 641A-644A.

200 *DM*, c. 46, col. 643B, quoting *Regula Pastoralis*, lib. 4, c. 10, which in turn invokes 2 Tim. 2:5: 'Non coronabitur nisi legitime certaverit'.

201 *DM*, c. 45, col. 642B: 'Praeveniente gratia, et bona voluntate subsequente, hoc quod omnipotentis Dei donum est fit meritum nostrum'.

202 *DM*, c. 44, col. 641C: 'Sancta Ecclesia superni sui capitis corpus est'; cf. Gregorius, *Moralia in Iob*, 28.x.22-24.

203 *DM*, c. 45, col. 642D: 'Dum quisque aliquod bonum accipit, non appetat amplius quam quod meruit, ne dum alterius membri officium arripere tentat, id quod meruit perdat. Conturbat enim corporis ordinem totum, qui non suo contentus officio, subripit alienum'. Cf. Isidorus, *Sententiae*, lib. 2, cc. 5-10, pp. 99-102. Many thanks to Matthieu van der Meer for his help translating this passage.

to giving people their talents.²⁰⁴ Consequently, he 'who regards not the limits of his own measures' also subverts God's grace, and causes the body to function improperly.²⁰⁵

This is the world of Smaragdus, his organic vision of the order approved and designed by God.²⁰⁶ As already hinted at in the *VR*, the best way to live together in a society was for everyone to be content with one's station in life. It was an ideal suitable for Benedictine communities, where seniority should be the only criterion for imposing any sort of hierarchy. Moreover, while it was not a model that could be expected to function within the entirety of the Carolingian Church, it did impress upon everybody the idea that order did not imply uniformity. This may be why Smaragdus tried to keep the audience for his *DM* and *VR* as broad as possible. Monasteries, chief among them Saint-Mihiel itself, may have been shining examples to their surroundings, but for the whole *ecclesia* to function as God intended, Smaragdus needed to address the entirety of the *populus*: all those who wished to travel along the *via regia* into the Promised Land.²⁰⁷ The Carolingian elites should be prepared and willing to carry the responsibility of rulership conferred upon them by their *ministerium* – which was symbolized, according to Smaragdus, by a diadem that was both a burden and a mark of authority. Receiving the monk's diadem would be akin to bearing the cross that Christ himself carried, suffer with him, and fully forsake one's self in the process.²⁰⁸ This was not an easy task by any stretch of the imagination.

To Smaragdus, the primary tool to achieve this mentality was prayer. Proper prayer, which was, according to the *RB* and the *Expositio*, determined by the 'purity of heart' and the 'attentiveness of the mind' of the one praying, so that it 'may quickly penetrate heaven'.²⁰⁹ Prayer was the alpha and omega of the *DM*, in that the first chapter instructs the audience, using the words of Isidore and Gregory the Great, to achieve an all but perpetual state of prayer where words would no longer be necessary, because God would be able to perceive the prayer in their hearts. This 'tension between the outward and the inward' was palpable throughout the *DM*, as well as being a recurring

204 *DM*, c. 44, c. 641B.

205 *DM*, c. 44, c. 641C; cf. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* 28.x.22-24.

206 Cf. Struve, *Entwicklung der organologischen Staatsauffassung*, pp. 87-91.

207 *VR*, *Epistola nuncupatoria*, c. 934B: 'Nam et Israeliticus populus cum, per aliena transiens regna, ad repromissionis tenderet patriam'.

208 *DM*, c. 83, cols. 676D-677C, col. 677C.

209 *RB*, c. 20; *Expositio*, c. 20, pp. 210-211, and c. 38, p. 253: 'Oratio enim bonorum monachorum cito penetrat coelum'.

theme in the works of Gregory the Great, one of Smaragdus' examples.²¹⁰ The very last chapter emphasized this point once more, using a Sermon by Caesarius: the dual sacrifice required of all Christians is that they not only do good works by acting in a way 'pleasing to God', but also, that their 'pious thoughts would present a pleasant offering to the Lord'. Only if the two were acting in perfect concord would the 'two altars of men' be combined into one on the day of reckoning. As Smaragdus writes:

As we rejoice externally about the consecration of an Altar in a house of God, so should we also deem it worthy to feel invisible, spiritual joy about the chastity of the body and the cleanliness of the heart.²¹¹

To him, this was the perfection expected of those on the *via regia*. Put differently, once all the 'living stones' had built the house of God, they could joyfully consecrate the altars set up within it.

Just as the *VR* had a more general audience than a single king, the *DM* was not aimed exclusively at monks. If we accept that the *DM* provided a series of readings for monastic communities over dinner, Smaragdus' goal was not to explain to monks how they should behave *within* their respective communities – that writing goal had already been fulfilled with his *Expositio*. The idea behind the *DM* was to impress upon its audience the importance of monks in the world, the reason why they should strive to build their internal cloisters as sturdy as possible. After all, monks were to be the foundation of the *ecclesia*, strengthening the walls for others and thus protecting it from the rains and storms that might destroy its splendour.²¹² They should not look down upon the outside world, but rather look upward and realize they were as much a part of it as everybody else.

The Lives of Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel

Sometime in the second half of the 820s, Smaragdus, together with Bishop Frothar of Toul, wrote a letter to Louis the Pious to report on their mission to the monastery of Moyenmoutier, where they had been sent to investigate

²¹⁰ *DM*, c. 1, cols. 594C–596C, c. 594D: 'Si vero desideramus ex corde, etiam cum ore conticescimus, tacentes clamamus'; Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 22.xvii.43. Meens, 'Ritual purity'.

²¹¹ *DM*, c. 100, cols. 690A: 'Et quomodo visibiliter de templi altaris consecratione gaudemus, sic invisibiliter de corporis castita e vel animi puritate spirituale gaudium habere mereamur'. The Sermon of Caesarius quoted is *Sermo* 228, c. 2, p. 902.

²¹² *Expositio*, Prologus, p. 43.

a dispute between the community of monks and their abbot, Ismundus.²¹³ The abbot was accused of preventing the monks to live the way they felt they ought to. The unsatisfactory leadership of the abbot was identified as a cause of discontent particularly as he refused to give the monks access to the part of the possessions of the abbatial revenues that, 'Smaragdus, at your [the emperor's] orders, has given [...] to the monks of this monastery, so that they may live a regular life'.²¹⁴ This had hampered their well-being to such an extent that they lodged an official complaint with the emperor.²¹⁵ Smaragdus and Frothar determined that this controversy was due 'in part to the negligence of these monks, and in part due to the negligence of their abbot', but stated that both parties were willing to make amends.²¹⁶ However, the letter continues, the trust between them had been broken to such a degree that 'without your [that is, Louis'] judgement, nothing would be done', and that the monks 'would rather be expelled from the monastery and live like beggars on the road' than to be thwarted by false promises.²¹⁷ For this reason, the bishop and the abbot decided to give the monks permission to travel to the palace in Aachen, and to present their grievances directly.

This was the Carolingian experiment in action. This affair highlighted how the role of the court was understood, both by the monks and by the *missi* sent to placate them. Louis had apparently decided to grant the monks a degree of self-sufficiency, evidently with the goal of enabling Moyenmoutier to manage its possessions without outside influence. This in turn had led to friction with their abbot, exacerbated by accusations of negligence on both sides.²¹⁸ There was no one guilty party, and there was no need for there to be one in order for the court to become involved. It was only at the insistence of the monks that the *missi* allowed them to approach the court, not to get rid of their rightfully elected abbot, but to have the emperor help them restore unity in a way that only the ruler of the *ecclesia*

213 On Frothar of Toul, see Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 204-205, and on his letters, see Stratmann, 'Schriftlichkeit'.

214 Frothar of Toul, *Epistola* 3, pp. 94-97.

215 A similar case is visible in an 840 charter from Flavigny, in which Modoin of Autun was sent to arbitrate: Bouchard, *Cartulary of Flavigny*, pp. 50-52.

216 Frothar of Toul, *Epistola* 3, p. 96: 'et cognovimus ex parte neglegentiam ipsorum monachorum, ex parte neglegentiam abbatis eorum'.

217 Frothar of Toul, *Epistola* 3, p. 96: 'postulaverunt, ut illis licentiam daremus ad vestrae pietatis praesentiam recurrenti et vestram misericordiam implorandi, dicentes se magis velle de eodem monasterio expelli et in peregrinatione et mendicitate vivere, quam falsis promissionibus ulterius credere et sub falso monachorum nomine militare'.

218 On *negligentia*, see De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 121-122.

would be able to do.²¹⁹ The case did not exist in isolation, either. Around the same time, the monks of Fulda petitioned the court about what they perceived as misconduct by their abbot, Ratgar. It was an affair that also involved a delegation of monks in Aachen, and which, according to one hagiographical account, only ended when the emperor personally delivered a sermon to the community.²²⁰ Another well-known case is the attempt to 'reform' the community of Saint-Denis, which saw monastic rights, abbatial autonomy, episcopal authority, and imperial power clash over many years before anything was resolved.²²¹

We do not know how the conflict in Moyaumontier played out exactly, but it is tempting to think that Smaragdus thought of his *Via Regia* as he sent the monks on their way to the king. It was his model of authority in action, a practical application of his visions of community, which seemed to either reflect or be accepted in the discourse of the 820s. Smaragdus' life and works were grounded in a monastic milieu, but his ideals were not shaped by and for monks exclusively. Like many of his contemporaries, Smaragdus was someone who occupied both worlds. For him, it was important to demonstrate how monasteries could, would, and should function in the Carolingian *ecclesia*.

In the first paragraph of the *Epistola Nuncupatoria* that precedes the *VR*, Smaragdus called the king a son of God, and reminded him that his crown (*diadema*) was a symbol of the authority conferred upon him by Christ. In these opening lines, it was suggested that the *Via Regia* and the *Diadema Monachorum* were sides of the same coin, the product of one mind with a consistent if complicated world view. Whether or not the abbot intended for these two works to function as companion pieces, the mutual influence between the two is undeniable and gives rise to the suspicion that these works were not simply a mirror for princes and a series of moral vignettes for monks, respectively. Although the many identities of Smaragdus – theologian, imperial emissary, abbot, political actor, courtier – become visible depending on the specific context of what he was doing, he remained one individual with a clear view on the responsibilities and resources of rulership and the burdens of holding a *ministerium*. Regardless of his intended

219 Cf. Noble, 'Monastic ideal', pp. 242–243.

220 As described in Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda*, pp. 119–130; Semmler, 'Studien zum *Supplex Libellus*'; Kramer, 'Teaching emperors', pp. 318–322; Gaillard, 'De l'interaction entre crise et réforme', pp. 319–323.

221 Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 250–256, esp. p. 255; Semmler, 'Saint-Denis'; Berkhofer, *Day of Reckoning*, pp. 11–14; Rembold, 'The "apostates" of Saint-Denis'.

audience, the overlap between his works demonstrated that to Smaragdus, there also existed a connection between the lives they had to lead.

This unitary sentiment was reflected in sources issued from the court as well. The so-called *Ordinatio ad omnes regni ordines*, a capitulary issued sometime between 823 and 825 paints the picture of a community of elites bound by the fact that they all partook of a single *ministerium*.²²² According to this vision, the hierarchy was led by the ruler, but supported by bishops and aristocracy alike, in an interdependent relation that allowed everyone to build the *ecclesia* and work towards the greater good.²²³ According to Louis the Pious, the 'sum of this *ministerium* came together in his person', and he would be 'the admonisher of all' while everybody else should support him. The capitulary thus created the ideal of 'an empire as a communal, functional body, in which the ruler, the secular elites and the religious authorities depended on one another to fulfil their *ministeria*'.²²⁴ With ideas such as these floating around, it is worth contemplating that Smaragdus was not thinking of two different *ministeria*, but rather the two lives of those sharing in that all-encompassing *ministerium*, had to be aware of: the *vita activa* and its counterpart, the *vita contemplativa*.

In the *De Vita Contemplativa* (DVC), a moral treatise by the fifth-century priest and teacher Julianus Pomerius, the latter of these two lives is defined as 'that life in which God can be seen', before writing that 'in the present life, replete as it is with woes and mistakes, there is no doubt that God cannot be seen'.²²⁵ This led to the inevitable conclusion that the contemplative life, for Pomerius, was the life after this one – the life in the City of God.²²⁶ For him, the active life was 'the journeying [which] makes a man holy', whereas the contemplative life was only reached the moment perfection was attained:

²²² Guillot, 'Une *ordinatio* méconnue'.

²²³ Zotz, 'In Amt und Würden', pp. 14–16.

²²⁴ *Admonitio ad Omnes Regni Ordines*, c. 3, p. 303: 'Sed quamquam summa huius ministerii in nostra persona consistere videatur, tamen et divina auctoritate et humana ordinatione ita per partes divisum esse cognoscitur'; see Hannig, *Consensus fidelium*, p. 269: 'eines gemeinschaftlichen Funktionskörpers des Reiches, in dem König und weltliche wie geistliche Große in der Erfüllung ihrer *ministeria* aufeinander angewiesen sind' ('a common functional body within the empire, within which the king, the lay elites and the high clergy depended on one another for the exercise of their *ministeria*'). Hannig, however, worked from the idea that *minister* and *ministerium* were essentially the same: cf. Zotz, 'In Amt und Würden', p. 14, n. 69.

²²⁵ DVC, lib. 1, c. 1, col. 419A: 'Quod si ita est, illa vita ubi Deus videri potest ipsa contemplativa credenda est. In praesenti autem vita miseriis, erroribusque plenissima, Deum, sicuti est, videri non posse, dubium non est. In futura igitur vita, quae ob hoc appellatur contemplativa, videndus est, nec immerito'.

²²⁶ Fick, 'Traces', pp. 189–191; Leyser, 'Augustine in the early medieval West'.

in Heaven, or in those extreme cases where holy men really cast off all ties with society around them.²²⁷ His treatise on the *vita contemplativa* thus turned into a depiction of the active life instead, the virtuous life which would enable people to live amongst peers and still attain Paradise, instead of living in isolation.²²⁸ It was a rather uncompromising thesis, but a highly popular one nonetheless.²²⁹ So popular even, that in most of the Middle Ages, the work was ascribed to the more famous Prosper of Aquitaine, as for example in the *Institutio Canonicorum*.²³⁰ Even so, Pomerius also latched on to an existing tradition. The distinction may be traced back to the Gospels, where an episode in which Martha was serving Jesus while her sister Mary was sitting down and listening to his teachings was interpreted to be a reflection of these two ways of life.²³¹ This idea, first visible in the works of Origen, proved to be influential in the ninth century still, and would prove to be a fertile ground for biblical exegesis throughout the Middle Ages.²³²

Smaragdus knew the *DVC*: it must have been discussed at Aachen while the *IC* was composed, and he used it while composing the *DM* and the *Expositio*.²³³ However, this is never made explicit in either the *DM* or the *VR*. In the *DM*, Smaragdus hints at Pomerius' two lives, comparing, in the words of Gregory the Great, the active life to:

A grave, which shields the dead from evil deeds; but the contemplative life buries even more completely, as it separates one wholly from the affairs of this world.²³⁴

However, he did not take this to Pomerius' logical extreme, but stuck to Isidore's more lenient interpretation:

The active life represents the innocence of good works, the contemplative the vision of a higher world. The former is a community of many, but the

227 *DVC*, lib. 1, c. 12, col. 423A: 'Habet activa profectum, contemplativa fastigium; haec facit hominem sanctum, illa perfectum'.

228 Firey, *A Contrite Heart*, pp. 181-182.

229 Laistner, 'Influence'.

230 Laistner, 'Influence', pp. 347-349.

231 Ernst, *Martha from the Margins*.

232 Constable, *Three Studies*, pp. 28-32.

233 For instance, *DM*, c. 23, c. 618D; for an overview of his use in the *Expositio*, see the English translation, pp. 563-564.

234 *DM*, c. 24, c. 620A: 'Activa quasi sepulcrum est, quia a pravis operibus mortuos tegit; sed contemplativa perfectius sepelit, quia a cunctis mundi actionibus funditus dividit': Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 9, xxxii.48.

latter of only a few. The active life makes good use of worldly goods; the contemplative life, however, renounces the world and chooses to live for God alone.²³⁵

According to these two authors, and by extension, to Smaragdus, one needed not actually be dead after having lived a virtuous life. It was enough to acquire the mental discipline to serve God without being distracted by the outside world. For Smaragdus, it was important to show that this could be done during this lifetime, even if it would take a monk's discipline.

In this sense, the *VR* and the *DM* should be regarded as companion pieces. Written around the same time, *VR* focused on the *vita activa*, whereas in the *DM* the *vita contemplativa*, the life focused on prayer and contemplation, was central.²³⁶ Many passages from the *VR* have been incorporated in the *DM*, showing how, to Smaragdus, many of life's rules were the same for those wielding authority in this world and those whose goals were set higher. The *VR* and the *DM*, between the two of them, presented the life to which all Christians should aspire. This was a life in which the active and the contemplative modes were not mutually exclusive; rather, the ethical programme they present should allow the 'act of prayer' to become 'a permanent disposition, [...] a constituent element of one's being'.²³⁷ By highlighting the importance of the internalization of prayer over the more regulated aspects of monastic life, Smaragdus thus indicated that the ideological models proposed by the *imperium* and the *ecclesia* both led to the same end result. This explains the pragmatism implicit in the *Expositio*, the third part of Smaragdus' reflections: it described not simply life in a monastery, but life in the monastic world created within the Carolingian *ecclesia*. Like all Carolingian intellectuals, Smaragdus was aware that court and cloister coexisted in an interdependent relation, as did all other essential parts of the *ecclesia* for that matter. Both were meant to support one another. This is why the imperial court was all but forced to interfere in Moyennoutier: the ideal of claustrality could and should be breached when a situation called for it.²³⁸

235 *DM*, c. 24, c. 619C: 'Activa vita innocentia est operum bonorum, contemplativa speculatio supernorum. Illa communis multorum est, ista vero paucorum. Activa vita mundanis rebus bene utitur, contemplativa vero mundo renuntians, soli Deo vivere delectatur': Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, lib. 3, c. 15.

236 Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, pp. 157-161.

237 Leclercq, 'Smaragdus', p. 40.

238 De Jong, 'Internal cloisters', pp. 213-217 describes two such instances of the way court and cloister intertwined as described in Ekkehard IV's *Casus Sancti Galli*.

In these three works, Smaragdus brought together his background as a teacher of grammar, his knowledge as an abbot, his experience as a *missus* and his role as a defender of ecclesiastical integrity. He wanted to impress upon his extended network of friends, colleagues and countrymen the awesome responsibilities that came with the newly created context of the Christian empire.²³⁹ The ideals described in his works, the traditions evoked and the spin added all show how Smaragdus was very much a part of the ongoing development of the ideology of empire between Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. He was not reacting against old habits, nor criticizing whatever new style Louis brought to the throne. He was, in his own way, throwing his weight behind a further improvement of the state of the *ecclesia*. He did this by showing rulers the path they should walk, and assuring them how they would be able to reach the Kingdom of Heaven even though they were not monks. A decade or so later, he added to this by teaching his monks – and by extension, all who aspired the perfection of the contemplative life – how and why they should internalize their ideals to the point where walking the ‘king’s highway’ had become a way of life.

One characteristic that stands out in all this is the interaction between self-discipline and mutual control, which further explains his views on the function of monasteries in the *ecclesia*: those who lived exemplary lives would almost automatically elevate the world around them, but also inspire others to regard them with the utmost scrutiny.²⁴⁰ This was the abbot who quells conflicts by allowing them to be played out peacefully; the emperor who strove to live an exemplary life, thereby helping others; but also the monks who expected their superiors to aid them in living a regular life. There is optimism here, but also caution. Smaragdus was aware that the higher you come, the harder you might fall.

In this one author’s view, the ideal was to inspire a Christian ideology in everybody within the Frankish empire. That was his responsibility, his *ministerium*. He would do his part by inspiring monks, who would – by their very existence – bring inspiration to the rest. Smaragdus regarded the existing divisions between monks and canons, clergy and laity as born from necessity, not as a true reflection of the ideal order he propagated, in which they were all subject to the same Divine father by virtue of having all accepted the Christian religion. Thus, the virtues he described in his VR

239 Meens, ‘Politics, mirrors of princes and the Bible’, p. 357; De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 112–114; Nelson, ‘Kingship and royal government’, pp. 422–430.

240 As noted, for example, for the monastery of Fulda by Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda*, pp. 53–54.

and *DM* were not a royal or monastic prerogative: in the end, it was up to all of the virtuous to help everybody else. It therefore seems paradoxical that Smaragdus was working at a point in time that was characterized by an ongoing re-appraisal of the institutions of the *ecclesia*, a movement that he and his close companions took an active part in, no less. As he was composing his ideological tracts on life in the *ecclesia*, the rulers that he so actively admonished were busy fighting heterodoxy, asking bishops for advice on matters liturgical, and calling together councils to identify and solve any and all problems that the *ecclesia* was faced with: they were devising their own ways of living up to the responsibilities that were set by the expectations of their court – and themselves.

If Smaragdus could have been granted one vast and naive wish, it would have been that he could make the world safe. If he could convince people to walk the *via regia* according to a *regula*, if they could attain the *diadema monachorum*, those looking for guidance would be better able to give others a sense of direction, too. This would be a vast undertaking, and impossible to accomplish by one single person, no matter how idealistic. Luckily, Smaragdus was not alone, and neither was he the only one to advocate such all-encompassing ideals of authority through responsibility. The lessons he sought to impart were as much a consequence of his own philosophies as they were a product of his social and intellectual environment: the court culture around Charlemagne and his heirs from the late eighth century onwards.²⁴¹ The next chapter will therefore focus on one of Smaragdus' colleagues, and one who is usually thought to have had a much greater hand in changing both the court and the empire than Smaragdus ever had. This was Benedict of Aniane, abbot, monastic reformer, and a trusted member of the inner court circle around Louis the Pious.

241 Noble, 'Louis the Pious and the frontiers', pp. 344-346; Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire', pp. 96-99; De Jong, 'From *scolastici* to *sciolii*', pp. 53-54.