

The Good, the Bad or the Unworthy?

Accusations, Defense and Representation in the Case
of Ebbo of Reims, 835-882



Bart Selten
(3036057)
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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BBKL</i>	<i>Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon</i>
Ebbo, <i>Apologeticum</i> I	Ebbo of Reims, <i>Apologetici Ebonis forma prior</i> , ed. Albertus Werminghoff, MGH Conc. 2 (Hannover and Leipzig 1908) 794-799
Ebbo, <i>Apologeticum</i> II	Ebbo of Reims, <i>Apologetici Ebonis forma posterior</i> , ed. Albertus Werminghoff, MGH Conc. 2 (Hannover and Leipzig 1908) 799-806
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
- Capit.	- Capitularia regum Francorum
- Conc.	- Concilia
- Epp.	- Epistolae (in Quart)
- Poetae	- Poetae Latini medii aevi
- Schriften	- Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica
- SS.	- Scriptores (in folio)
- SS. rer. Germ.	- Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum, seperatim editi
<i>NA</i>	<i>Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde zur Beförderung einer Gesamtausgabe der Quellenschriften Deutscher Geschichten des Mittelalters</i>
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina

INTRODUCTION: A CAROLINGIAN DREAM

In 877, a man fell ill. His name was Bernold, and he was a parishioner in the see of Reims.¹ Bernold received the rites of the dying, did not eat for four days and he was so weak that when he wanted to drink, he could not ask for water. Only through gestures he could make clear what his needs were. After these four days, Bernold lost consciousness, and the bystanders thought that he was dead already. His chest, however, was still moving by his ongoing breath, and his face did not turn pale yet. In the middle of the night, Bernold opened his eyes and asked for a priest. His wife went out to look for one, and quickly came back with the father she had found. Bernold asked the priest to take a chair and sit down next to him. Then, he told him to listen carefully and remember what he was about to say. Finally, he made the priest promise to tell everybody the words he spoke that night.

Bernold told the priest that in his sleep, he had been transported to another world. When he arrived there, he came to a strange place, where he saw a terrible scene: forty-one bishops were crawling around and although the extreme cold made their teeth chatter, the bishops looked like they had been burned by fire. Three of the bishops Bernold recognized: Aeneas, Pardulus and Ebbo.² When Ebbo noticed Bernold's appearance, he tried to reach him, cried out his name and begged Bernold to help him. When Bernold asked what he could do, Ebbo answered him that he should look for all the bishop's people, both the clergy and the laymen, and tell them that they should give alms and pray extensively on the behalf of the poor bishops, who were torn between ice and fire there. However, Bernold did not know how to find these people. At once, a guide appeared who led him to a large palace where a lot of people were standing around discussing the fate of the poor bishops. Bernold told them about Ebbo's plea for prayers and alms, and immediately the guide took him back to the place where he had found the forty-one bishops before. Now, they were not in rags anymore, but in proper clothes and their faces were shaven. Their skin was no longer burnt but looked healthy and they were not sitting in a wet and cold atmosphere, but were very comfortable. Most

¹ The following passage is my summary of Hincmar of Reims' *Visio Bernoldi*. Maaïke van der Lugt, 'Tradition and Revision: the Textual Tradition of Hincmar of Reims' *Visio Bernoldi*. With a New Critical Edition', *Bulletin du Cange* 52 (1994) 109-149. For a longer summary and analysis of this *Visio*, cf. Van der Lugt's introduction to the edition.

² Aeneas of Paris, Pardulus of Laon and Ebbo of Reims.

important, however, was that Ebbo and his companions were not recognizable as bishops anymore: none of the group wore a chasuble, or any of the other signs marking them as clergymen. Ebbo thanked Bernold. He explained that the bishops had suffered in a very harsh prison, but that now their imprisonment was much lighter. They were guarded by Saint Ambrose.

After this first episode, Bernold continued the story of his dream. He had a second meeting with the late King Charles the Bald, and thereafter he encountered two noblemen. During the last episode of his dream, Bernold overheard an argument between a nobleman and a peasant. The peasant claimed that Bernold had only fourteen more days to live. The nobleman, however, told the peasant that Bernold would live fourteen more years. To convince his counterpart in the discussion, the noble told the peasant to stop quarrelling and look up, for Bernold's confessor was coming near. The dream ended and we return to Bernold's chamber. The priest, standing next to him, celebrated mass with Bernold and by the power of the Eucharist, Bernold was finally taken back to the land of the living.³

The story told here is taken from the *Visio Bernoldi*, a *visio* from the ninth century, most probably written by Hincmar, archbishop of Reims.⁴ My thesis, however, is not about Bernold and neither about Hincmar. It is about the *Visio's* main supporting actor: the man, who, when we met him first, was crawling around, burned but with chattering teeth, who begged and prayed, and whose punishment was, through Bernold's help, ameliorated by Saint Ambrose himself. It is about the man who first wore the external signs of a bishop who had sinned, but later in the story did not carry his chasuble anymore and waited like all laymen for the last judgment. This thesis is about Ebbo, or, to be more precise, about the question how Ebbo ended up in Bernold's dream in this particular way.

A longer biographical chapter will follow,⁵ but in just a few sentences Ebbo's life can be sketched in this way: he was lowborn but grew up at the Carolingian court. Close to the emperor Louis the Pious, he became as archbishop of Reims one of the most

³ Maaïke van der Lugt, 'Tradition and Revision: the Textual Tradition of Hincmar of Reims' *Visio Bernoldi*. With a New Critical Edition', *Bulletin du Cange* 52 (1994) 109-149.

⁴ About the genre of *visiones* in the ninth century, cf. Ibidem 111-112 and Robert Easting, 'Access to Heaven in Medieval Visions on the Otherworld', in: Carolyn Muessig and Ad Putter ed., *Envisaging Heaven in the Middle Ages*, Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture 6 (London 2007) 75-90. For more about the *Visio Bernoldi*, cf. pp. 45-47 of this thesis.

⁵ Cf. pp. 11-19 of this thesis.

important clerics in the Carolingian empire. In 833, however, he took part in a rebellion against the emperor and in 835 he was punished for the role he had played. Ebbo was deposed and hereafter, he was first sent into captivity in various monasteries. In 840, he was reinstated as archbishop in Reims and then deposed again in 841. Hereafter, he wandered around through the empire to finally become bishop in Hildesheim where he died in 851.

Two years ago, when I started to write a first very short paper about Ebbo, I had no idea that he would turn out to be such a ‘hot’ topic during the subsequent years. I had the opportunity to read Mayke de Jong’s *The Penitential State* at an early stage and here Ebbo already played a small but interesting role. However, in *The Penitential State*, his tale ended in 841 while Ebbo’s history would continue for years.⁶ Besides De Jong’s work, not much had been written specifically about Ebbo in the last years and several important and interesting sources had only little been touched. In his impressive history of the bishopric of Hildesheim, Hans Goetting had written a very good overview of Ebbo’s life.⁷ Peter McKeon published a shorter article about Ebbo.⁸ His article, however, was not so much about Ebbo himself; in the article, Ebbo served as an example for McKeon’s tale of the decline and fall of the Carolingian empire after Charlemagne’s death. The research with which I started this thesis was very much orientated on a selected number of sources, most notably two so-called *Apologetici* written by Ebbo in his own defense after his deposition.⁹ However, the publication of two most interesting studies – next to De Jong’s *Penitential State* – turned a lot of my ideas upside down. In both Courtney Booker’s *Past Convictions* and Steffen Patzold’s *Episcopus*, Ebbo has a remarkable role and in these two books, quite a number of the questions I had asked myself about Ebbo and especially his *Apologetici* were solved already.¹⁰ But as usually is the case, new information led not just to new answers but also to new questions and points of discussion. Moreover, the intentions of these three works were very different

⁶ Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State. Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Cambridge 2009) on Ebbo most notably 76-79 and 252-259.

⁷ Hans Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim III, Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe von 815 bis 1221 (1227)*, Germania Sacra. Historisch-Statistische Beschreibung der Kirche des alten Reiches 20 Die Bistümer der Kirchenprovinz Mainz (Berlijn 1984) 56-84.

⁸ Peter R. McKeon, ‘Archbishop Ebbo of Reims (816-835): a study in the Carolingian Empire and Church’, *Church history* 43:4 (1974), 437-447.

⁹ Ebbo, *Apologeticum I* and *Apologeticum II*.

¹⁰ Courtney M. Booker, *Past Convictions. The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians* (Philadelphia 2009) on Ebbo most notably 30-33, 94-97, 182-191, 199-209, Steffen Patzold, *Episcopus. Wissen über Bischöfe im Frankenreich des späten 8. bis frühen 10. Jahrhunderts*, *Mittelalter-Forschungen* 25 (Ostfildern 2008) on Ebbo most notably 196-199, 315-353.

from mine. In *The Penitential State*, De Jong showed how a medieval religious and political discourse formed the background of Louis the Pious' penitence in 833 and how sin, penance and above all the relation between a Frankish ruler and God worked, or was supposed to work, during the Carolingian era. Booker took Louis the Pious' penance as an example; not only of a ninth century event and its implications but even more to see how in historiography the interpretation of this occasion changed and how different periods shaped different representations of what had happened in 833 and beyond. Finally, with *Episcopus* Patzold revised everything we thought to know about bishops in the Carolingian age and set a new standard for this knowledge in the coming years.

My questions for research, however, were different – and less ambitious. Ebbo remains the central figure of my thesis and I am especially interested in the image that has been created of him after his fall in 835. Therefore, I shall stay close to my sources. In this thesis, we will make a journey through several of them, all deriving from the ninth century. Our starting point is 835, the year of Ebbo's deposition. After his fall, several of his antagonists tried to represent Ebbo in a specific way, more often than not to support their own various positions. They had one thing in common: they needed a scapegoat for the rebellion against Louis the Pious in 833, and in Ebbo they found one. In the second chapter of this thesis, we will follow Ebbo through several sources written by some of his antagonists all the way until his last big contemporary enemy: Hincmar. In every case, we will wonder how and why the image of Ebbo was shaped in that specific period, by that specific author and in this specific context. Of evident importance is the question how the image of Ebbo developed in these sources. Hereafter, in the third chapter, we will turn to Ebbo's defense. We will consider the *Apologetici* I already mentioned and I will discuss two texts written in his defense. The main questions remain the same: who represented Ebbo in which way and for which reason, and how did this image develop? Before we turn to the sources, however, let us first, in the first chapter of this thesis, take a closer look at the occurrences that led to Ebbo's deposition in 835, and then at Ebbo himself. In order to find out how both his allies and his enemies tried to create a certain image of Ebbo, knowledge of these historical backgrounds is indispensable.

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

Troubles in the Carolingian Empire, 814 – 841

To be able to understand Ebbo's role in later Carolingian historiography, we have to go back in history as far as 814.¹¹ That year, the emperor Charlemagne died, leaving behind an empire covering most of Western Europe, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Elbe in the east, including parts of the Italian peninsula. This whole realm was inherited by Charlemagne's only living son, Louis – Charles' other sons had all died in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Louis, who later would be named 'the Pious', had three sons in his turn: Lothar, Pippin and Louis the German. Not long after he started his reign, in 817, Louis the Pious arranged his succession through a document that according to the traditional historiography would cause big troubles later on. In the so-called *Ordinatio Imperii*, Louis tried to make sure that after his death the Carolingian empire would not fall apart with each of his sons reigning over a unique part of it, but would remain one empire under one emperor.¹² Once Louis died, Lothar would be appointed emperor, but the other sons would serve as kings under him. Therefore the *Ordinatio Imperii* was strongly supported by those noblemen who served under Lothar. Another group of supporters was to be found among the (high) clergy of the empire: from a theological perspective they preferred the Carolingian realm to remain one.¹³ Until Louis' death, however, the three sons would have more or less the same position in the empire: Louis the German and Pippin were made king of one part each and Louis would remain emperor himself with Lothar, the eldest son, as co-emperor. Louis the German, hence his name, got the kingdom of Bavaria and Pippin was sent to Aquitaine.

The idea behind the *Ordinatio Imperii* was to create stability and unity in the empire, but the plan did not work out as well as expected. From 822 onwards, from Italy where he had become king after the death of his cousin Bernard, Lothar tried to get as much of a grip on the Carolingian heartlands, north of the Alps, as possible.¹⁴ And although

¹¹ Unless noted otherwise, this summary of events is based on Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State*, mainly 14-58.

¹² *Ordinatio Imperii*, ed. Alfredus Boretius, MGH Capit. 1 (Hannover 1883) 270-273.

¹³ Steffen Patzold, 'Eine "loyale Palastrebellion" der "Reichseinheitspartei"? Zur "Divisio Imperii" von 817 und zu den Ursachen des Aufstandes gegen Ludwig den Frommen im Jahre 830', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 40 (2006) 43-77, 60-61.

¹⁴ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 33.

formally they all had the same title, the three sons constantly competed with one another to get the best position in the political field of the 820s. From the year 825 onwards, Lothar gained more power. Between 822 and 829, he stayed in his kingdom for only six months. The rest of the time he travelled around the empire looking for support. Although formally his position did not change that year, from 825 onwards all imperial capitularies were signed by Louis the Pious and Lothar.¹⁵

In 829, the situation got even more difficult. Six years earlier, Louis' second wife Judith had given birth to Louis' fourth son. Thus breaking his own *Ordinatio Imperii*, in 829 Louis created a new kingdom for the little boy, who was named after his grandfather – his name was enough to show that the young boy was born to rule! Charles was made king of Alemannia, an old kingdom, former realm of the *gens* called Alamanni, located very central in the empire and consisting of (parts of) Burgundy, Alsace and several large areas in current western Germany. For a long time, this step was seen in historiography as the start of a new phase in the history of the Carolingian empire under Louis the Pious. Were his sons during the 820s mainly busy fighting each other, from 829 onwards they united to fight against their shared enemy Charles. However, as De Jong claimed, the donation to Charles of a kingdom was not the real problem: nobody had expected that Charles would not receive a part of his father's inheritance.¹⁶ Much more problematic was probably the rise of another nobleman at the court: Bernard of Septimania. In 829, Louis the Pious made Bernard his chamberlain and the direct responsible for Charles. In this way, Bernard became Louis' prime advisor. Lothar lost his first place in the palace and was sent to Italy moreover.¹⁷

The relation between Pippin and Louis the Pious had been complicated already, but became much worse since the rise of Bernard too. In 830, when his father was on a campaign in Brittany, Pippin started a first revolt; his brother Lothar joined him soon. Louis the Pious managed to solve this conflict at a church council in Compiègne. The rebelling sons were sent back to their own kingdoms.¹⁸ In 833, however, the sons, now accompanied by Louis the German, rose up against their father once again. This new alliance of the three brothers resulted in a dramatic event. With their joined forces, the three brothers marched towards a place known as the Rothfeld, or Field of Lies, near Colmar. There the two armies met. Although Lothar brought Pope Gregory IV from

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Ibidem 41.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem 41-44.

Rome to negotiate between the sons and their father, a battle seemed to be unavoidable. The sons' army, however, was so much bigger, that it never came to a fight: with the supremacy in sight, most of the emperor's forces walked over to the other side.¹⁹ Lothar arrested his father and imprisoned him at the monastery of Saint-Médard in Soissons.

On the 6th of October 833, Lothar organized an assembly in Compiègne, not far from Soissons, where also the clergy of the empire met in a general meeting. Who attended this council, and how many clergymen were present, is unknown to us. Only one name is mentioned in the annals: Ebbo, archbishop of Reims.²⁰ Thanks to his own account of the council, we can also be sure that Agobard, archbishop of Lyons, attended the meeting.²¹ Agobard, however, does not give any other names than his own. Leonie van Beckum suggests that mainly prelates close to Lothar were present at the council.²² This, however, is absolutely not necessarily the case. The church council was planned already before the revolt had started and hence probably almost the whole clergy had gathered. It is only about Agobard that we can clearly say that he had taken position opposite the emperor. However, he was probably more anti-Judith than opposed to Louis.²³ Whether most of the assembled clergymen were Louis' supporters or not, it is known for fact that a majority of them chose the side of the rebelling sons and they played an important role in the following events. It was those churchmen, and not Louis' sons or other rebelling nobles, who decided that Louis had failed to serve his people and God and that therefore he was considered not to be capable anymore of reigning his empire. They decided *divino iustoque iudicio*, with divine and just justice, to take away from him his *potestas*, his imperial power. Moreover, they decided that Louis had to do penance before God and the people, in public, for his sins. This decision was recorded and justified in the so-called *Relatio Episcoporum*.²⁴ According to this document and the account of Agobard, Louis did his penance out of his own free will.²⁵ Both Louis' contemporary biographers however, tried to convince their readers of quite opposite:

¹⁹ The desertion of the emperor's armies would by the bishops at the council of Soissons (833) be presented as firm evidence of divine judgement. *Ibidem* 48.

²⁰ *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SS. rer. Germ. 5 (Hannover 1883) 5-7.

²¹ Agobard of Lyons, *Agobardi Cartula de Poenitentia ab Imperatore Acta*, ed. Alfredus Boretius and Viktor Krause, MGH Capit. 2 (Hannover 1907) 56-57.

²² Leonie van Beckum, 'Een keizer ontroond: Lodewijk de Vrome en zijn openbare boetedoening', in: Mayke de Jong, Marie-Thérèse Bos and Carine van Rhijn ed., *Macht en Gezag in de Negende Eeuw*, Utrechtse Historische Cahiers 16 (1995) 61-78, 69.

²³ Philippe Depreux, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781-840)* (Sigmaringen 1997) 5.

²⁴ *Episcoporum de poenitentia, quam Hludovicus imperator professus est, relatio compendiensis*, ed. Alfredus Boretius and Viktor Krause, MGH Capit. 2 (Hannover 1907) 51-55.

²⁵ Agobard, *Cartula*.

both Thegan and the anonymous Astronomer claimed that the emperor was forced to do penance.²⁶

Probably his sons had hoped that after his penance, Louis the Pious would give up his throne himself and retire to a monastery. But although he had done his ritual of public penance, after which one was supposed to resign from office,²⁷ Louis refused by all means. Therefore a *status quo* originated, a period during which it was unclear who had the actual power in the empire. Lothar tried to act as the new emperor. Apparently, his younger brothers were not very pleased with his behaviour: the three kings formed all but one closed front. Hardly a year after the non-battle at the Rothfeld, Louis the German convinced Pippin to get their joined forces to Aachen, in order to ‘release’ their father. Thus in the year 834 Louis the Pious was back on his throne, and once more sent his eldest son to Italy.

So far so good and all was well? Not quite. Until his death in 840, Louis the Pious had to face many more (family) troubles. Just to give a few examples: in 837 the emperor gave his youngest son, Charles, a huge area stretching from Burgundy to the North Sea coast. During the winter that followed, Lothar and Louis the German met in secret – what they talked about we do not know, but their father definitely got angry when he heard about this encounter. At first he tried to negotiate with Louis the German, but then he took away from him the reign over quite a number of his territories. Pippin had died in December 838 and he had barely been buried when Louis the German marched with an army towards Frankfurt, where the emperor had planned to spend the winter. A month later, January 839, many of the people Louis the German had gathered deserted him and the king fled in panic.²⁸ When Louis the Pious died on the 20th of June, 840, he left three competing sons behind.

Before we will get there, let us take a step back to 834, the moment Louis the Pious managed to get his crown back with the help of Pippin and Louis the German. It is obvious that the emperor at least had to do something after the humiliation in Compiègne; he could not possibly continue his reign as if nothing had ever happened. Punishing his sons, however, was out of the question. First of all, it had been two of

²⁶ Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS. Rer. Germ. 64 (Hannover 1995) 167-277, 230-231; The Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS. Rer. Germ. 64 (Hannover 1995) 279-554, 480-485. Cf. De Jong, *The Penitential State* 231-232.

²⁷ About the consequences of public penance, cf. pp. 26-27 of this thesis.

²⁸ *Annales Bertiniani* 13-24.

them who had actually put him back on the throne. The first son, Lothar, was sent back to Italy already, bound with oaths in which he had promised never to stand up against his father again. Finally, all his sons still had a strong power base in their own realms, their own supporting noble families and clergymen. A scapegoat for the whole affair had to be found elsewhere. There was a clear candidate, one who had not only attended that damned church council at Saint-Médard where Louis was forced to do his penance, but moreover, being archbishop of the diocese in which Soissons and Compiègne laid, was to held responsible for that very council: Ebbo.

It could have been a brilliant career, c. 775 – 851

There are two contemporary sources that provide us with detailed information about Ebbo's younger years and his career. The first source is a letter from 867, written by King Charles, now nicknamed 'the Bald'.²⁹ In 867, Charles and Louis the German were the last remaining sons of Louis the Pious – Lothar had died in 855. After the death of Louis the Pious, his realm was divided between his sons in 843 at the Treaty of Verdun, and Charles the Bald became king of West Francia. Since Soissons was to be found in his kingdom, Charles was responsible for everything that happened there. As I will discuss later, Ebbo's punishment ordered by Louis the Pious in 835 caused significant problems throughout the ninth century. For now, however, it is enough to keep in mind that an attempt was made to solve these troubles at a church council in Troyes in 867. For this event, Charles wrote a long letter to Pope Nicholas I, to expand his view on Ebbo's case.³⁰ To be as precise as possible, Charles wanted the pope to know everything he knew about the background of the trial against Ebbo in 835. In my opinion, there is no reason to believe that Charles writing was just any odd story or that he purposely shared false information about Ebbo.

The second main source about Ebbo's life is Flodoard's *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*.³¹ Flodoard had lived in Reims all his life. He was born in 894 in Épernay, a village close to the town, and sent to Reims to be educated in the cathedral school. Ultimately, he became

²⁹ On Charles the Bald cf. Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (New York 1992).

³⁰ Charles the Bald, *Karl der Kahle an Nikolaus I*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann, MGH Conc. 4 (Hannover 1998) 239-243 (hereafter referred to as Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I*). Further biographical information about Ebbo is based on Depreux, *Prosopographie* 169-174, Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 57-61 and McKeon, 'Archbishop Ebbo of Reims 437-447.

³¹ Flodoard of Reims, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, ed. Martina Stratmann, MGH SS. 36 (Hannover 1998).

canon of the church of Reims and a favourite of the Archbishop Herive and his successor Séulf.³² Flodoard is one of the most important historiographers of the tenth century. Until his death in 966, he wrote his own annals, several long poems about the history of Christ and various martyrs, and his famous History of the Church of Reims.³³ Most striking, however, is Flodoard's method. It would be an anachronism to call him 'objective' but it is remarkable that Flodoard used as many sources as possible while writing his *Historia*. Most of them came from the archives of Reims.³⁴ However, when judging the objectivity of the text, Flodoard's way of writing can also be considered a problem, as many of the sources incorporated in his *Historia* were written by Ebbo's main antagonist Hincmar, archbishop of Reims between 845 and 882. Therefore, the two chapters Flodoard wrote about Ebbo should be perceived in different ways. Flodoard based the first chapter, *caput XIX*, on a wide range of sources and therefore it is quite reliable.³⁵ This chapter deals with Ebbo's career until 835. The succeeding *caput XX* is devoted exclusively to Ebbo's deposition.³⁶ In this chapter we recognize to a larger extent Hincmar's influence.

Charles the Bald wrote that Ebbo was born in the *familia fisci*, a rather large and diverse group of unfree men and women who lived at the imperial court. Charles did not know who his father was.³⁷ His mother was identified as a certain Himmeltrude. She was Louis the Pious' own nurse.³⁸ For Flodoard, this was reason enough to believe that Ebbo and Louis were 'milk brothers'.³⁹ In German historiography the idea developed that Ebbo was an illegitimate son of Charlemagne from the emperor's intimate relationship with one of his serves.⁴⁰ However, no evidence can be found in contemporary sources to support this idea. Whether there was more than just a professional relationship between Charlemagne and Himmeltrude or not, we can say with certainty that from an early stage in Ebbo's life, the emperor saw a future for him. According to Charles the Bald it had been

³² On Flodoard, cf. Michel Sot, *Un historien et son église au Xe siècle. Flodoard de Reims* (Paris 1993) 43-55.

³³ The most recent edition of Flodoard's annals is to be found in the MGH: Flodoard, *Flodoardi Annales*, ed. Georgius Heinrichus Pertz, MGH SS. 3 (Hannover 1839) 363-408. His poetry was edited by Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 135 (Paris 1853) 491-885.

³⁴ Sot, *Un historien et son église* 103-107.

³⁵ Flodoard, *Historia* 175-183.

³⁶ *Ibidem* 183-189.

³⁷ Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 239 ll. 24-29. Unless noted otherwise, biographical information about Ebbo is based on Depreux, *Prosopographie* 169-174, Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 57-61 and McKeon, 'Archbishop Ebbo of Reims 437-447.

³⁸ McKeon, 'Archbishop Ebo of Reims' 437.

³⁹ Flodoard, *Historia* 175 ll. 9-12.

⁴⁰ Richard Drögereit, 'Erzbistum Hamburg, Erzbistum Hamburg-Bremen oder Erzbistum Bremen: Studien zur Hamburg-Bremer Frühgeschichte, *Archiv für Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel- und Wappenkunde* 21 (1975) 136-230, 139.

Charlemagne himself who gave Ebbo the chance to climb the social ladder.⁴¹ Ebbo was educated at the court, trained as a priest and during his training he was sent to Louis the Pious, who in 781 at three years old had already been made king of Aquitaine. Ebbo would serve under Louis as *bibliothecarius* and keeper of the Holy Scriptures, which was a significant position. Because it seems unlikely that a lower class boy like Ebbo would succeed in getting such a position at the young king's court, among others Richard Drögereit suggested that this boy was more than just any serve.⁴² However, according to Stuart Airlie, it was far from uncommon that rather lowborn people attained a much higher status at the Carolingian court.⁴³ One important reason why it was attractive for an emperor, king or duke to have such confidants was that a servant who was not related to one of the important noble families in the empire was far more likely to remain loyal to his master, because he had no family rights to fight for. Especially if they were made clerics, as was often the case, these 'parvenus' could be of great use. Although the rules about celibacy were not as strict during the Carolingian as after the Second Lateran Council (1139), many clergymen remained unmarried, and as a result had no children who could claim their father's rights. Moreover, Airlie stressed that especially in Ebbo's case, the power of royal patronage should not be underestimated. According to Airlie, Ebbo's starting point – in the *familia fisci* – might have been uncommon, but from the moment he started his training at the court, his career followed the normal pattern.⁴⁴

In Aquitaine, Ebbo most probably continued his education, but until 816 the sources do not mention him. In 816, however, Ebbo made a giant step in the hierarchy of the Carolingian empire. That year, he came with Louis the Pious to Reims where Louis was crowned emperor by Pope Stephan IV. Ebbo was present at the coronation. At that time, a certain Gislemar was archbishop of Reims. Soon after he was consecrated as bishop, it would be revealed that he was unable to even read the gospels properly. Apparently, at that moment Ebbo had already gathered enough support at Louis' court to to be elected as the new archbishop of Reims.⁴⁵ It was the beginning of what could have been a brilliant career.

The start of Ebbo's career was indeed prosperous. By becoming archbishop of Reims, he became one of the most important clerics in the Carolingian empire. Not only

⁴¹ Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 239 ll. 24-29.

⁴² Drögereit, 'Erzbistum Hamburg, Erzbistum Hamburg-Bremen oder Erzbistum Bremen' 139.

⁴³ Stuart Airlie, 'Bonds of power and bonds of association in the court circles of Louis the Pious', in Peter Godman and Roger Collins ed., *Charlemagne's Heir* (Oxford 1990) 191-204, 200-202.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem* 203-204.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 202-203.

was the archbishopric located very central in the Carolingian realms, Reims was also one of the oldest Christian towns in Francia and home to Saint Remigius who had baptized Clovis in the late fifth or early sixth century. In 816, the pope crowned Louis the Pious in Reims. From that moment onward, the see must have been of high importance for the emperor. In the empire, bishops not only had ecclesiastical power, but also had a lot of influence on political affairs. However, it was not just because of the important diocese Ebbo presided that during the 820s Ebbo became one of the brightest stars at the Carolingian firmament. Michel Sot even called Ebbo's episcopate *un des plus brillants de la Renaissance carolingienne*.⁴⁶ What Sot meant exactly becomes clear if we consider what Ebbo achieved between 817 and 830. Firstly, during this time Ebbo stayed very close to the imperial court. How important Ebbo must have been for Louis the Pious during the 820s, is shown by Ermold, a monk and servant at the court of Pippin in Aquitaine. In 824, he was exiled to Strasbourg. There he wrote a poem in honour of Louis the Pious, hoping to be allowed to go back to Aquitaine where he belonged. The poem, contains the following passage:

“Asking for advice, Louis [the Pious] sought a suitable man whom he could send to win them [the Danes] back to God after so many years of sin. Thus, Ebbo, bishop of Reims, went to perform this task. Following his example, the Danes would surely believe in God, for Louis had raised Ebbo from boyhood and had taught him the liberal arts. Therefore, Caesar spoke to his servant, and persuaded him with these words and pious commands: “Go, my priest.””⁴⁷

It seems that in 826 Louis the Pious and Ebbo were very close to each other. Ermold suggests that Louis had raised Ebbo himself and calls him ‘my priest.’ More important, however, is that Ermold wrote his poems to flatter the emperor and that these lines were part of this strategy. In other words: to please the emperor, Ermold wrote these very kind words about Ebbo.

⁴⁶ Sot, *Un historien et son église* 471.

⁴⁷ Transl. Carey Delores Fleiner, *An Elegiac Poem in Honour of Louis, Most Christian Caesar Augustus, by Ermoldus Nigellus, in Exile* (unpublished). *Consilio accepto quaerit, quem mitteret illuc / Quaerere lucra dei perdita tanta diu. / Mittitur ad hoc opus Remensis episcopus Ebo, / Quo faciente queant credere nempe deo. / Nam Hludovicus enim puerum nutrirat eundem, / Artibus ingenius fecerat esse catum. / Hunc ergo alloquitur Caesar, verbisque coruscet; / Multa canens famulo dat pia iussa suo: / “Ito sacer.”* Ermoldus Nigellus, *In honorem Hludowici christianissimi Caesaris Augusti*, ed. Ernestus Duemmler, MGH *Poetae* 2 (Berlijn 1884) 59 ll. 23-31.

Despite his motives, Ermold's poem was definitely not completely fictional, for we know that during the 820s Ebbo was indeed very active in the ongoing attempts to convert the Danes to (proper) Christianity. He travelled to northern Germany and Scandinavia a few times himself, shaping the northern (church-) provinces of the Carolingian empire.⁴⁸ In 822, Ebbo travelled to Rome where Pope Paschal I appointed him as papal legate in the north.⁴⁹ Because he was not only concerned with the souls of the Danes, Ebbo asked Halitgar, bishop of Cambrai, to write a penitential to use in his own diocese. For this penitential Ebbo himself wrote the introduction.⁵⁰ Ebbo was also active in the reform movements that were going on in the Carolingian church during that time. For example, he wrote a short treatise about the position of different clerics. He was the first to define the role of the *chorepiscopus*, chorbishop, in the church.⁵¹ There was also a different genre of texts in which Ebbo was active: under his reign the school of manuscript illumination in Reims became the most famous in the western world, producing for example the beautiful *Utrecht Psalter*.⁵² This wonderful Psalter was most likely created in honour of Louis the Pious himself, or maybe his wife Judith ordered it, possibly as a present for the little Charles.⁵³ It is not unlikely at all that Judith ordered this Psalter, for there was a very strong bond between the archbishop and the emperor's second wife. As described by Charles the Bald in his aforementioned letter, Judith promised Ebbo that if he ever needed her help he only had to send her back his ring.⁵⁴ As I will discuss later, this ring would play an interesting role in Ebbo's life.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Drögereit, 'Erzbistum Hamburg, Erzbistum Hamburg-Bremen oder Erzbistum Bremen'.

⁴⁹ Raymond Davis, *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis)*. *The Ancient Biographies of Ten Popes From A.D. 817-891*, Translated Texts for Historians 20 (Liverpool 1995) 2 and 81-82.

⁵⁰ Raymund Kottje, *Die Bussbücher Haligars von Cambrai und des Hrabanus Maurus. Ihre Überlieferung und ihre Quellen*, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters 8 (Berlin en New York 1980) 173-174.

⁵¹ Martina Stratmann, 'De ministris Remensis ecclesiae: eine Schrift Ebos von Reims zur Diözesenverwaltung', in: Hurbert Mordek ed., *Aus Archiven und Bibliotheken. Festschrift für Raymond Kottje zum 65. Geburtstag*, Freiburger Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte. Studien und Texte herausgegeben von Hubert Mordek 3 (Frankfurt am Main 1992), 121-135. In the age of the churchfathers, chorbishops were bishops in rural areas in the Eastern Church. From the eight century onwards, in the west, chorbishops served as auxiliary bishops. The office disappeared in the eleventh and twelfth century and archdeacons replaced the chorbishops.

⁵² On manuscript illumination in Reims, cf. Florentine Mütterich, 'Carolingian manuscript illumination in Reims', in: Koert van der Horst, William Noel en Wilhelmina C.M. Wüstefeld, *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art* ('t Goy 1996) 104-119.

⁵³ Koert van der Horst, 'The Utrecht Psalter: picturing the psalms of David', in: Koert van der Horst, William Noel en Wilhelmina C.M. Wüstefeld, *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art* ('t Goy 1996) 22-84, 82. However, Celia Chazelle, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era. Theology and Art of Christ's Passion* (Cambridge 2001) suggests that the psalter was created between 840 and 850.

⁵⁴ Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 240-241 ll. 39-8.

⁵⁵ Cf. pp. 71.

The question what Ebbo's motives were to leave Louis' side and to join the rebelling brothers, and when he made his turn, is still being discussed, and probably this problem will never be solved, for the contemporary sources are not all that clear about this matter. There are two exceptions. The first is Charles the Bald, who in 867 wrote that Ebbo chose Lothar's side in 833, as almost all bishops did, willingly or unwillingly.⁵⁶ The second source for this matter is Flodoard. According to him, Lothar bought Ebbo's support by offering him the abbey of Saint-Vaast.⁵⁷ However, as explained, Flodoard cannot be perceived as an 'objective' source in this case. Rosamond McKitterick suggested that already in 830 Ebbo turned his back to Louis and chose Lothar's side, but how she arrived at this conclusion is unclear.⁵⁸ According to Paul Dutton, Ebbo was part of a small group of clerics, besides Ebbo consisting of amongst others Hilduin and Agobard, which from the early 830s onwards opposed the emperor.⁵⁹ However, Dutton hardly gives any argument for this claim. Therefore, I would rather follow Philippe Depreux, who showed that at least the charters suggest that only at the Rothfeld Ebbo's position changed.⁶⁰ Moreover, De Jong suggested that Ebbo could be identified with Phassur in Paschasius Radbertus' *Epitaphium Arsenii*. This suggests that he remained loyal to Judith and Louis until the meeting of the armies at the Field of Lies.⁶¹ Probably, in 833 Ebbo just bet on the wrong horse – a mistake he would make more often. Furthermore, the question should be asked whether Ebbo could have acted differently in 833. As I mentioned before, the council in Soissons had been planned well before the occurrences at the Field of Lies. Since Soissons was to be found in his diocese, Ebbo had no choice but to head the council. Whatever the reason for his turn might have been, it is clear that when Louis the Pious sat back on his throne Ebbo was not just on the wrong side but, as we have seen, made scapegoat for the whole affair.

The trial against Ebbo started in Metz where, according to the Annals of Saint-Bertin, Ebbo stood up on a higher place in the church and confessed that the emperor had unjustly been deposed.⁶² During the following meeting at the palace of Thionville, Ebbo told all the people present that he had confessed a capital sin to his three

⁵⁶ Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 240 ll. 15-18.

⁵⁷ Flodoard, *Historia* 183-184, ll. 23-6.

⁵⁸ Rosamond McKitterick, 'The historical context: Carolingian wealth, faith and culture', in: Koert van der Horst, William Noel en Wilhelmina C.M. Wüstefeld, *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art* 1-21, 5.

⁵⁹ Paul Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (Lincoln 1994) 101.

⁶⁰ Depreux, *Prosopographie* 173.

⁶¹ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 109-110, 253.

⁶² *Annales Bertiniani* 10-11 LL. 40-11.

confessors. Here he read out loud a text known as the *Resignatio Ebonis*.⁶³ During the Carolingian era, the document was not known yet by this name. We find the name *Resignatio Ebonis* for the first time in the edition provided by Boretius and Krause in 1907.⁶⁴ The trial against Ebbo and his confession will be further analyzed in the following chapter, but for now one should know that after the trial in Thionville, Ebbo did not return to Reims, at least not until 840, when he was temporarily restored to his see.

Between 835 and 840, Ebbo was sent into captivity in various monasteries in the empire. Immediately after the council, he was sent to Hraban Maur in Fulda where he already had been imprisoned before the synod started.⁶⁵ Hraban showed sympathy towards Ebbo. Fearing that in Fulda Ebbo could revitalize his pact with Lothar, the emperor first commanded Hraban to guard Ebbo better. Finally, Louis chose different and probably more secure places of captivity for Ebbo. First he sent him to Lisieux, where abbot Fréculf had a close eye on him, and later on he was placed under the custody of Boso in the abbey of Fleury.⁶⁶

For a short while in 840, better fortune seemed to smile upon Ebbo. When Louis the Pious died in the month of June of that year, the quarrel between Louis' remaining sons – Lothar, Louis the German and Charles the Bald – that had slumbered for a couple of years, came alive. Now Ebbo was at once the center of one of the many power conflicts between the three brothers. Since his deposition in 835, no new bishop had been instated in Reims. As we will see later on in this thesis, this fact would be an important argument in the ongoing debates about the trial against Ebbo. As amongst others Charles the Bald would argue later on: the fact that a new bishop was never consecrated, suggested that Ebbo had never been deposed.⁶⁷ The see of Reims was of so great importance in the Carolingian empire, that controlling it would be of great benefit for everyone with a claim for power in the empire. Especially for Lothar, Ebbo played an important role. If Ebbo would be accepted as archbishop in Reims again, this would imply that he had been tried unjustly in 835 and thus that he – and Lothar with him – had made the right decision in 833. Ebbo's restoration, in other words, could legitimate

⁶³ *Ebonis Archiepiscopi Remensis Resignatio*, ed. Albertus Werminghoff, MGH Conc. 2 (Hannover and Leipzig 1908) 701-702. About this document, cf. pp. 20-27 of this thesis.

⁶⁴ *Ebbonis Archiepiscopi Remensis Resignatio*, ed. Alfredus Boretius and Viktor Krause, MGH Capit. 2 (Hannover 1907).

⁶⁵ Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 68.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁷ Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 241 ll. 32-36.

Lothar's revolt against his father.⁶⁸ According to the latest division of the realm Louis the Pious had made before his death, Reims would be part of the realm of Charles the Bald. But when the emperor died, Lothar, who then became emperor, was the first to react and quickly took the town. He called a new synod, in Ingelheim, a small village in the heart of the Carolingian realms where Charlemagne had built one of his palaces. At this council, the present clerics declared the decisions made at the five years old synod of Thionville (835) invalid. Ebbo became archbishop in Reims again.⁶⁹

However, good fortune did not last long. Not even a year after the synod of Ingelheim (840), on the 25th of June 841, the armies of Lothar and Charles the Bald met at Fontenoy. Charles beat his half-brother; peace was finally made at the Treaty of Verdun in 843. Here the empire was divided in three parts. Charles received the western part of the realm; Louis the German received the eastern portion and Lothar the most central part plus Italy. Reims, however, fell from now on definitely under Charles. One of the first decisions he made now he gained power over this important bishopric was to call another synod, to be held in Bourges in 843. Here Ebbo's deposition was declared once again. Ebbo had to flee and now his office was formally vacant.⁷⁰

How close Ebbo was to Lothar during this period becomes clear if we take a look at the small group of people that, accompanied by armed forces, left the northern part of the empire for Rome in 844. In this group we find Lothar's eldest son Louis II, archbishop Drogo of Metz and two former prelates: Bartholomew of Narbonne and Ebbo. In the month of January of that year, Pope Gregory IV had died and the election of a new pope, Sergius II, seemed to be a good opportunity to ask for papal support; for Louis II, to be crowned king of Italy, for Drogo to be appointed as apostolic delegate with power over the other Frankish bishops and for Ebbo and Bartholomew to win back their sees, which were both still vacant.⁷¹ Obviously, the master plan was to gain as much influence for Lothar as possible. Again, Ebbo played an important role for Lothar. If the pope would allow Ebbo to return to his see, he would implicitly justify the revolt against Louis in 833, or at least forgive Ebbo for his role in the revolt. Any papal judgment about the case would also pass for Lothar. If the pope would grant Ebbo's request, he would implicitly justify Lothar's behaviour in 833. However, once again luck was not on Ebbo's

⁶⁸ McKeon, 'Archbishop Ebbo of Reims' 444.

⁶⁹ *Concilium Ingelheimense*, ed. Albertus Werminghoff, MGH Conc. 2 (Hannover and Leipzig 1908) 791-793.

⁷⁰ Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 70.

⁷¹ *Ibidem* 70-71. Cf. Davis, *Liber Pontificalis* 82, and *Annales Bertiniani* 30.

side, for only half of the plan succeeded. Sergius crowned Louis and made Drogo papal vicarius. But Ebbo and Bartholomew returned from their voyage as laymen.⁷²

A year after his travel to Rome, Ebbo had to give up his claim for Reims. At a new synod, held in Beauvais, a rather young monk named Hincmar was elected as the new archbishop.⁷³ Lothar protested heavily against this decision at the papal court and Sergius declared that yet another church council had to be held in 846 in Trier, where a new election would be organized under the supervision of papal *missi*. But the *missi* never showed up in Trier. Therefore it was decided that there would be a new meeting, in Paris. In his turn, Ebbo never showed his face at this synod and thus Hincmar remained archbishop in Reims.⁷⁴ Then the alliance between Ebbo and Lothar came to an end. We cannot be certain about the reason of their separation, but probably Ebbo refused to travel to Byzantium on Lothar's behalf. Lothar had sent him to solve some diplomatic troubles.⁷⁵ Whether an undesired order or another matter was the reason for the split up, Ebbo now turned to Louis the German. The king showed mercy, and probably in 845 or 846 provided Ebbo with the bishopric of Hildesheim in the far northeast of the ecclesiastical province of Mainz.⁷⁶ Ebbo remained bishop of Hildesheim for the rest of his life. He died in his bishopric in 851.⁷⁷

⁷² Davis, *Liber Pontificalis* 82.

⁷³ About Hincmar's election, cf. Jean Devisse, *Hincmar. Archevêque de Reims 845-882* (Genève 1976) 31-40.

⁷⁴ McKeon, 'Archbishop Ebbo of Reims' 447. No reason for Ebbo's absence at the synod is mentioned.

⁷⁵ Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 71-72.

⁷⁶ It is unclear when exactly Ebbo became bishop in Hildesheim. Ibidem 72-73 and 75-76.

⁷⁷ About Ebbo's period in Hildesheim, cf. ibidem 72-78.

2. THE CREATION OF A SCAPEGOAT, 835 – 882

To show how in the course of the ninth certain authors tried to make Ebbo the scapegoat of everything that had happened in 833, I will look at a wide range of sources, divided chronologically. In the first part of this chapter, I will take into account four sources written between 835 and 841, the year Ebbo was forced to leave Reims for the second time. All these sources are closely related to the emperor's court. The first derives from the synod at Thionville (835) where Ebbo was condemned: the *Resignatio Ebonis*, the text he read out in Episcopal chambers, telling the present bishops that he had sinned and therefore could not remain archbishop. The second text we will consider are the Annals of Saint-Bertin, the year-to-year historiographical accounts of all that happened in the empire from 830 onwards, succeeding the Royal Frankish Annals.⁷⁸ Then we will move to the two contemporary biographies written about Louis the Pious: Thegan's *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris* and the *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, written by the anonymous Astronomer. In the second part of this chapter, we will concentrate on the period after the emperor's death. The central character in the debates with Ebbo would become Hincmar, his successor in Reims. In this part, we will first consider different church councils organized by Hincmar in the period between 853 and 867 during which several matters concerning Ebbo were discussed. Then we will take a closer look at Hincmar's last words about Ebbo, written down in his *Visio Bernoldi*. Hincmar was the last of Ebbo's antagonists who had known Ebbo during his own lifetime. Therefore, I end this chapter with Hincmar's death in 882.

Who is to blame? 835 – 841

The Resignatio Ebonis

About the nature of the *Resignatio Ebonis* as a text, we cannot be entirely sure.⁷⁹ Most probably, it gives us the words Ebbo spoke in Thionville during his trial, but we know it only as a text included in other works written both by Ebbo himself and others. I will

⁷⁸ Janet L. Nelson, *The Annals of Saint Bertin. Translated and Annotated by Janet L. Nelson*, Manchester Medieval Source Series. Ninth-Century Histories I (Manchester and New York 1991) 4-5.

⁷⁹ About the *Resignatio's* title, cf. pp. 16-17 of this thesis.

just mention the four earliest witnesses of the *Resignatio* here; they will all be discussed further on in this thesis. The first of these sources in which the *Resignatio* is to be found, are Ebbo's own *Apologetici* that he wrote during the early 840s.⁸⁰ The second is Theoderich of Cambrai's *Libellus*, which was written to be presented at a church council in Soissons in 853, where several matters concerning Ebbo were discussed.⁸¹ Hincmar included this *Libellus* in his treatise on the doctrine of predestination that he wrote during the 860s.⁸² The last of the earliest sources for the *Resignatio Ebonis* is the so-called *Narratio Clericorum Remensium*, a document written in Ebbo's defense in circa 866.⁸³ For a long time, however, the most common source for the *Resignatio* was Flodoard, who included the entire document in his *Historia*.⁸⁴ Whether the *Resignatio* circulated in 835 already, or shortly thereafter, remains unclear. However, Booker detected manuscript witnesses suggesting that the text, approved by Ebbo's own subscription, had circulated during the late 830s already.⁸⁵ Although the various texts that contain the *Resignatio Ebonis* show quite a few important and intriguing differences, the first part of the text is in all cases similar. Here we read:

I, Ebbo, unworthy bishop, knowing my weakness and the weight of my sins, I have appointed, to judge me for my misdeeds, my witnesses and confessors, the archbishop Aiulf and the bishop Badarad and also the bishop Modoin. I have given them the sincere confession that, looking for a remedy of doing penance and salvation of my soul, I recede from my Episcopal office and ministry. From these [office and ministry] I acknowledge myself to be unworthy and incapable, because of those reasons, which I have confessed in secret confession to those bishops, and in this way, may they be witnesses that another man will be named and consecrated and elected in my place, who can be there worthy and will serve my church, that I have governed until now unworthy; and that thereupon I

⁸⁰ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I 797 ll. 5-14 and *Apologeticum* II 803 ll. 1-9. For the debate about the date of these works, cf. pp. 56-57 of this thesis.

⁸¹ Theoderich of Cambrai, *Libellus Theoderici Cameracensis*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann, MGH Conc. 3 (Hannover 1984) 290-293, 291 ll. 1-11.

⁸² Hincmar of Reims, *De Predestinatione*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 125 (Paris 1873) 65-474, 388.

⁸³ *Narratio Clericorum Remensium*, ed. Albertus Werminghoff, MGH Conc. 2 (Hannover and Leipzig 1908) 806-814, 808 ll. 4-12.

⁸⁴ Flodoard, *Historia* 186 ll. 7-15.

⁸⁵ Booker, *Past Convictions* 189.

will not make any repetition, nor any interpellation on the grounds of canonical authority, with my own hand I prove writing.⁸⁶

Now what can we learn from this short text? Actually Ebbo did not tell the people gathered at the palace in Thionville all that much. This might well be the reason why the short text would cause so much controversy, and it would become an important argument for both sides in the debate between Hincmar and Ebbo, as we will see later on. The *Resignatio Ebonis* starts with Ebbo's statement that he is an *indignus episcopus*, an unworthy bishop, aware of his failures and the weight of his sins. Then he introduces his confessors: Aiulf, archbishop of Bourges; bishop Badarad of Paderborn; and yet another bishop, Modoin of Autun. These men he asked to judge him and to these bishops he confessed certain sins. Ebbo makes very clear that he confessed his sins *secreto*: in secret. Those sins were so heavy that he considered himself unworthy to keep his ministry. Unworthy as he is, Ebbo suggests someone else to serve as bishop in his place to govern and serve the church with dignity like he had done until that very day. So as to make clear that Ebbo never would or could reclaim his words, he signed the *Resignatio* in his own hand.

All in all the text creates more new questions than it answers. What did Ebbo mean when he named himself *indignus episcopus*? Which are the sins he was aware of? Why did he have to be judged and which sins had he confessed in secret to his three confessors? Ebbo considered himself to be unworthy to remain in office. What were the implications of these words? Did he think he neither could nor would ever become archbishop anymore? By asking for somebody else to head his church, did he mean that this person would definitely take his place, or just serve on his behalf during his period of penance? Another complex question is why Ebbo said these words: was he forced to, did he have no other choice or was it out of his own free will? Neither can we say much sensible about the authorship of the document: was it Ebbo himself who wrote or dictated these words, or was he forced to read out and sign what was written for him? In other words: the text is rather neutral and can be read in many different ways. In the next chapter, I

⁸⁶ *Ebonis Archiepiscopi Remensis Resignatio* ll. 10-20: Ego Ebo, indignus episcopus, recognoscens fragilitatem meam et pondera peccatorum meorum testes confessores meos, Aiulfum videlicet archiepiscopum et Badaradum episcopum necnon et Modoinum episcopum. Constitui mihi iudices delictorum meorum et puram ipsis confessionem dedi quaerens remedium poenitendi et salutem animae meae, ut recederem ab officio et ministerio pontificali. Quo me recognosco esse indignum, et alienum me reddens pro reatibus meis, in quibus me peccasse secreto ipsis confessus sum, eo scilicet modo, ut ipsi sint testes alio succedendi et consecrandi subrogandique in loco meo, qui digne preesse et prodesse possit ecclesiae, cui hactenus indignus prefui; et ut inde nullam repetitionem aut interpellationem auctoritate canonica facere valeam, manu propria mea subscribens firmavi. For a French translation cf. M. Lejeune, *Histoire de l'église de Reims par Flodoard*, Oevres de Flodoard I (Reims 1854) 359.

will take a closer look at the position of the *Resignatio Ebonis* in Ebbo's own defensive strategy after 840.

What is significant to note here is that in both his *Apologetici* and in the *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* we read the *Resignatio Ebonis* as quoted above. However, in several other works, the words *manu propria mea subscribens firmavi* are not Ebbo's last. First of all, as Booker noticed, in all other sources the text continues with the sentence *Ebo, quondam episcopus, subscripsi: 'I, Ebbo, former bishop, have subscribed this.'*⁸⁷ Secondly, during the ninth century already the resignation text circulated with another text, one probably dictated by Jonas, bishop of Orléans to the notary Helias.⁸⁸ In this added Episcopal statement, it is written that after his secret confession, Ebbo's confessors Aiulf, Badarad and Modoin, accompanied by three more confessors: Achard of Noyons; Theoderich of Cambrai and Noto of Arles, had told the synod about Ebbo's confession of his 'particular crimes' and his wish to resign from office. According to this addendum, after reconsidering the resignation, all bishops and archbishops present at the meeting confirmed with their signature, in Booker's words, 'his irrevocable forfeiture of office, his vow to abstain from preaching and his professed intention to regain God's favour through penance.'⁸⁹ After this statement a list of all those prelates present at the council was written, amongst whom not the least from the empire: Drogo of Metz, Charlemagne's illegitimate son and thus Louis the Pious' half-brother. However, it has to be noted that we find this addendum to the *Resignatio* for the first time in the *libellus* I already mentioned, written by Theoderich of Cambrai in 853 to be presented at a church council in which Ebbo's case was discussed once again. We have to consider the possibility that Theoderich himself created the addendum at that very moment. It is also possible that Theoderich thought it to be a genuine document, written at the council in 835, whereas it actually had been created and added to the *Resignatio* at some other point between 835 and 853. Yet, in 867 one believed the document to be written in 835 to be sent to Pope Leo.⁹⁰ I will discuss Theoderich's *libellus* later in this chapter.

The question now is why in several versions of the *Resignatio Ebonis* we do find the extra final sentence, and why Jonas probably added the addendum with the long list of names to the text. About the first case, Booker is very sure: according to him, Ebbo

⁸⁷ Booker, *Past Convictions* 194.

⁸⁸ Ibidem 189. Albert Werminghoff edited this addendum together with the *Resignatio* as *Libellus episcoporum de Ebonis resignatione*, MGH Conc. 2 (Hannover and Leipzig 1908) 702-703.

⁸⁹ Booker, *Past Convictions* 189.

⁹⁰ *Libellus episcoporum de Ebonis resignatione* 701.

selected just these parts from the text which suited him well, and left out the parts unwelcome to him. As we will see later on when we will talk about the *Apologeticum*, one of Ebbo's central arguments in support of his case was that he had only temporarily resigned from office in 835. The words *quondam episcopus* were therefore very unwelcome to him: these would prove he even had considered himself a *former* bishop.⁹¹ In other words, according to Booker the words *Ebo, quondam episcopus subscripsi* have been part of the original text and Ebbo left them out on purpose. Although we certainly must consider this a probability, I think that it is possible to find another explanation for the differences in the two versions.

First of all, we might question Booker's idea that Ebbo quoted the *Resignatio* selectively. According to our knowledge, he reproduced one sentence less than we find in the other sources. Despite this one omitted sentence, the text of the *Resignatio Ebonis* as we find it in various other sources, is similar.⁹² Of course it is possible that Ebbo omitted these few words, but since no 'original' version of the text survived, it is in my opinion equally feasible that later authors have *included* those few words. Moreover, Ebbo's version of the text is the oldest we have: the first version of his *Apologeticum* was probably written in 840 or 841,⁹³ whereas the oldest version including the extra sentence is Theoderich of Cambrai's *Libellus* which he wrote to be presented at the synod of Soissons in 853. However, it has to be said that we know Ebbo to have been very well capable of forging complete documents.⁹⁴ On the other hand, his antagonists did the very same: in 853, Hincmar would try to manipulate the implications of the *Resignatio* in many ways.⁹⁵ Maybe he was responsible for this addition?

It is obvious that Ebbo had good reasons to leave out these two words, *quondam episcopus* – but it is very well possible to turn the argument around and ask ourselves whether certain other authors could have good reason to add these few words to the text. I think they certainly had. First of all, including them in the text was an easy way for everyone who was not on Ebbo's side to turn the document from a somewhat vague confession into a clear statement. As we have seen, in the *Resignatio* itself, Ebbo hardly confessed or confirmed anything. However, if he had called himself a 'former bishop',

⁹¹ Booker, *Past Convictions* 194, especially note 48.

⁹² Cf. also Steffen Patzold, *Episcopus* 319-320 who writes that Ebbo the *Resignatio* "vollständig in sein *Apologeticum* inserierte."

⁹³ Patzold, *Episcopus* 319. On the question when Ebbo wrote the first version of his *Apologeticum* cf. pp. 56-57 of this thesis.

⁹⁴ Cf. pp. 67 of this thesis.

⁹⁵ Patzold, *Episcopus* 327.

this would make very clear that he resigned from his office indeed. Moreover, since a bishop would only resign if he had done some serious misdeeds, a formal resignation would imply that Ebbo had confessed some heavy sins. Yet, in 853 Theoderich could easily have made the addition: Ebbo died two years earlier so there was no one left to question the text as presented by Theoderich. Moreover, Theoderich had personal reasons to add this sentence to the text. He was made bishop himself in 831 and so he was both an eyewitness of what had happened in 833 and in 835. During these two years, Theoderich's position had changed dramatically. When he became bishop of Cambrai, Theoderich found himself at the top of one of the most important bishoprics subordinate to the see of Reims; Ebbo, in other words, was his direct superior. Moreover, Theoderich succeeded Halitgar who used to be a close friend of Ebbo. Ebbo and Halitgar had probably travelled to the north together on a mission to the Danes.⁹⁶ We can safely assume that when Theoderich was consecrated, Ebbo had nothing against him and it is very well possible that Theoderich was a favourite of Ebbo himself or that Ebbo made Theoderich bishop as a favour to his old friend Halitgar. It is no surprise that in 833 we find Theoderich on Ebbo's side in the camp of the rebelling sons.⁹⁷ What his position was during the two years that followed we do not know, but in 835 we find Theoderich on the other side, opposing Ebbo; indeed he is one of the clerics who signed Jonas of Orléans' addendum to the *Resignatio Ebonis* and according to the same addendum, he was one of Ebbo's six confessors.

Although in his case, being so close to Ebbo, Theoderich's change of allegiance might be more remarkable, he was most probably not the only bishop to make a 180 degrees turn. During the trial against Louis the Pious, many of them had chosen the side of the rebellious brothers or had stayed away from the troubles as far as possible. It is more than plausible that in 835 they needed a scapegoat as much as the emperor needed one. In 853, when Ebbo was dead and could not stand up for himself anymore, Theoderich had the chance to confirm Ebbo's guilt and thereby exculpate himself and his fellow bishops once again.

Then there is the case of the document added to the *Resignatio Ebonis* by Jonas of Orléans. As I mentioned before, the oldest source in which we find this addendum included is

⁹⁶ Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 61-62.

⁹⁷ Thomas Bauer, "Theoderich I", in: Traugott Bautz ed., *BBKL XI* (Nordhausen 1996) via www.bbkl.de (2010).

Theoderich's *libellus* of 853 – and Theoderich did have his own agenda in 853. Like he had the possibility to add the words *quondam episcopus* to the original *Resignatio*, Theoderich had both the possibility and the motive to forge this complete addendum. Only a detailed study of the manuscripts might answer the question whether Theoderich forged the document indeed, or that it was genuine after all. However, in 867 the complete church council of Troyes, where his case was discussed, believed the document to be genuine.⁹⁸ Therefore, it is interesting to consider its implications. In the addendum, we find six instead of three confessors and the long list of bishops who confirmed Ebbo's resignation. To answer the question why Jonas ordered this addendum and made it circulate together with Ebbo's *Resignatio*, we should take a closer look at the rituals of confession and penance in the Carolingian period.

In historiography, public penance was often perceived as an ancient ritual that had existed during the first three or four centuries of Christianity.⁹⁹ In this view, *paenitentia publica* led to a list of life long consequences: the penitent could not marry, hold public office or become cleric. Because of its harshness, this form of public penance started to disappear at the end of the fourth century and was replaced by a deathbed ritual.¹⁰⁰ However, in her article on 'Transformations of penance,' De Jong made very clear that the history of penance is much more complicated. First, this author claimed that only few sources from the classical period have survived and that therefore we know only little about penance during the earliest four hundred years of Christianity.¹⁰¹ Secondly, she showed how during the sixth, seventh and eighth century debates were going on about the nature of penance and how various forms of penance existed next to each other.¹⁰²

The theories later historians developed about ancient public penance are to a large extent based on Carolingian testimonies of these rituals. However, according to De Jong, public penance was a true Carolingian 'invention of tradition.'¹⁰³ Actually, the Carolingian form of *paenitentia publica* was not based on an ancient tradition, but much more on the practice of monastic exile.¹⁰⁴ The reinvented form of public penance was harsh. During the early ninth century, imposing penance had become a possibility for a ruler to punish

⁹⁸ *Libellus episcoporum de Ebonis resignatione* 701.

⁹⁹ For a more complete overview of the historiography of public penance, cf. Mayke de Jong, 'Transformations of penance', in: Frans Theuvs and Janet L. Nelson, *Rituals of Power. From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, Boston and Cologne 2000) 185-224, 185-190.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem 185-186.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem 190-193.

¹⁰² Ibidem 193-217.

¹⁰³ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 232.

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem 233.

those who had rebelled or disturbed the order in another way. The accused would perform his penance in a monastery and stay there until the ruler decided to rehabilitate him.¹⁰⁵ However, the bishops involved were more principled. In their view, the consequences for the penitent were more severe: after undergoing the ritual of public penance the penitent was supposed to live an almost ascetic life and should remain in the monastery.¹⁰⁶ Finally, we should consider the fact that another but very similar ritual of penance existed for clerics. This ritual was especially imposed on bishops who were accused of sexual misbehaviour. According to canon law, bishops did not have to humiliate themselves in public. However, they were supposed to confess their sins in the presence of both clerics and laymen. After undergoing such a public ritual the bishop would be deposed.¹⁰⁷

The question about the possibility to depose a bishop was of high importance in the 830s. In 829, a big church council had been organized in Paris. Here, among many other subjects, the bishops discussed their own position in the empire. In their opinion, things went wrong in their time for there had evolved confusion about the position of the episcopate on the one hand and the position of the rulers on the other.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the bishops discussed their own duties and rights. Unsurprisingly, according to themselves, the bishops were of paramount importance in the empire. They were the vicars of Christ and hold the keys to the kingdoms of heaven.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the bishops deserved to be honoured and could not be deposed by laymen. To protect the dignity of the Episcopal office, a bishop never had to confess his sins in public. However, if a bishop had to be punished, he had to perform a public ritual as I described above.¹¹⁰

In this light, the added list of names and the confirmation of the bishops caused a major change in the way contemporaries would perceive Ebbo's confession. When we read the first part of the *Resignatio*, the part quoted by Ebbo in his *Apologetici*, we read that Ebbo had confessed his sins in secret to his own confessors. Consequently, he had to do

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem 228-234, 255 and Mayke de Jong, 'What was public about public penance? *Paenitentia publica* and justice in the Carolingian world', *La Giustizia nell'alto Medioevo (secoli IX-XI)*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo 44 (Spoleto 1997) 863-904.

¹⁰⁷ De Jong, 'Transformations of penance' 202, De Jong, *The Penitential State* 255.

¹⁰⁸ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 177.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. the *Relatio episcoporum* in which the bishops, concerning the penance of Louis the Pious, wrote: "It behoves those who belong to the Christian religion to know what is the ministry of the bishops, and how those who are evidently Christ's vicars and hold the keys to the kingdom of heaven should be watchful for and concern themselves with the salvation of all." Transl. Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State* 271.

¹¹⁰ This is just a very short summary of a part of the proceedings of the council of Paris of 829. For more the most recent extensive discussions of this council with further references, cf. Patzold, *Episcopus* 149-168 and De Jong, *The Penitential State* 176-184.

the rather mild form of secret penance. However, with his addendum, Jonas came with a completely different interpretation of Ebbo's confession in Thionville. Now it was suggested that Ebbo had not just confessed his sins in secret, but once more to six confessors and ultimately the whole congregation of bishops knew of his confession. By making this known through the addendum, Jonas took Ebbo's confession out of the secret to throw it into the public. The consequences would be much more serious for Ebbo; there would certainly be no chance that he could remain archbishop or that he could ever be reinstated.

The list was thus a powerful weapon for all those who wanted to make sure that Ebbo would never come back to Reims anymore. In their turn, Ebbo and his friends ignored the list and its implications. As we have seen the addendum was neither mentioned in his *Apologetici* nor in the *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* that was written in his support. Moreover, according to his few supporters, most notably Hraban Maur and the empress, there was no reason why Ebbo could not be bishop anymore. In their opinion, there had just been a normal confession in Thionville, and no publicity meant no scandal and thus no problems that could not be overcome.¹¹¹

The Annals of Saint-Bertin

Despite the name, the Annals of Saint-Bertin do not have much to do with the monastery of Saint-Bertin, located in the northwest of modern France. If the only surviving manuscript – originating from the eleventh century – containing the complete annals had been found elsewhere, it would certainly bear another name.¹¹² The origin of the annals has to be found at the court circles of Louis the Pious and certainly the annals reflect the opinion of the court. Although the old idea that annals are objective accounts of what happened in a region during a certain period is still popular amongst some historians,¹¹³ in my opinion we should read the annals as carefully as any other source.

About the authorship of the Annals of Saint-Bertin much remains unclear. Historians assume that three authors have worked on the annals or that at least the annals are written in three phases concerning the period between 830 and 882. The first

¹¹¹ C.f. De Jong, *The Penitential State* 254-259.

¹¹² General information on the Annals of Saint-Bertin is based on Janet Nelson's introduction to her translation of the annals: Nelson, *The Annals of Saint Bertin*. 1-19.

¹¹³ Cf. e.g. Sarah Foot, 'Finding the meaning of form: narrative in annals and chronicles', in: Nancy Partner ed., *Writing Medieval History* (Oxford 2005) 88-108 who writes about the Annals of Saint-Bertin: "In the mid-ninth-century Annals of St-Bertin, for example, events were simply recorded one after another, with minimal commentary."

author is unknown and neither do we know when he stopped writing to be succeeded by the chaplain Prudentius. Especially during the nineteenth century, historians tried to prove that Prudentius' starting point was 836. Their main argument is that during the first five years certain places and people were named differently than from 836 onwards. To give just one example: according to this theory the first annalist always gave Louis the Pious the title *domnus imperator*, whereas Prudentius spoke consequently of *imperator*.¹¹⁴ However, by giving a few examples, Janet Nelson showed that in the annals there were many alternative ways to speak of the emperor; for example, both before and after 835 he is named *religiosissimus imperator*. The part of the annals concerned with 835 and the synod of Thionville can therefore have been written by both Prudentius and the anonymous first annalist.

The only modern historian who tried to identify the first author is Léon Levillain in his introduction to the (modern) French translation of the annals. He suggested that the royal chaplain Fulco could have been the annals' author. His argument is that in 833 and 834 the annalist was clearly loyal to Louis the Pious and during this period, Fulco remained in the emperor's camp too – in 835 he was rewarded for his loyalty by becoming the new head of the see of Reims, although he was never consecrated.¹¹⁵ Although Levillain's observation about the loyalty of the annalist during Louis' absence of the throne is correct, his argument is not convincing. Obviously, Fulco was not the only one in the empire who stood up for the emperor during this period. On the other hand, Levillain does not mention the fact that Fulco had been educated by the archchaplain Hilduin. He succeeded Hilduin as archchaplain and was probably responsible for the annals that were kept at the court.¹¹⁶ Finally, Hilduin is considered to be one of the probable authors of the *Annales Regni Francorum*. The Annals of Saint-Bertin were the continuation of these older royal annals.¹¹⁷ If indeed Hilduin was the author of the *Annales Regni Francorum*, it is possible that his pupil Fulco took over his work.

Much more is known about the second author who worked on the annals. Probably Prudentius was the son of Spanish parents who had taken refuge in the Frankish empire. Already in the early 820s, he was sent to the palace to become chaplain

¹¹⁴ *Annales Bertiniani* V-VIII

¹¹⁵ Felix Grat, Jeanne Viellard en Suzanne Clémencet ed., *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, introduced and annotated by Léon Levillain (Paris 1964) VI-XII, Nelson, *The Annals of Saint-Bertin* 6.

¹¹⁶ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 65.

¹¹⁷ Nelson, *The Annals of Saint-Bertin* 6, De Jong, *The Penitential State* 66.

at Louis the Pious' court. Having lived and worked at the palace for most of his life, the palace was Prudentius' main point of reference. Moreover, it is clear that Prudentius was very loyal to the emperor: the entries of the annals for the period between 835 and 840 are all written in the light of Louis' restoration; for the first entries of the annals. Only later, after the emperor's death when Prudentius was consecrated bishop of Troyes, his focus slightly changed. But whether it was the first unknown author or Prudentius who wrote the annals in 835, we can be sure that the annalist working at that moment was in favour of the emperor, and opposing Ebbo.

Finally, we have to keep in mind that the third author was no one other than Hincmar. Although Hincmar started his work only after Prudentius' death in 861, it is very well possible that he made changes to the original text, inserted pieces of text or deleted parts. It is impossible to detect which entries are in one way or another reshaped by Hincmar, but we should be aware of the possibility.¹¹⁸ For 835, however, this does not change much about the situation: the annalist was hostile to Ebbo.

Now let us take a look at what the anonymous author wrote in his entry for 835:

Furthermore, Ebbo, former archbishop of Rheims, who had once been a kind of standard-bearer of that whole conspiracy, ascended a high place in that same church [Saint-Stephen in Metz] and voluntarily confessed before everyone that the Emperor had been unjustly deposed; that everything done against him had been evilly done and wickedly plotted, against all the rules of equity; and that afterwards the Emperor had been deservedly, justly and worthily established again on his own throne of empire. When all these things had been solemnly completed, they returned to the palace of Thionville. There Ebbo confessed to a capital crime at a plenary session of the synod, proclaimed his unworthiness of so great an office as that of bishop, and confirmed this in his own writing: then he resigned from that office by the consent and the judgment of everyone.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Nelson, *The Annals of Saint-Bertin* 13-15, M. Meyer-Gebel, 'Zur annalistischen Arbeitsweise Hinkmars von Reims', *Francia* 15 (1987) 75-108.

¹¹⁹ Transl. Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin* 32-33. "Sed et Ebo Remorum pridem archiepiscopus, qui eiusdem factionis velut signifer fuerat, concenso eminentiori loco in eadem ecclesia, coram omnibus libera voce professus est, eundem augustum iniuste depositum, et omnia quae adversus eum patrata fuerant inique et contra totius tramitem aequitatis fuisse machinate, et tunc merito iuste digneque proprio imperii solio reformatum. Quibus sollempniter transactis, ad sepedictum palatium regressi sunt; ibique Ebo in plenaria sinodo capitale crimen confessus, seque tanto, id est episcopali, ministerio indignum proclamans

First of all, it is noteworthy that from the very first line, the annalist tried to hammer into the heads of his readers the idea that Ebbo actually had resigned from his office. Already in the first line, so before the description of the actual trial, the annalist speaks about Ebbo as *pridem archiepiscopus*: former archbishop. Then it is noted – in Nelson’s wonderful translation – that Ebbo ‘had once been a kind of standard-bearer of that whole conspiracy.’¹²⁰ For the annalist there was clearly no question possible of Ebbo’s guilt. Even though in the annals Louis’ rebelling sons are definitely not spared – quite the contrary¹²¹ – it is clear that the annalist held Ebbo almost personally responsible for what had happened in Compiègne in 833. We can read the same in the annals’ entry about 833, where no single prelate who was present at the synod is mentioned by name, except Ebbo. In this passage, Lothar and Ebbo are presented as the evil geniuses behind the council and its decision to make the emperor do penance.¹²²

After these few sentences in which Ebbo is introduced as the wicked leading actor of the story, the annalist continues with an account of what had happened, first in the church of Saint-Stephen in Metz and thereafter in Thionville. The annalist wrote that first in Metz Ebbo voluntarily confessed that ‘the Emperor had been unjustly deposed [...] and deservedly, justly and worthily established again on his own throne of empire.’¹²³ Then the council moved to the palace of Thionville, where Ebbo made the confessions we have discussed earlier. The entry is short and rather to the point, but one thing is striking: again and again the annalist emphasizes that Ebbo had confessed *en plein public*: In Metz he confessed voluntarily *coram omnibus*, before everyone. Subsequently, in Thionville Ebbo confessed his *capitale crimen in plenaria synodo*. This claim of the annalist is certainly a point of discussion. As we have seen, in Ebbo’s *Resignatio* itself no confession *in plenaria synodo* is mentioned. We find the idea that Ebbo had confessed his sins in public just in Jonas’ addendum. At last, according to the annalist Ebbo resigned from his office *sese omnium consensu atque iudicio*: by the consent and justice of everyone. The shift is remarkable. Do we read in Ebbo’s own account of the *Resignatio Ebonis* that only his three confessors knew of his sins? In Jonas’ of Orléans there are six confessors plus a

propriaque scriptione confirmans, sese omnium consensu atque iudicio ab eodem ministerio reddidit alienum.” *Annales Bertiniani* 10-11.

¹²⁰ Nelson, *The Annals of Saint-Bertin* 32-33.

¹²¹ On accusations addressed to Lothar, Pippin and Louis the German in the Annals of Saint-Bertin cf. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming* 110, Booker, *Past Convictions* 26-29.

¹²² *Annales Bertiniani* 5-7.

¹²³ Nelson, *The Annals of Saint-Bertin* 33.

complete list of prelates who knew of all this. In his turn, the annalist even claimed that Ebbo had confessed his sins not just to his confessors, but in the plenary meeting of the synod. The call for scandal became louder and louder.

Thegan

The third source we will take a closer look at is Thegan's *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris* – The Deeds of the Emperor Louis – the first of Louis the Pious' biographies. The author of the work was born in a Frankish noble family in circa 800. In 825 he was consecrated as chorbishop of Trier, where he served under archbishop Hetti.¹²⁴ Little is known about Thegan's position in 833, but we can be sure that his superior remained very loyal to the emperor during these difficult times.¹²⁵ Louis and Hetti remained close; Hetti even was one of the emperor's servants at his deathbed.¹²⁶ However, Thegan wrote his work when the emperor was still alive, most probably in 835. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the *Gesta* is filled with references to the events of 833.¹²⁷

Being so close to the emperor, Thegan's first aim was to rehabilitate Louis the Pious' name and to show through the text why Louis was the only legitimate crowned emperor. Therefore, he shaped the image of Louis as the perfect Christian ruler.¹²⁸ To emphasize Louis' position as a good leader, Thegan created an example of evil leadership: the bad bishop Ebbo. If there is one source in which an author tried to turn Ebbo into a scapegoat, it is the *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris*. Several of its chapters, among others two of its longest, form a flood of abuses against Ebbo. One of Thegan's main points against Ebbo is his low birth. According to the chorbishop, from such a *servus* one could not expect anything but wicked behaviour. It is hardly necessary to give more than a few examples to show in which spirit Thegan wrote about Ebbo. According to him, Ebbo was *impudicus* and *crudelissimus*, and he suffered from *cupiditas et mendacium* – he was shameless and most cruel, suffered from greed and he was a liar.¹²⁹ Thegan also used

¹²⁴ Ernst Tremp, *Studien zu den Gesta Hludowici imperatoris des Trierer Chorbischofs Thegan*, MGH Schriften 32 (Hannover 1988) 4-18.

¹²⁵ Depreux, *Prosopographie* 244-246.

¹²⁶ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 80.

¹²⁷ On the *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris* cf. ibidem 72-79 and Booker, *Past Convictions* 29-33; according to David Ganz the fact that Thegan's text was named *Gesta* instead of *Vita* in the ninth century already, proves that one perceived the text not as a biography. David Ganz, 'Einhard's Charlemagne: the characterisation of greatness', in: Joanna Story ed., *Charlemagne. Empire and Society* (Manchester and New York 2005) 38-51, 41.

¹²⁸ Matthew Innes, 'He never allowed his white teeth to be bared in laughter': the politics of humour in the Carolingian renaissance', in: Guy Halsall ed., *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2002) 131-156, 137-140.

¹²⁹ Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris* 232 l. 1 and 234 ll. 20-21.

many biblical references to shape a particular image of Ebbo. For example, he compared him with Jeroboam, who once had been an ally of Solomon but then, he rebelled against the king.¹³⁰ Especially its long chapters 20 and 44 formed one big accusation against Ebbo.¹³¹

The key to the question how we should read these accusations against Ebbo, and how one probably read them in the ninth century already, is given by Walahfrid Strabo. Walahfrid became monk at a very young age. He was educated in Fulda. In 829 he became chaplain at the court where he was involved in the education of the young prince Charles. Ten years later, in 839, Louis the Pious rewarded him and made him abbot of Reichenau.¹³² Between 840 and 849, Walahfrid wrote a preface to the *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris* and inserted chapter headings.¹³³ According to Walahfrid, the part of the *Gesta* in which Thegan concentrated on the events of 833 and its aftermath formed an *invectio in Hebonem et consimiles*; in De Jong's words: 'a harangue against Ebbo and his kind.'¹³⁴ The *Gesta* thus had a clear function in the period between 835 and 840. However, Thegan did not just want to re-establish the image of Louis the Pious as a good Christian ruler. On top of that he had the clear aim to turn Ebbo into his prime antagonist. Thegan did the same as the author of the Annals of Saint-Bertin; also the annalist kept on stressing the legitimacy of Louis' return on the throne and Ebbo's wicked behaviour. Thegan, however, took his job extremely serious. The accusations at Ebbo's address come at high speed and seem to be never ending. As De Jong wrote: 'Walahfrid recognized a good *invectio* when he saw one' and Thegan's *Gesta* was certainly a good *invectio*.¹³⁵ If there was a call for scandal after 835, with the *Gesta Hludowici* Thegan wrote a major contribution to it. Especially the *Gesta's* chapters concerning Ebbo form one big attempt to turn Ebbo's case into a public affair. In his turn, between 840 and 849 Walahfrid made the power of this *invectio* even stronger by editing it together with several other documents concerned with the events of 833 and 835.¹³⁶

However, the question has to be asked why Thegan wrote in this almost personal, strikingly nasty way about Ebbo. According to De Jong, Thegan was the spokesman of the Frankish bishops who were loyal to Louis in 835, ashamed as they were about the

¹³⁰ Ibidem 206 ll. 1-10. Thegan referred to I Kings 11: 26-40.

¹³¹ For a more in depth analysis cf. De Jong, *The Penitential State* 76-79.

¹³² Depreux, *Prosopographie* 393-394.

¹³³ Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris* 168-174.

¹³⁴ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 77.

¹³⁵ Ibidem 78.

¹³⁶ Courtney Booker, 'A new prologue of Walahfrid Strabo', *Viator* 36 (2005) 83-105, 91.

role they had played in Soissons in 833. The *Gesta* may therefore be considered as their voice. In De Jong's words: "The driving force behind Thegan's *Gesta Hludowici* was the collective shame of loyal bishops, who agonized about the fact that they had become instrumental in the effort to depose the emperor."¹³⁷ But maybe there is even a more personal bond to be found between Thegan, Louis the Pious and the creation of Ebbo as a scapegoat of all that had gone wrong in the empire. This bond can be found in the person of Hetti, Thegan's superior in Trier. As we have seen already, Hetti was one of Louis' closest allies. Moreover, he played a very important role in 835 at the council of Thionville where Ebbo was condemned. Hetti would be the second archbishop to sign the list added by Jonas of Orléans, right after Drogo of Metz, the emperor's own half-brother. Drogo himself had remained loyal to Louis as well. In 834 we even find him in the group of people, headed by Louis the German who released Louis from his imprisonment. That same year, Louis was reinstated in Drogo's church in Metz and a year later, Ebbo was deposed there.¹³⁸ In my opinion, it is feasible that Hetti had ordered his chorbishop to write the *Gesta*. And although there is no evidence to prove this theory, it is a tempting idea that through Hetti it could even have been Drogo or Louis himself who had requested the *Gesta*. It is very clear, however, that the archbishopric of Trier was very loyal to the emperor.

The Astronomer

In comparison to Thegan's *Gesta Hludowici*, the *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris* written by the anonymous Astronomer is much more of a 'real' biography to modern standards. Where Thegan wrote with the clear purpose of re-establishing Louis the Pious' name, the Astronomer wrote a well-balanced account of the late emperor's life. The Astronomer finished the *Vita Hludowici* most probably right after Louis' death. Ernst Tremp suggests that the political reality as described in the *Gesta* shows that the text must have been written before the Battle of Fontenoy (June 841). In the *Gesta*, Lothar and Charles the Bald get along quite well, a situation that after the big battle would not return.¹³⁹ One could hypothesize, however, that the Astronomer suffered from wishful thinking and

¹³⁷ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 77.

¹³⁸ Depreux, *Prosopographie* 165.

¹³⁹ Ernst Tremp, *Die Überlieferung der Vita Hludowici Imperatoris des Astronomus*, MGH Studien und Texte 1 (Hannover 1991) 138-148. Hugh Doherty, however, suggests that the *Vita Hludowici* was written in 843. Hugh Doherty, 'The maintenance of royal power and prestige in the Carolingian Regnum of Aquitaine under Louis the Pious' (Unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Cambridge, Faculty of History, Cambridge 1999) edited by De Jong, *The Penitential State* 80-81.

described an ideal – albeit unrealistic – situation. If we assume, however, that the *Gesta* were finished before the Battle of Fontenoy, we have to consider the fact that the Astronomer started his work already when Louis the Pious was still alive. After all, the *Vita Hludowici* is too complicated and too long a work to be written within just a couple of months.¹⁴⁰ This means that the emperor himself could have been involved in the production of his biography and might have had a hand in its content.

Discussions about the Astronomer's identity go as far back as the eleventh century.¹⁴¹ We know for a fact that the Astronomer was a prominent courtier; according to himself he was one of the *procureres palatii*, men at the court who were even more important than the ordinary *nobiles*.¹⁴² The Astronomer got his nickname from a passage in the *Vita Hludowici* in which he describes how he observed a comet together with the emperor. Later research shows that this must have been the comet Halley that passed planet earth in 837.¹⁴³ Revitalizing some older theories, Ernst Tresp tried to identify the Astronomer with Hilduin the Younger.¹⁴⁴ However, Tresp seemed not to be quite sure about this theory; in the introduction to his edition and translation of the *Vita* – published four years later than the article in which he makes the suggestion – he does not say a word about it. Probably he had good reasons not to; besides the fact that they both showed some interest in astronomy, no connection between Hilduin and the Astronomer can be made.

Over the last decades, Booker, Philippe Depreux, Hugh Doherty and Matthias Tischler developed novel ideas about the emperor's biographer's true identity. Depreux suggested that the Astronomer could be identified with Dicuil, a certain Irishman who became associated with the Carolingian court when he arrived on the Continent. Depreux' first argument to name Dicuil, is the fact that the Irishman as early as in 814 offered a treatise about astronomy to the emperor. Moreover, according to Depreux, the few details we can learn from the *Vita Hludowici* about its author's personal life correspond very well with what we know of Dicuil.¹⁴⁵ However, in my opinion it is unlikely that Dicuil was the man behind the Astronomer. As we have seen, the

¹⁴⁰ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 81.

¹⁴¹ For a brief summary of the oldest ideas about the Astronomer's identity cf. Ernst Tresp's introduction to his edition of the text: The Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris* 53-55.

¹⁴² Régine Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde Franc au IXe siècle* (Paris 1995) 136-143.

¹⁴³ Depreux, *Prosopographie* 37. On the Astronomer's position at the court, cf. *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris* 55-60, De Jong, *The Penitential State* 79-81.

¹⁴⁴ Tresp, *Die Überlieferung der Vita Hludowici Imperatoris des Astronomus* 147-148 based this idea on Max Buchner, 'Entstehungszeit und Verfasser der Vita Hludowici imperatoris des "Astronomen"', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 60 (1940) 14-45.

¹⁴⁵ Depreux, *Prosopographie* 159-160.

Astronomer was most probably a prominent courtier. According to De Jong, close readers who knew the court did not need a name to identify the author, ‘for any insider would know who was so established in the emperor’s good graces that he was called out to Louis’ bedchamber to give his views on the meaning of a comet.’¹⁴⁶ There is no sign at all that Dicuil was so close to the emperor, especially not in 837. As Depreux wrote himself, after 825 Dicuil seemed to have disappeared from the sources completely.¹⁴⁷

Hugh Doherty came with a completely different hypothesis. He did not give the Astronomer a name, but following ideas developed by Ernst Tremp, he places the Astronomer in the entourage of Drogo of Metz. Especially in the last part of the *Vita Hludowici*, Drogo plays quite an important role. It is the Astronomer who describes how Drogo always remained loyal to his half-brother, and it is the Astronomer who sketches the scene with Louis the Pious on his deathbed, served by Drogo – from 835 onwards Drogo was Louis’ archchaplain. Finally, the Astronomer has quite a positive opinion about Lothar and after Louis’ death, Drogo was to be found in Lothar’s camp.¹⁴⁸ This is certainly no definitive proof for Drogo’s involvement, but according to among others De Jong, Doherty made a plausible suggestion.¹⁴⁹

Matthias Tischler developed a third theory about the Astronomer’s background. According to this author, the fact that Jonas of Orléans was born in Aquitaine and a member of the elite there before he became bishop of Orléans, was reason to suggest that he had always been close to the emperor.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Tischler claimed that some phrases in the *Vita Hludowici* show striking similarities with phrases from the acts of the council of Paris (829). These acts had been written by Jonas.¹⁵¹ Although Jonas would be an interesting Astronomer in the context of this thesis, in my opinion, Tischler’s theory is not convincing. Both the acts of the council and the *Vita* are massive works, and the Astronomer touches some themes that have been discussed at the council. It is hardly surprising that few similarities between the texts are to be found; this does not have to mean that their author was the same.

A last theory was developed recently by Booker. According to him, Walahfrid Strabo could have been the Astronomer. To support his claim, Booker gives interesting

¹⁴⁶ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 81-82.

¹⁴⁷ Depreux, *Prosopographie* 160.

¹⁴⁸ Doherty, ‘The maintenance of royal power and prestige in the Carolingian Regnum of Aquitaine under Louis the Pious’ 56-65, in De Jong, *The Penitential State* 80.

¹⁴⁹ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 80-81.

¹⁵⁰ Matthias M. Tischler, *Einbarts Vita Karoli. Studien zur Entstehung, Überlieferung und Rezeption*, MGH Schriften 48 (Hannover 2001) 1109.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem* 1111.

arguments, although he makes very clear that he is not certain about his hypothesis. According to Booker, Walahfrid had been involved in the court for years already, he was always loyal to Louis the Pious and as editor of both the *Gesta Hludowici* and Einhard's *Vita Karoli*, he knew how to write a biography. On top of that, Walahfrid was known to be interested in astronomy.¹⁵² Moreover, after the death of Louis the Pious Walahfrid declared loyalty to Lothar. For now, I consider both Booker's idea and Doherty's theory as the best options to identify the Astronomer.

Both Drogo's and Walahfrid's assumed involvement with the *Vita Hludowici* would have interesting consequences for Ebbo's tale. As I have discussed before, in 835 Drogo played an important role in the process of Ebbo's deposition: Ebbo's first public confession even took place in Drogo's church in Metz. Therefore, Drogo was the first to sign Jonas of Orléans' addendum to the *Resignatio Ebonis*. In short, Drogo was one of Ebbo's main antagonists in the period between 835 and 840. In 840, however, Drogo made an interesting turn. Immediately after the emperor's death, Lothar claimed the crown and Drogo declared loyalty to his nephew.¹⁵³ Consequently, when Lothar decided to put Ebbo back at the head of his diocese, Drogo supported this decision. Indeed, we find him amongst those who attended the council in Ingelheim where Ebbo was restored.¹⁵⁴ Now if we follow – like De Jong – Doherty's plausible theory, we will find Drogo in an interesting position. At the one hand he was one of the masterminds behind Ebbo's deposition in 835, but only five years later he had to change his position towards the former archbishop of Reims completely, in order to show his loyalty to his new superior. On the other hand, Walahfrid's position towards Ebbo is interesting as well. Like Drogo, Walahfrid had remained loyal to Louis the Pious for the whole period. Moreover, he edited Thegan's *Gesta Hludowici* and probably shared Thegan's opinion about Ebbo. But on the other hand, like Drogo, after Louis' death Walahfrid became an ally of Lothar – both Drogo and Walahfrid were clearly loyal to the emperor. However, by turning towards Lothar they became part of the same camp as Ebbo. Let us take a look at what the Astronomer wrote about the former archbishop.

Especially compared with Thegan, we read only very little about Ebbo in the *Vita Hludowici*. In his account of 833 the Astronomer does not mention Ebbo at all and on

¹⁵² Booker, *Past Convictions* 37 n.129.

¹⁵³ Depreux, *Prosopographie* 167.

¹⁵⁴ *Concilium Ingelheimense* 793.

835 his tone is very different from what we read in the sources analyzed thus far. About Ebbo and the council of Thionville the Astronomer writes:

Then he [Louis the Pious] decided to go to Thionville for the Feast of the Purification of Saint Mary where the people whom he had instructed to do so arrived. While he was there he raised serious complaints about some of the bishops in respect of his deposition, but since certain of them had fled to Italy and others, although summoned, did not wish to obey only Ebbo was there among those who were called. When he was pressed to give an explanation for what had happened he pleaded that he alone was left to be investigated of all those in whose presence these things had been done. But when some bishops ignored the urgency of the situation and excused themselves with a protestation of innocence, Ebbo, ground down by such arguments, took this badly and, having sought the advice of some of the bishops, he offered some sort of a confession against himself and he confirmed that he was unworthy of the priesthood and agreed to resign irrevocably from it. This he communicated to the bishops and, through them, to the emperor. This done, Agobard, the Archbishop of Lyons, who was summoned but declined to come, indeed he was called three times to explain himself, was removed from the leadership of his church. The others, as we said, had fled to Italy.¹⁵⁵

This passage might seem relatively short if we take into account that it is only a small part of one of the 64 capita in the *Vita Hludowici*, but this chapter is one of the longest and maybe one of the most important of the *Vita*. The entire chapter is dedicated to the

¹⁵⁵ Transl. Thomas F.X. Noble. I made gratefully use of Noble's work translation that was only very recently published in Thomas F.X. Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer* (Pennsylvania State University 2009). "Sane sollempnitatem purificationis sanctae Mariae in eadom Theodonis villa agendam constituit, ubi etiam populus, cui praeceptum fuerat, advenit. Quo consistens, contra quosdam episcopos de sui deiectione conquerebatur, sed cum quidam in Italiam confugissent, aliqui vocati oboedire nolissent, solus Ebo eorum qui impetebantur affuit. Qui cum rationis reddende causa super talibus urgeretur, causabatur se solum, relictis omnibus in quorum praesentia hec facta ruerant, urgeri. At vero cum ceteri episcopi obtenderent necessitatem praesentiae, excusarent autem voluntatem innocentiae, hisdem Ebo tandem moleste ferens talibus extediari, consilio petito aliquorum episcoporum, ipse in se quandam confessionem praedicavit, confirmavitque se et indignum sacerdotio et inrevocabiler eo abstinere iudicavit; quod et episcopi et per eos imperatori contradidit. Quo facto, Agobardus Lugdunensis archiepiscopus, qui evocatus venire distulit, cum ter esset evocatus ad satisfactionem, ab ecclesiae semotus est praesulatu, ceteris, ut diximus, in Italiam fugientibus." The Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris* 500-502. Cf. those same pages for Tremp's German translation.

theme of restoration.¹⁵⁶ What we read here is very interesting indeed. The Astronomer's interpretation of 835 turns out to be radically different from what we read in the other sources. What strikes the most is that he, unlike the other eyewitnesses of the synod of Thionville, does not try to turn Ebbo into a scapegoat in any way. Quite the contrary is the case. Where Ebbo was, to the annalist of Saint-Bertin, 'a kind of standard-bearer of the whole conspiracy' and to Thegan a cruel and greedy liar, the Astronomer writes that the emperor accused 'some of the bishops.' But some of them had taken refuge in Italy – probably with Lothar – while *aliqui*, some others, just did not show up and therefore, Ebbo was the only of the charged bishops who was there in Thionville. According to the Astronomer, in 835 Ebbo 'was pressed to give an explanation for what had happened.' In the end, he 'sought the advice of some of the bishops' – Aiulf, Badarad and Modoin – and he 'offered some sort of a confession against himself and he confirmed that he was unworthy of the priesthood and agreed to resign irrevocably from it.'

How very different is the Astronomer's account of the trial against Ebbo, compared with Thegan's *Gesta* and the Annals of Saint-Bertin! Here we find no single reference to a public confession, nor in Metz, neither in Thionville – actually the Astronomer does not mention the events in Metz at all. According to the Astronomer, Ebbo had made nothing but *quandam confessionem* and as a conclusion he considered himself to be unworthy of his position. The next sentence is equally interesting. Here the Astronomer writes: 'This [the fact that he had confessed and/or his decision to resign from his office] he communicated to the bishops and, through them, to the emperor.' I suppose that with this single sentence the Astronomer referred to the same episode of the history as Jonas of Orléans in his addendum to the *Resignatio*. The way in which they perceived this event is completely different. As we have seen, Jonas claimed that at this session of the synod, Ebbo had confessed his sins twice more, to the three extra confessors and to the complete council moreover. According to the Astronomer, however, Ebbo had never confessed at this meeting – in his view, Ebbo had never publicly confessed at all. The only thing Ebbo had told the synod during this meeting, was his decision to resign from his office. In other words, The Astronomer is very clear about Ebbo: in the first place he was just one of the bishops who had been accused for the role they had played in 833. Moreover, Ebbo had never confessed anything in public and had only voluntarily resigned from his office.

¹⁵⁶ The Astronomer, *Vita Hludovici Imperatoris* 500-506.

How should we read this passage? At least, it is striking that the Astronomer wrote about the same events as the other narratives, but in such a different way. Did he tell the truth whereas the annalist and Thegan did not? We should most certainly not forget that if we assume that the *Vita Hludowici* saw the light some time between Louis the Pious' death and the Battle of Fontenoy, it is very well possible that the Astronomer finished his work right after the council of Ingelheim – the emperor had died in June 840, the council took place in August. In other words, the moment that the Astronomer – whether we identify him with someone from Drogo's camp or with Walahfrid – finished his text, Ebbo was in full power again and, what is more, a close ally to Lothar. Although the Astronomer did certainly not write in a friendly way about Ebbo, or tried to rehabilitate him completely, in 840 he was not quite the man to turn into a scapegoat either.

Conclusions

If we follow the sources, we can clearly see how from 835 onwards the different parties involved tried to make Ebbo the scapegoat for all that had happened in Soissons in 833. Louis the Pious was in need of somebody to blame and Ebbo's fellow bishops, ashamed of the role they had played themselves in the process of deposition of their emperor, needed someone to pay for their collective guilt. Even for Ebbo himself, taking the blame was probably not the worst option: after a secret confession of his sins, he could do penance without being deposed. However, the debate about the nature of his confession and Ebbo's position after the council in Thionville were ongoing. In these debates the *Resignatio Ebonis* would be a powerful weapon. Both Ebbo and his antagonists could use it to prove their own case. Jonas of Orléans probably ordered to include a complete addendum with the *Resignatio* to make Ebbo's confession a public affair. In his turn, Ebbo might have erased the last line of the *Resignatio* – although it is also possible that this line was added later.

The key to the case seemed to be the debate about secret versus public sins, confession and penance. Sins committed and confessed in secret would not necessarily cause dramatic consequences. Everybody sinned every now and then and each good Christian would confess and do penance for his sins from time to time. Public sins and public confession, however, was of a very different kind. After undergoing a ritual of public penance the penitent was not supposed to have a public function ever again. Especially in the case of clerics, deposition would follow. If we follow the accounts from the council of Thionville, we see how several authors tried to turn Ebbo's confession into

an emphatically public affair and claimed that Ebbo had confessed his sins beyond the limits of secrecy. In the basic version of the *Resignatio Ebonis* we read only about Ebbo's confession to his three confessors. To this *Resignatio* Jonas added his addendum according to which Ebbo had confessed once again to six confessors. Moreover, according to this addendum, after his secret confession Ebbo told his sins once again to the full congregation of the bishops. To make things even worse for him, the addendum contained a list with the autographs of forty-three archbishops and bishops – it was hardly possible to make a confession more of a public business. In his turn, Ebbo tried in his *Apologeticum* – written after 841 – to keep things as secret as possible by just ignoring this addendum completely. However, this might be unsurprising if we consider the option that Theoderich of Cambrai forged the addendum in his *libellus* written in 853.

We find the same search for publicity in the Annals of Saint-Bertin. The annalist, anonymous but certainly closely related to the court, kept on stressing that Ebbo had confessed before everyone on a high place in the church and thereafter once again in a plenary meeting of the synod. Moreover, it is clear to the annalist that Ebbo was the standard-bearer of the whole conspiracy against the emperor and thus the one, and only one, to blame. The same position is taken by Thegan, whose complete *Gesta Hludowici* is written to re-establish the good Christian ruler Louis the Pious. Louis' main antagonist in the *Gesta* is without any doubt the infamous Ebbo, who in the *Gesta* is depicted as an archetypical greedy peasant. This *invectio* made Ebbo's case even more public. Thegan is by far the most brutal of Ebbo's accusers, probably because he was the most personally involved of them all. He was the voice of the bishops. Almost all of them had played an at best dubious role in 833; by making Ebbo their scapegoats they freed themselves from this sin and tried to show their everlasting loyalty to the emperor. Moreover, Thegan wrote his *Gesta* in Trier, a bastion of the emperor's allies.

How much things changed after Louis the Pious's death we see if we consider the Astronomer, who writes about Ebbo in a completely different way than Thegan, the court annalist and all those who tried to manipulate the *Resignatio Ebonis* these years. Firstly, in his *Vita Hludowici*, Ebbo is no scapegoat anymore but just one of the many bishops who were called to account by Louis the Pious. Secondly, according to the Astronomer Ebbo had just offered 'some sort of a confession.' According to the Astronomer, he had just confessed to 'some confessors', who in his *Vita Hludowici* narrative just served as counsellors. There had never been any public confession; not in Metz and neither in Thionville. Moreover, Ebbo had resigned from priesthood voluntarily and had never been

deposed. In other words, according to the Astronomer there was no reason why Ebbo could not be a bishop anymore. Indeed: the moment the *Vita Hludowici* was first circulated, Ebbo was back in his see again. For a short period, he was a power to be taken very seriously.

The quarrel with Hincmar 845 – 882

Church councils, 853-867

After the Battle of Fontenoy on the 26th of June 841, everything changed for Ebbo. His patron, Lothar, was defeated and he had no choice but to take refuge at Lothar's court in Italy. However, the couple of months in which Ebbo had been back in Reims spark a controversy that would continue long after Ebbo's own death. During this relatively short period, Ebbo had consecrated an unknown number of clergymen. As soon as Ebbo had to resign from his office again, a debate about the status of those clerics started. Some claimed that, since Ebbo had been unjustly reinstated as archbishop in 840, the clerics he had consecrated should not remain in their function. Especially for Hincmar, Ebbo's successor in Reims from 845 onwards, this case would be one of major importance.¹⁵⁷ If those clerics consecrated by Ebbo would be considered to be rightfully consecrated, this would imply that in 840 and 841, Ebbo had been justly reinstated himself. The implication, then, would be that after 841, Ebbo still had every right to get his position back and therefore, that he was a continuous threat for Hincmar. It is more than obvious that from 845 onwards, Hincmar had very good reasons to confirm the image of Ebbo as the scapegoat of all that had happened in 833. But now, it was not just Ebbo who had to be fought; there were also those clerics consecrated by Ebbo as well. Even after Ebbo's, death they continued to be a threat for the validity of Hincmar's own consecration.¹⁵⁸

During his life, Hincmar tried to get rid of this ghost that would haunt him well until his death in several ways. First of all, in 853, only two years after Ebbo's death, he called a synod to decide on the faith of the clerics consecrated by his predecessor.¹⁵⁹ It can hardly be a coincidence that Hincmar organized this council at the exact location

¹⁵⁷ On Hincmar's impressive career cf. Devisse, *Hincmar*.

¹⁵⁸ Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 80-81.

¹⁵⁹ *Soissons, April 853*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann, MGH Conc. 3 (Hannover 1984) 253-289.

where twenty years earlier Ebbo had presided over the synod where Louis the Pious was forced to do penance.¹⁶⁰ Of all the churches and monasteries in his province, Hincmar decided that the monastery of Saint-Médard just outside Soissons was the perfect spot to discuss the position of those clerics Ebbo had consecrated in 840 and 841. Soissons was the place where Ebbo had done injustice against the emperor Louis, and now justice could triumph at the very same place if the clerics would be condemned. Hincmar was very well prepared for this council. He had requested the aforementioned *libellus* from Theoderich, bishop of Cambrai, who in the late 830s had been one of the bishops who had signed Jonas of Orléans' addendum to the *Resignatio Ebonis* that I have discussed above.¹⁶¹ This *libellus* was read aloud during a plenary meeting of the council by Lupus, abbot of Ferrières. Theoderich recalled almost literally the arguments from the period 835-841; half of the *libellus* consists of the extended version of the *Resignatio Ebonis*.¹⁶² Further on, Theoderich gave a few examples of ancient canon law to support his case. In a short sentence, he is especially close to the annalist's idea that Ebbo had been personally responsible for Louis' deposition in 833. According to Theoderich, the late emperor had unjustly been incriminated and had also unjustly been sent away from his throne. It was Ebbo and nobody else who had condemned him and, Theoderich claimed, Ebbo had confessed that himself.¹⁶³ The synod accepted this reading, and therefore the progress of the council must have been a pleasure to Hincmar. It was decided that the clerics had been unjustly consecrated in 840 and 841 for Ebbo had never been lawfully reinstated. For now, Hincmar's position was safe.

However, as it turned out, this was not enough. In 866, questions about the validity of the council of Soissons of 853 started to be asked in Rome, at the papal court. The catalyst in the process that followed was provided by one of the clerics Ebbo had consecrated named Wulfad. In 853 Wulfad had apparently been ill. Therefore he had not been present at the council in Soissons, and hence he had not been forced to resign from his office together with the other clerics. Although we cannot be certain about Wulfad's

¹⁶⁰ For a summary of the complete synod, cf. Wilfried Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frankenreich und in Italien* (Paderborn etc. 1989) 245-249 (hereafter referred to as Hartmann, *Konziliengeschichte*) and Charles Joseph Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles d'après les Documents Originiaux* IV-I (Paris 1911) 192-196.

¹⁶¹ Theoderich of Cambrai, *Libellus* 290-293. Presumably, Theoderich had also been involved in Ebbo's restitution in 840. For Theoderich's different positions between 835 and 853, cf. Paul Willem Finsterwalder, 'Eine parteipolitische Kundgebung eines Anhängers Lothars I', *NA* 47 (1928) 393-415, 413-415.

¹⁶² Booker, *Past Convictions* 197.

¹⁶³ Theoderich, *Libellus* 290 ll. 26-30. For the implications of Theoderich's version of the *Resignatio Ebonis* see above.

position in 853, by the mid-850s he had become an important priest; Charles the Bald had entrusted him with the education of his youngest son, Carloman, who had been born in 853.¹⁶⁴ In 866, Wulfad had made a quite a career for himself. From 853 onwards he had been made abbot of Saint-Médard (sic!), Montier-en-Der and Rabais. Moreover, he had been consecrated as bishop of Langres in 856. In 866, he was about to make a new step in his life, for he was nominated to become the new archbishop of Bourges. Even two new synods had to be called in order to decide about his case.¹⁶⁵

The two synods took much longer than the one of 853 and probably Hincmar was not at all happy with its decisions in the end.¹⁶⁶ At first, everything seemed to be all right for him. A first meeting was organized in 866, once again in Soissons, and here Hincmar presented a large amount of documents to support his case to the gathered clerics.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, Hincmar understood that Wulfad had become too important to just be sent away with nothing. Therefore, the synod suggested a compromise. On the one hand, Wulfad could remain in his position and even become legitimately archbishop, but on the other hand, the essence of the decisions of the council in 853 would be confirmed. With this message archbishop Egilo of Sens was sent to Rome.¹⁶⁸

The answer Egilo brought back could not have been worse for Hincmar. Pope Nicholas I wrote that for several reasons he did not at all agree with the verdict of 853; the pope ordered the formal restitution of all the clerics.¹⁶⁹ Hincmar's automatic response was to call for another synod, to be held in Troyes in 867.¹⁷⁰ In an ultimate attempt to save his position, Hincmar wrote a new text to Nicholas and offered him several agreements. Even about Ebbo's deposition Hincmar had to change his position slightly. On the one hand, the new council confirmed that after 835 Ebbo had never been archbishop of Reims anymore, but on the other, Hincmar had to agree with the rather novel idea that a future deposition of any bishop would not be possible without the consultation of Rome.¹⁷¹ A new delegation was sent to Rome with this message. There,

¹⁶⁴ John Marenbon, 'Wulfad, Charles the Bald and John Scottus Eriugena', in: Margaret Gibson and Janet Nelson ed., *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom. Papers Based on a Colloquium Held in London in April 1979*, B.A.R. International Series 101 (Oxford 1981) 375-383, 375.

¹⁶⁵ Ibidem 379-380, Devisse, *Hincmar* 91-100, Thomas Bauer, 'Wulfad', in: Traugott Bautz ed., *BBKL XIV* (Nordhausen 1998) via www.bbkl.de (2010). More about Wulfad on pp. 65-66, 68 of this thesis.

¹⁶⁶ On the debate and the church councils of 866 and 867 cf. Hartmann, *Konziliengeschichte* 316-321 and Hefele and Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* 392-420.

¹⁶⁷ Hartmann, *Konziliengeschichte*, 317-319. For the sources we have from this council, cf. *Soissons, 18 – 25 August 866*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann, MGH Conc. 4 (Hannover 1998) 201-228.

¹⁶⁸ Hartmann, *Konziliengeschichte* 318-319.

¹⁶⁹ Ibidem 319-320, Patzold, *Episcopus* 339-341.

¹⁷⁰ For the sources written at this council, cf. *Troyes, Oktober – November 867* 229-245.

¹⁷¹ Hartmann, *Konziliengeschichte* 320-321, Patzold, *Episcopus* 342-343.

they found a completely new situation. In November 867, Nicholas had died and luckily for Hincmar, the new pope – Hadrian II – did not feel like quarrelling on about Ebbo’s case. Hadrian sent his approval of Wulfad’s consecration to the north, but let the case of Ebbo rest.¹⁷² He wrote that *illa, quae de Ebbone dici possunt, quia, ut opinamur, nihil ad utilitatem proficiunt, iamiamque silentio contegantur*: “all those things that could be said about Ebbo, because they are not relevant anymore, are already covered by silence.”¹⁷³

Clearly, between 845 and 867, and also during the years thereafter, Ebbo was a big problem for Hincmar. In Hincmar’s opinion, Ebbo would always remain the black sheep of his era. It is of no surprise that whenever Hincmar had the opportunity, he tried to establish the image of Ebbo as the scapegoat of all that had happened in 833. Hincmar took his chance in 860 when he wrote his third treatise on the heresy of predestination, known to us as *De Predestinatione*.¹⁷⁴ This treatise formed Hincmar’s answer to a small church council – only eight prelates took part in it – organized in 855 in Valence by Lothar.¹⁷⁵ Although the main issue of this meeting was the ongoing debate about the predestination, a debate Hincmar was very much involved in,¹⁷⁶ the assembled clergymen talked also about another subject that interested Hincmar: the question under which conditions a bishop could be consecrated. One of the four prelates who took part in the council is a very fascinating figure about whom only very little is known: Ebbo of Grenoble, the presumed nephew of Ebbo of Reims.¹⁷⁷ This younger Ebbo had probably been raised at his uncle’s court in Reims before becoming deacon there. Most probably he had tried to find refuge at Lothar’s court after 835 already, or else after 841.¹⁷⁸ In the 850s we find him as bishop in Grenoble, a town located in Lothar’s part of the empire.

¹⁷² Patzold, *Episcopus* 345-346.

¹⁷³ Hadrian II, *Hadrianus Karolo Calvo regi respondet Ebbonis causam silentio contegi debere*, ed. Ernestus Perels, MGH Epp. 6 (Berlin 1925) 704-707, 705 ll. 8-10.

¹⁷⁴ Hincmar, *De Predestinatione*. His first and second works on the predestination are unknown to us. Cf. also Eleanor Shipley Duckett, *Carolingian Portraits. A Study in the Ninth Century* (Ann Arbor 1969; 1991) 261-262 who in her popular scientific portrait of Hincmar wrote that by this time ‘all men were growing tired of this unending war of debate.’

¹⁷⁵ About the council of Valence in 855, cf. Hartman, *Konziliengeschichte* 262-264 and on the council plus Hincmar’s response Hefebe and Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* 204-210 and Devisse, *Hincmar* 244-268.

¹⁷⁶ The ninth century debate about predestination is too complicated to be discussed here. For a good introduction to parts of the theological side of the discussion cf. George H. Tavard, *Trina Deitas. The Controversy Between Hincmar and Gottschalk*, Marquette Studies in Theology 12 (Milwaukee 1996). About the debate between Hincmar and his main counterpart in this discussion, Gottschalk, cf. David Ganz, ‘The debate on predestination’, in: Margaret Gibson and Janet Nelson ed., *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom. Papers Based on a Colloquium Held in London in April 1979*, B.A.R. International Series 101 (Oxford 1981) 353-373. About the place of this debate in Hincmar’s oeuvre and career, cf. Devisse, *Hincmar* 115-269.

¹⁷⁷ Hartmann, *Konziliengeschichte* 262-263.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

During the early 850s, Hincmar accused the younger Ebbo of writing a critique about his doctrine and several attacks on his personal behaviour. However, this critical treatise, known as *Liber de tribus epistolis*,¹⁷⁹ was most probably not written by the younger Ebbo. Modern scholarship proved it to be written at the court of the archbishop of Lyon.¹⁸⁰ There is no evidence for Hincmar's other accusations either. Apart of this curious episode, nothing seems to be known about Ebbo of Grenoble.¹⁸¹

As said, the main point of debate in Valence in 855 was the debate about predestination. However, it is not surprising that a synod organized by Lothar and attended by Ebbo of Grenoble at least tried in any way to rehabilitate Ebbo of Reims. Being with only eight prelates, none of them with a significant position in the empire, the synod could not do much more than to formulate some general ideas about the consecration of bishops. For Hincmar, this was a good occasion to confirm once more everything he had said and written about Ebbo in 853. In his treatise on predestination, to counter Ebbo of Grenoble's opinions about the predestination, and to slander the reputation of his uncle, he quoted the *libellus* written about Ebbo's case in 853 by Theoderich of Cambrai.¹⁸² Hincmar used Ebbo's case in his *De Predestinatione* to defend the authority of prelates and secular rulers had over bishops.¹⁸³ Although this text was not primary written to condemn Ebbo, Hincmar here implied for sure that in 835, Louis the Pious had been in the position to depose Ebbo. According to Hincmar, by 860, Ebbo was a dead villain and that was that.

Hincmar's last words: the Visio Bernoldi

Let us now return to the *Visio Bernoldi*.¹⁸⁴ At the time Hincmar was working on this text, probably round 877,¹⁸⁵ Ebbo was not exactly rehabilitated, but, as we have seen, the attitude towards him had changed. Wulfad, one of the clerics Ebbo had consecrated in 840 or 841, had become one of Charles the Bald's main advisors and was therefore a powerful man. Probably because of this, the king himself had become one of Ebbo's supporters. With the king, more people in the empire had very different thoughts about

¹⁷⁹ *Liber de tribus epistolis*, Jacques-Paul Migne ed., PL 121 (Paris 1852) 985-1086.

¹⁸⁰ In his edition, Migne subscribed the treatise to Remi, archbishop of Lyon. According to Tavard, *Trina Deitas* 35, the treatise was written by the deacon Florus.

¹⁸¹ Hartmann, *Konziilengeschichte* 262-263. All remarks I made here about Ebbo of Grenoble is literally all that seems to be known about him. Besides, the only thing we know for fact is that he was present at another church council, in Saint-Geômes in 273. Hartmann, *Konziilengeschichte* 273.

¹⁸² Booker, *Past Convictions* 197.

¹⁸³ Ganz, 'The debate on predestination' 364.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. the introduction to this thesis.

¹⁸⁵ Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming* 183.

Ebbo than Hincmar. For example, in 864, archbishop Anskar of Hamburg-Bremen had praised Ebbo extensively for his attempts to convert the Danes to Christianity.¹⁸⁶ In Anskar's *Vita*, written by his successor Rimbert between 869 and 876, the missionary Ebbo even served as a model Christian.¹⁸⁷ For Hincmar, however, Ebbo was still the same old threat. Moreover, after his loss of face at the council of Troyes (867), his opinion about Ebbo was maybe more bitter than ever. The *Visio Bernoldi* would be his last strike; a mere five years after its publications Hincmar died.¹⁸⁸

Whether Bernold actually existed at all, we will most probably never know, but his tale is certainly written down with reasons, as we will see. The text is known from several manuscripts, the oldest from the early tenth century.¹⁸⁹ In the medieval manuscripts, the text has no name; its first editor, Jacques Paul Migne named it *De Visione Bernoldi Presbyteri*. About the authorship of the text, some doubt has existed. Both Hincmar's biographers, Heinrich Schrörs and Jean Devisse, claimed that the text was 'genuine.' According to them, the *Visio Bernoldi* was based on a true story and written by an unknown author who must have been close to the source of the tale.¹⁹⁰ Most other scholars, however, claimed that Hincmar wrote the text at least partially himself in support of his own ideas – the overlap between Hincmar's political thoughts of the late 870s and what is written in the *Visio Bernoldi* is to large to be a coincidence.¹⁹¹ Moreover, as Paul Dutton argued, there are so many of Hincmar's theological ideas to be found in the *Visio Bernoldi*, that it is almost unthinkable that somebody else than he wrote this text. Finally, according to Dutton, the identity of its author is revealed by Flodoard in his *Historia*.¹⁹² I could not agree more with Dutton and will consider Hincmar as the *Visio Bernoldi's* author.

Now let us take a fresh look at what is written about Ebbo in the *Visio Bernoldi*. At first in a dream an ill priest named Bernold met Ebbo at a place we can easily identify with hell or purgatory. Ebbo was creeping around here, helpless, together with two

¹⁸⁶ James T. Palmer, 'Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* and Scandinavian mission in the ninth century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55:2 (2004) 235-256, 235-236.

¹⁸⁷ Ibidem 253.

¹⁸⁸ Van der Lugt, 'Tradition and revision' 109.

¹⁸⁹ For a good overview of the manuscript tradition of the *Visio Bernoldi*, cf. Ibidem 127-138.

¹⁹⁰ Heinrich Schrörs, *Hinkmar Erzbischof von Reims. Sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Freiburg im Breisgau 1884) 379, Devisse, *Hincmar* 821-823.

¹⁹¹ Cf. e.g. Van der Lugt, 'Tradition and revision' 112 and Horst Fuhrmann, 'Fälscher unter sich: zum Streit zwischen Hinkmar von Reims und Hinkmar von Laon' in: Margaret Gibson and Janet Nelson ed., *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom. Papers Based on a Colloquium Held in London in April 1979*, BAR International Series 101 (Oxford 1981) 237-254, 244.

¹⁹² Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming* 190-191.

others, the bishops Aeneas and Pardulus.¹⁹³ Ebbo asked Bernold to make everybody pray for their fate, and so it happened. When Bernold returned to that very same place, the conditions they lived in had become very different – they now lived in a heavenly place, protected by Saint Ambrose.

At first sight, it may seem strange how gentle Hincmar is for Ebbo in the *Visio Bernoldi*. However, as Paul Dutton already noticed, this can easily be explained. According to Dutton, ‘none of the defiled bishops regained the right to wear chasubles and, therefore, were unable to celebrate the Eucharist. Moreover, Ebbo was no longer the archbishop of Rheims; he waited like all men for the final judgment.’¹⁹⁴ I would even go one step further and suggest that exactly this superficial kindness makes the *Visio Bernoldi* Hincmar’s most subtle attack on Ebbo. The clue is to be found in the different ways Bernold in his dream had found the three bishops before and after he organized the prayers on their behalf. When Bernold met the bishops for the first time, suffering, they were clearly dressed as bishops and they wore all the signs a bishop used to wear. However, when Bernold came back to find the three men in better health at the side of Saint Ambrose, they sat there without their chasubles, as laymen. Hincmar here plays quite nicely with the developments of the 860s and 870s, for we can say that by Pope Nicholas’s semi-rehabilitation in 866, Ebbo’s position had changed from purgatory to heaven. In the *Visio Bernoldi* Hincmar gave a very interesting twist to this newly created situation. Instead of fighting Ebbo further, he pretended that it was his own selfless and ultimately good parishioner Bernold who made things so much better for Ebbo. In other words, Ebbo owed his new position to nobody but Hincmar. Hincmar chose a good moment to make this claim moreover. By the end of 877, almost all the eyewitnesses of the last thirty-five years had died: Ebbo himself in 851, Pope Nicholas in 867 and Charles the Bald in October 877. The *Visio Bernoldi* was not just Hincmar’s last word. The text constitutes the last words of anyone who had known Ebbo during his lifetime.

Of course Hincmar would not be Hincmar if suddenly Ebbo had turned into a saint. There is one extremely important detail to be read in the *Visio Bernoldi*: Ebbo gained his improved position in purgatory not as a bishop, but as a layman. To depict him in this way was Hincmar’s final argument. On the one hand, he could now claim himself to be Ebbo’s saviour. But on the other hand, it must have been clear to every

¹⁹³ Aeneas and Pardulus were two of the many other enemies Hincmar had made. Pardulus had even once been an ally of Hincmar and strangely Hincmar started the dispute with him only after Pardulus death. Ibidem 185-186.

¹⁹⁴ Ibidem 185.

attentive reader that Ebbo still sat next to Ambrose as a sinner and not as one of Hincmar's equals. The tone of the *Visio Bernoldi* was very different, but Hincmar's central message was still the same: after 835, Ebbo had never justly been archbishop anymore.¹⁹⁵ Moreover: penance worked – but not in such way that Ebbo could have been reinstated.

Conclusions

As soon as he became archbishop in Reims in 845, it must have been clear for Hincmar that in order to keep his position, he must oppose Ebbo's claims by all means. If Ebbo himself or one from his camp managed to convince a majority in the empire that Ebbo in 841 had been deposed unjustly as archbishop of Reims, this would automatically imply that in 845 Hincmar was unjustly consecrated. In Soissons, in 853, Hincmar tried to resolve the case once and for all in a big synod where, through a *libellus* written by Theoderich of Cambrai, the arguments levelled against Ebbo in 835 were repeated once more. The *Resignatio Ebonis* of 835 and Jonas of Orléans' addendum to the *Resignatio* were included in this *libellus* – if Theoderich had not created this addendum himself. However, this council could not put an end to the debate. In the 860s, a new player became involved in the game: Pope Nicholas I. He did not accept the synod of Soissons of 853 and decided that the entire case should be revised. Only by making concessions towards Ebbo's supporters, most notably Wulfad, Hincmar could stay with his claim for Reims. He organized yet another synod, in 867; that its outcome was accepted in Rome might well be a case of sheer coincidence, for Nicholas I had died, and the new Pope Hadrian II was less interested in the case. A clever man Hincmar was, and by the very end of his life in one of his last works, he found a way to turn the concessions he made in 867 around. For every well-informed reader, the *Visio Bernoldi* left no room for doubts. In 867 Hincmar had shown his most generous side; so he had rehabilitated Ebbo himself, but as a layman, not as a bishop. Hincmar's position remained safe – from Ebbo, that is. In 882, Hincmar did not die in Reims, the place he had fought for so hard for almost forty years. He expired in Épernay, where he was forced to seek refuge, for the Vikings.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. *Ibidem* 185.

3. (SELF) DEFENSE, 840 – 867

In the previous chapter I have looked at the way in which during the ninth century Ebbo was made the scapegoat for everything that had happened in 833. Now I will turn to his defense. Again, I will consider several sources and follow the same chronological order as I did previously. The chapter, however, will start a bit later, for between 835 and 840, Ebbo hardly received any support. The only two who during these hard times really seemed to try to help him, were Judith and Hraban Maur.¹⁹⁶ Judith, however, although she was empress still, was not in the best thinkable position to help; already in 830 she had been accused of adultery herself.¹⁹⁷ Above I mentioned already the ring Judith had given to Ebbo after the birth of Charles the Bald. She had promised him that, whenever he was in need for help, he just had to send her back the ring. So Ebbo did in 835 and Judith did what she could. According to Charles the Bald in the letter he wrote in 867 about the case, Ebbo would have been punished much more severe without Judith's intervention.¹⁹⁸ Only in 840, after the death of Louis the Pious, Ebbo was reinstated in Reims. In August 840 organized a council in Ingelheim where it was decided that Ebbo could return to his see.¹⁹⁹

As far as we know, Ebbo only started his own defense after 840.²⁰⁰ In the first part of this chapter, we will consider the two texts he wrote in his own defense. To tell his version of the tale, he wrote an *Apologeticum* – under this name the text was known in the ninth century.²⁰¹ This *Apologeticum* exists in two versions, which will be the focus of the first part of the chapter. Only after his death in March 851, more documents were written in Ebbo's defense. As we have seen, the main issue of the debate was not anymore what had happened in 835, but the validity of his reinstatement in December 840 and his second deposition in June 841. In the second part of this chapter, we will turn once again to the synods of 866 and 867 where the matter of the clerics Ebbo had consecrated during his brief reinstatement, was discussed. As we have seen, at these councils, Hincmar had to keep on attacking Ebbo in order to protect his own position.

¹⁹⁶ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 255, Patzold, *Episcopus* 137.

¹⁹⁷ On Judith's position after 830, cf. Mayke de Jong, 'Bride shows revisited: praise, slander and exegesis in the reign of the empress Judith', in: Leslie Brubaker and Julia M.H. Smith ed., *Gender in the Early Medieval World. East and west, 300-900* (Cambridge 2004) 257-277, 267-276.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. p. 71 of this thesis.

¹⁹⁹ Patzold, *Episcopus* 136-137. For the documents written at this council, cf. *Concilium Ingelbeimense*.

²⁰⁰ For problems of dating the sources, cf. pp. 56-57 of this thesis.

²⁰¹ Patzold, *Episcopus* 319 n.433.

The clerics on their turn tried to defend Ebbo's for their fate was directly connected with his. The first text we will read is known as the *Narratio Clericorum Remensium*. This document was written by these clerics in the period of the councils of Soissons (866) and Troyes (867).²⁰² Finally we will consider a letter written by Charles the Bald to the pope during this period. In a final attempt to solve the case of the clerics, the king took an interesting position, as we will see.

Ebbo's answer: the *Apologetici*

Even though they are rather interesting sources, both versions of Ebbo's *Apologetici*, which Ebbo most probably wrote between 840 and 844, have been neglected by historians for too long. Of course, German scholars involved with the MGH were interested in the text; both Albert Werminghoff, the editor of the *Apologetici* and Karl Hampe wrote articles about them, which are still valuable.²⁰³ A few years earlier, Schrörs had mentioned these texts in his biography of Hincmar.²⁰⁴ But afterwards, silence descended on the *Apologetici*; only Jean Devisse, Hincmar's second biographer, wrote about them²⁰⁵ while in Hans Goetting's entry on Ebbo in his work on the bishopric of Hildesheim, his remarks on the *Apologetici* ended up in a footnote.²⁰⁶ This tendency only started to change during the new millennium; especially in the last two years the *Apologetici* got the attention they deserved in three notable publications.²⁰⁷ Before we turn to the discussions that are going on about the *Apologetici*, let us first have a look at what Ebbo actually wrote in his works. Both texts are too long to be cited here entirely and therefore I include just relatively short summaries.²⁰⁸

²⁰² Horst Fuhrmann, *Einfluß und Verbreitung der pseudoisidorischen Fälschungen. Von ihrem Auftauchen bis in die neuere Zeit*, MGH Schriften 24 (Stuttgart 1972-74) 208-209 n.43. Cf. Hartmann, *Konziengeschichte* 198 n.3 who suggests that the *Narratio* might have been written as early as 853.

²⁰³ Albert Werminghoff, 'Ein neuer Text des Apologeticum Ebonis', *NA* 25 (1900) 361-378 and Karl Hampe, 'Zum Streite Hincmars von Reims mit seinem Vorgänger Ebo und dessen Anhängern', *NA* 23 (1898) 180-195. Although sometimes slightly outdated, the work the MGH scholars did is almost invaluable.

²⁰⁴ Schrörs, *Hincmar Erzbischof von Reims* 33-34, most notably n.32.

²⁰⁵ Devisse, *Hincmar* 83-89.

²⁰⁶ Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 69-70.

²⁰⁷ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 256-257, Booker, *Past Convictions* most notably 94-97 and 192-196, Patzold, *Episcopus* 319-323.

²⁰⁸ My summaries are based on my own translations and the summaries provided by Booker, *Past Convictions* 192-194 and Patzold, *Episcopus* 319-321 (first version) and 322-323 (second version).

First version

Ebbo began his first apology, known in Werminghoff's edition as the *forma prior*, with the statement that the first period of Louis the Pious' reign shone brightly.²⁰⁹ This good fortune did not last long, for the later period of his reign was shaken excessively by divine wrath. Ebbo compares these bad times with the words Matthew the Evangelist had written about the latest days in a clear reference to the troubles between the emperor and his sons: *The brother also shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the son; and the children shall rise up against their parents.*²¹⁰ Both clerics and laymen, Ebbo told, were sent in exile or forced into a monastery. This was all for their own good, because those who had done penance at least received the remedy of salvation, while those who persisted in their sins, would experience the future justice of condemnation (*iudicia dampnationis futura sentirent*).²¹¹ Maybe Ebbo referred here to the events of 822. In that year, at the council of Attigny, Louis the Pious had done public confession for the first time in order to, in De Jong's words, 'wipe the slate clean with God and his relatives.'²¹² It is thinkable that in these sentences of the *Apologeticum*, Ebbo implied that the emperor had received salvation while others, who had neglected their own sins, would suffer later. Ebbo himself was very much aware of his own sinfulness. He went on with his *Apologeticum* by naming himself an *indignus episcopus*, unworthy bishop, living among *ceteros anxios tribus*, the other anxious people.²¹³ Again he used a biblical phrase to describe his own position: *for I will declare my iniquity: and I will think for my sin.*²¹⁴ Because of these sins, he even had performed, out of his own free will, a *humilis satisfactio*, a humble penalty.²¹⁵ Ebbo, in other words, regarded himself a sinner. However, he was just a sinner like everyone else, and he at least was aware of his sins and had performed penance accordingly.

Incomprehensible for Ebbo, his persecutors did not read the Bible as well as he did. In the following part of his *Apologeticum*, Ebbo quoted several biblical phrases about the position of sinners: *Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved; but give place unto wrath, for it is written: Revenge is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*²¹⁶ And, like Job, Ebbo cried out: *I have*

²⁰⁹ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I 794-725 ll. 27-1.

²¹⁰ Ibidem 795 ll. 2-3; Matth. 10:21. Bible translations are according to the Douay-Rheims translation and taken from www.latinvulgate.com (2010).

²¹¹ Ibidem 795 ll. 4-9.

²¹² De Jong, *The Penitential State* 36.

²¹³ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I 795 ll. 10-11. *Tribus* literally means tribes but I suppose that Ebbo here referred to 'people' in the broadest sense of the word.

²¹⁴ Ibidem ll. 13; Psalm 37:19.

²¹⁵ Ibidem ll. 19-21.

²¹⁶ Ibidem ll. 22-23; Rom. 12:19.

*sinned: what shall I do to thee, O keeper of men?*²¹⁷ Nevertheless, he was forced *mundano impetu*, by worldly fury,²¹⁸ to come to a tribunal. In my opinion, this sentence is one of the most important of the *Apologeticum*. Ebbo writes that he was forced to come *ad tribunal palatinum, non ad synodalem sanctorum conventum*,²¹⁹ to the tribunal of the palace, and not to the synodal meeting of the Holy [brothers i.e. Ebbo's fellow bishops]. Herewith he made a clear reference to the meeting in Thionville, but he did not write a single word about any gathering in Metz. According to Ebbo, the meeting where he was condemned had not been a synod. His argument: he had been brought there as a prisoner, while to a synod a bishop could only come voluntarily.²²⁰ In other words: according to Ebbo, since he had never confessed anything at a proper synod, it was impossible that he ever had been forced to do penance. Moreover, a court tribunal had no rights to depose a bishop, and the penance he had performed was no forced penalty, but resulted from his own initiative. Ebbo wrote that he had chosen Aiulf, Badarad and Modoin as his confessors himself and that he had asked them to judge him.²²¹ Ebbo just mentioned those three bishops, not the other three mentioned in Theoderich's *libellus*, and neither a confession to the complete council. Through his confession he received *remissio peccatorum*, forgiveness of his sins. The sin that he had done penance for was the sin of pride; he confessed that he had become too much involved in earthly affairs.²²²

How to read this passage? To judge almost 1200 years later whether the council of Thionville was a *tribunal palatinum* or a synod is hardly possible. What is very interesting, though, is the clear distinction Ebbo made between his public act by reading the *Resignatio Ebonis*, his secret confession to Aiulf, Badarad and Modoin and his deposition at what according to him was nothing but a *tribunal palatinum*.²²³ For his own confession and penance, Ebbo had a very noteworthy example: Louis the Pious' own penance in 822.²²⁴ In his *Apologeticum* Ebbo went on by writing that in principle, after doing penance God had made him free from sins and that moreover after God's punishment he could not be condemned by the world anymore. He had plenty of biblical references to prove his point: *For whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth: and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*,²²⁵

²¹⁷ Ibidem ll. 23-25; Job 7:20.

²¹⁸ Ibidem l. 26.

²¹⁹ Ibidem l. 27.

²²⁰ Cf. Patzold, *Episcopus* 319.

²²¹ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I 795 ll. 32-35. Cf. Patzold, *Episcopus* 319.

²²² Ibidem 795-796 ll. 37-4.

²²³ About the question whether Ebbo had confessed at a synod or not, cf. also p. 67 of this thesis.

²²⁴ De Jong, *The Penitential State* 259.

²²⁵ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I 796, ll. 10-12; Hebrews 12:6.

*whilst we are judged, we are chastised by the Lord, that we be not condemned with this world*²²⁶ and *I will confess against my self my injustice to the Lord: and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin.*²²⁷

In other words: according to Ebbo his penance had brought salvation closer than ever. By doing penance, he had cleansed himself from sins so there was not reason anymore why he could not be archbishop.²²⁸ Only after his confession Ebbo was forced to resign from his office, but this procedure did not take place in the church. He must have been very aware of the fact that, according church law, a bishop could not be forced to leave his see.²²⁹

After his explanation and justification of his first confession – we are about halfway the *Apologeticum* – Ebbo goes on with his interpretation of the *Resignatio Ebonis*. First he inserted the *Resignatio*²³⁰ and thereafter he tried to make clear for his readers that in his *Resignatio*, he had signed exactly what he had confessed to Aiulf, Badarad and Modoin previously – and certainly no crime so heavy that because of it a bishop could have been deposed. The problem was that, in Ebbo's opinion, too many people had misread or even abused the *Resignatio*. According to Ebbo, the only words from the *Resignatio* one could use against him were the words *indignus episcopus*. However, Ebbo claimed, if because of these words alone he was judged guilty, one could similarly overthrow him by everything he had ever written because he always subscribed as unworthy bishop.²³¹ Again, what Ebbo wants his readers to believe is that he was a sinner, just like everybody else. Of course he named himself *indignus episcopus*, because like every sinner – and who did not sin? – he was unworthy of his office. Ebbo continues by claiming that never before any bishop was deposed if he had not committed *certo crimine canonice*,²³² a certain crime according to church law – obviously implying that he had committed such crime.

After this defense of his deeds in 835, Ebbo turned to his own reinstatement in 840. He describes how on the sixth of December in that year, a mass was celebrated in Reims where he got back the position he still owed. At this point, Ebbo included a document in the *Apologeticum*. The document was signed by the suffragan bishops who

²²⁶ Ibidem ll. 12-13; I Cor. 11:32.

²²⁷ Ibidem ll. 21-22; Psalm 31:5.

²²⁸ Patzold, *Episcopus* 319.

²²⁹ Cf. pp. 26-27 of this thesis and Patzold, *Episcopus* 320.

²³⁰ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I 797 ll. 5-13.

²³¹ Ibidem ll. 14-16: *Si quis vero per hanc salutarem in pressuris repertam conscriptionis formam me damnandum decreverit, similiter et in omnibus scriptis meis me obprimere poterit, in quibus numquam me iustifico, sed semper indignum episcopum subscribens [...].*

²³² Ibidem ll. 28-31.

served under the archbishop of Reims. In it, they declared to accept Ebbo as their superior again.²³³ There has been much discussion about this document. In 853, when at Soissons the clerics Ebbo had consecrated tried to use this document in support of their case, the bishops who were supposed to have signed it – amongst whom Theoderich of Cambrai – protested in fury. They claimed that this document had been forged.²³⁴ The discussion about the authenticity of this document would go on for centuries. In the late nineteenth century, Hampe and Werminghoff had no doubt about the status of the document Ebbo inserted: it was a forgery.²³⁵ In 1988, however, Wilfried Hartmann thought to have found the solution to this debate. According to him, it was genuine for the clerics would have never dared to present a forged document while some of its signers were still alive.²³⁶ However, Patzold pointed out that probably the clerics believed the document to be genuine and therefore presented it to the synod, which did not mean it was not a falsification.²³⁷ When all is said and done, there is no doubt about Ebbo's capability of forging texts. Already in 1898 Karl Hampe showed in what clever way Ebbo had created a complete papal letter himself.²³⁸ In my opinion, Patzold's general idea about this forged document is very interesting. It is important to know whether a certain document is genuine or not, but often, it is even more important to know who *believed* a document to be genuine.

Let us now finish the *Apologeticum*. Ebbo concluded his work by making several rather general biblical references to sin, sinners, penance and salvation. With the Psalmist, he once again prayed God to excuse him. Moreover, he begged to be corrected by the just man.²³⁹ With John the Evangelist, he asked rhetorically who out there is without sin.²⁴⁰ And like the publican in Luke he prayed to God once more: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."²⁴¹ In this way, he tries to show himself as a true follower of Christ and the apostles. Like they were aware of their sins so was he, and like God had

²³³ Ibidem 798 ll. 2-24.

²³⁴ Hartmann, *Konziliengeschichte* 246.

²³⁵ Hampe, 'Zum Streite Hincmars von Reims' 186 and Werminghoff, 'Ein neuer Text' 377.

²³⁶ Wilfried Hartmann, 'Fälschungsverdacht und Fälschungsnachweis im frühen Mittelalter' in: *Fälschungen im Mittelalter. Internationaler Kongress der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, München, 16-19 September 1986*, II *Gefälschte Rechtstexte. Der bestrafte Fälscher*, MGH Schriften 33 II (Hannover 1988) 111-127, 114.

²³⁷ Patzold, *Episcopus* 320 n. 422. Strangely, in his *Konziliengeschichte* 198 Hartmann wrote about this document again and here he refers clearly to its origin in the *Apologeticum*. Nevertheless, about its authenticity, he gives a reference to his article in *Fälschungen* whereas Patzold in just one footnote proved that knowing the *Apologeticum*, Hartmann's argument was invalid.

²³⁸ Hampe, 'Zum Streite Hincmars von Reims' 180-191.

²³⁹ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I, 798-799 ll. 25-3; Psalm 140:3-5.

²⁴⁰ Ibidem 799 ll. 5-8; John 8:7.

²⁴¹ Ibidem ll. 8-10; Luke 18:13.

saved their souls, he expected that his soul would be saved.²⁴² In this last part of the *Apologeticum*, Ebbo stressed a very important topic: his humility.

To value the *Apologeticum* is not an easy task. At first sight, the text seems to be pretty straightforward: as we have read, it gives a straight defense for Ebbo's case. But further questions arising – when did Ebbo write and circulate the text, what was the public he aimed for – are hard to answer.²⁴³ We find the first version of the *Apologeticum* in only two manuscripts, the first from the ninth century, the second from the eleventh century. Both manuscripts are part of a collection of texts; the first containing works that are generally anti-Hincmar, the second existing of texts about priestly duties and penance.²⁴⁴ Both manuscripts are Ebbo-friendly and this suggests that already during the ninth century this first version circulated amongst those who fought for his case.²⁴⁵

However, who exactly could have had the document, or at what moment the text was spread, remains unclear. From the manuscripts, we cannot give the *Apologeticum* any other date but 'ninth century'.²⁴⁶ In his edition, Albert Werminghoff claimed that Ebbo wrote both versions of the *Apologeticum* after his second deposition, in 842. Why Werminghoff gave it this date remains unclear for he did not give any argument to support his case.²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, historians took Werminghoff's claim for granted.²⁴⁸ The only exception is Patzold, who recently argued that Ebbo wrote the first version a year earlier, shortly after his restitution in Ingelheim.²⁴⁹ According to this author, the content of the first version does not suggest at all that Ebbo wrote it after his second deposition. In Patzold's opinion, quite the contrary is the case; especially the last sentence of this version of the *Apologeticum* suggests that a bishop at the head of his see was writing here. Ebbo wrote: "Announcing that he would rather be joyful thanks to recovery rather than grieve on account of the wickedness of adversity, as was right and proper, this festive restoration obtained from God a worthy future."²⁵⁰ Indeed, these are rather the words of a bishop who is just restored, than the words of a man who was just deposed for the

²⁴² Patzold, *Episcopus* 321.

²⁴³ Cf. *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Booker, *Past Convictions* 95.

²⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Werminghoff's introduction to his edition of the text. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to see any of the manuscripts myself.

²⁴⁷ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I 794 and Werminghoff, 'Ein neuer Text' 375.

²⁴⁸ Cf. e.g. Booker, *Past Convictions* 94.

²⁴⁹ Patzold, *Episcopus* 319 especially n. 435.

²⁵⁰ Transl. Mayke de Jong (unpublished). Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I, 799 ll. 35-36: *Plus de gratia recuperationis congaudere quam de nequitia damnationis dolere suggerens, sicut oportuit, festiva haec restitutio Deo dignis posteris procuravit.*

second time in six years. It is obvious that before June 841, Ebbo could make good use of the *Apologeticum*. The moment he was back in his see was the proper moment to silence his enemies once and for all. This suggests that Ebbo wrote his *Apologeticum* to be read by an audience as large as possible. Indeed the only addressee we find in the text is the *universa catholica Dei aeclesia*²⁵¹ – that could include (almost) everyone. But the fact that we find the text in only two manuscripts suggests that Ebbo could not spread his word as much as possible. Moreover, if indeed many people involved in the case knew the *Apologeticum*, I would have expected to find references to it in for instance the accounts of the councils of Soissons (853) and Soissons/Troyes (866/867). However, no such are found. Maybe he just had too little time to make the text well known, as Patzold suggests?²⁵²

Second version

The history of the second version of Ebbo's *Apologeticum* is even more uncertain than the backgrounds of the first version. The work was only discovered during the late nineteenth century by Ernst Dümmler. He forwarded the manuscript to his colleague Albert Werminghoff who made an edition and first study of the text.²⁵³ However, the manuscript Dümmler had found was most certainly a contemporary manuscript; it was a transcript of a medieval manuscript made by J. Sirmond during the early seventeenth century. Sirmond's *Vorlage* has been lost. The manuscript Sirmond had copied originated in the abbey of Hérivaux but we have no idea how old this manuscript was.²⁵⁴ The only thing we can be sure about is that his *Apologeticum* only ended up in Hérivaux long after Ebbo's death, since the monastery was founded in 1140.²⁵⁵

Sirmond's manuscript is very interesting. Immediately after the *Apologeticum*, we find in it a copy of the *Visio Bernoldi* and in the same manuscript there are other sources concerning Reims, Hincmar and Ebbo to be found.²⁵⁶ Because of this, Booker supposes that at some point, a compilation of the *Visio Bernoldi* and this version of the *Apologeticum* had been made. Indeed, as Booker suggests, the *Visio Bernoldi* could function as a 'striking conclusion to that initial text's [the *Apologeticum*] story, providing the last word

²⁵¹ Ibidem ll. 32-33.

²⁵² Patzold, *Episcopus* 321.

²⁵³ Werminghoff, 'Ein neuer Text'. This edition was later reprinted as Ebbo, *Apologeticum* II.

²⁵⁴ Booker, *Past Convictions* 95, especially n.131, Van der Lugt, 'Tradition and revision' 135.

²⁵⁵ About the early history of the abbey of Hérivaux, cf. Anne Candele, 'L'abbaye d'Hérivaux aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles', *Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Senlis. Comptes rendus et mémoires* 1973-1974 (1974) 21-44.

²⁵⁶ Van der Lugt, 'Tradition and Revision' 137, Booker, *Past Convictions* 95-96.

on Ebbo's fate and a moral about it as well.²⁵⁷ Booker does not answer the question when those texts were compiled, and who took them together. Indeed, it seems impossible to answer these questions. It might be possible that those texts were compiled at an early stage already, but I do not think that it was Hincmar himself or a contemporary of Ebbo and Hincmar who took the two texts together. In the first place, one should wonder how Hincmar could have known the text. As I will argue later in this chapter, Ebbo wrote the second version of his *Apologeticum* most probably after his second flight from Reims. Therefore, it is unlikely that a copy of the text was kept in Reims, where Hincmar could have possessed it. Like the first version, neither was this second version ever mentioned at one of the ninth century councils concerning Ebbo's case. Moreover, one should wonder why, if he possessed the text, Hincmar had never used it against Ebbo. It is possible that Hincmar only got hold on the *Apologeticum* at the final stage of his life and therefore compiled it with the *Visio Bernoldi*. But in that case, I would have expected to read about or to find the complete *Apologeticum* in any form in Flodoard's *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*. In that work, Flodoard wrote some extensive chapters about Ebbo, but about the *Apologetici* no word. To write his *Historia*, Flodoard definitely used Hincmar's archive and moreover, he quoted many Hincmar's works – amongst others the *Visio Bernoldi*. I think that if Hincmar knew one of the *Apologetici*, Flodoard would have known about it as well. Finally, there are other ways in which the *Visio Bernoldi* and Ebbo's *Apologeticum* could have ended up in Sirmond's transcription together. Maybe the monks in Hérivaux kept one archive filled with texts concerning Reims and made Sirmond one transcript of all the texts he found there?²⁵⁸ Even the possibility should be considered that Sirmond himself had compiled these texts. According to Patzold, it is possible that the last part of the second version of the *Apologeticum* originally had not been inserted in this version. Patzold suggested Sirmond added it to his transcription whereas it actually was a separate manuscript in the same collection. In the same way, the *Apologeticum* and the *Visio Bernoldi* might have ended up in the same manuscript.²⁵⁹ All said and done, the only thing we know for fact is that the monks in Hérivaux seem to have kept a dossier about Ebbo and Reims.

The content of the second version of the *Apologeticum* is in parts comparable with the first version. Its opening lines, however, are very different. In the first lines of

²⁵⁷ Booker, *Past Convictions* 95-96.

²⁵⁸ Van der Lugt, 'Tradition and Revision' 137.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Patzold, *Episcopus* 322-323 n.461.

his first version, Ebbo wrote that the he had known good fortune during the early years of Louis the Pious' reign. After these lines, he started, as we have seen, his litany about the sins of the world, the sins of men and his own sinfulness. In the second version, the motive of sin is stressed much more. Now he started by claiming: "let all men of this empire and beyond truly know, how many evils have multiplied in this age of ours, because of our sins."²⁶⁰ In the edition of the first version, Ebbo's narrative about sin and penance took about two pages.²⁶¹ In the second version, the same episode took a page more.²⁶² This part is filled with biblical references. In it, Ebbo explained that the only road to salvation is doing penance. The passage can easily be summarized by quoting just one of the biblical phrases Ebbo uses to argue his case, Luke 18:14: 'every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'²⁶³ The implication of this long passage must have been inevitable. According to Ebbo, the world was full of sins and the only way to be released from one's sins was to follow the example of the blessed apostles and to be humble: to do penance. Ebbo had sinned like everyone. However, he at least had showed himself humble so he, contrary to so many others who persisted in their sins, would be exalted.

After this long passage, Ebbo returned to the same line he had followed in the first version of his *Apologeticum*. In order, we find the following parts: first, he discussed his penance of 835 and the document we know as *Resignatio Ebonis*;²⁶⁴ hereafter, Ebbo included and discussed a document he had not inserted in the first version of the *Apologeticum*: a charter written at the council of Ingelheim where he had been reinstated;²⁶⁵ and finally, he inserted the – probably forged – document signed by the suffragan bishops that he had inserted in the first version. As I mentioned before, the possibility should be taken into account that this last document was only added to the second version of the *Apologeticum* by Sirmond in his transcript. The way, in which in this second version of the *Apologeticum* Ebbo described his confession of 835, is closely connected to the first part of the text. As in the first version, he claimed that everybody sinned and that Christ had demanded the world to confess and to do penance. In this way, Ebbo

²⁶⁰ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* II 800 ll. 1-3.

²⁶¹ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I 795-796.

²⁶² Ebbo, *Apologeticum* II 800-802.

²⁶³ Ibidem 801 ll. 42-43.

²⁶⁴ Ibidem 803 ll. 1-37.

²⁶⁵ Ibidem 803-805 ll. 38-11.

presented himself again as an example for all men: he had followed Christ's example and had paid for his sins, so everybody else should do penance too.²⁶⁶

Hereafter, we find a new element in this version of the *Apologeticum*. As said, Ebbo included a document that had been signed at the council of Ingelheim, where he had been reinstated. In this document, the prelates who attended this synod confirmed Ebbo's return to Reims. This document is definitely genuine – it is known from several manuscripts and is to be found in Flodoard's *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*²⁶⁷ – but in his version, Ebbo gave it an interesting twist: he added some extra sentences that gave the document even more importance. As usual, the original document ended with a list of those prelates who had signed it plus their titles. The first of them was Drogo of Metz. After Drogo's name, Ebbo wrote a few sentences repeating exactly his own arguments: that no bishop could ever be deposed by a worldly court, that a bishop never could be forced to appear in court, et cetera. Moreover, in Ebbo's version of this document, Drogo did not sign as *episcopus* like in the original, but as 'son of Charles, the glorious emperor, brother of Louis, the most excellent emperor, and imperial archbishop of his whole holy church.'²⁶⁸ Probably, in this way Ebbo stressed Drogo's important position in order to make clear that his decisions were in accordance with the wishes of the Carolingian family.²⁶⁹ Ebbo definitely pretended that these were indeed Drogo's own words. Historians have never had any doubt about the status of these lines; they are most definitely not authentic.²⁷⁰ It is uncertain why Ebbo did not include this document – with or without his own additions – in the first version of his *Apologeticum*. Probably, the acts of the council of Ingelheim were not finished yet when he wrote the first version. Although in the only surviving manuscript written at the council the meeting was dated on June 24, 840, probably the actual synod had taken place later and was *rückdatiert* in order to make its decisions valid from June 840 onwards.²⁷¹

Before I will continue to discuss this document, I must return to the question when the second version of the *Apologeticum* was written. As we have seen, from the manuscripts involved we cannot learn much about the date of both *Apologetici*. In 1900, when he made the first edition of the second version, Albert Werminghoff claimed that

²⁶⁶ Cf. Patzold, *Episcopus* 322.

²⁶⁷ Cf. *Concilium Ingelheimense* 791-792.

²⁶⁸ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* II 804 ll. 20-23: *Filius Karoli gloriosi Augusti, frater Hludowici, excellentissimorum Caesarum totiusque sanctae ecclesiae ipsorum palatinus archipraesul.*

²⁶⁹ Patzold, *Episcopus* 323.

²⁷⁰ Werminghoff, 'Ein neuer Text' 374, Patzold, *Episcopus* 322-323.

²⁷¹ Hartmann, *Konziliengeschichte* 197 n.1.

both versions were written just after Ebbo's second deposition, probably to be brought to Rome in 844. In his view, the second version of the *Apologeticum* is a revised version of the first. According to Werminghoff, the first version should be understood as a rough draft.²⁷² In modern historiography, this idea was often taken for granted.²⁷³ As we have seen, because of the content of the very last sentence of the first version, Patzold claimed that this first version had been written in 840 already. According to this author, the second version was written after Ebbo's deposition indeed, probably to be presented in Rome.²⁷⁴ I could not agree more with Patzold, and had come to that conclusion before I read *Episcopus*. In my opinion, not just that last sentence points towards the fact that Ebbo wrote the two versions of his *Apologeticum* in very different circumstances. I think that in general the two texts, although its contents are comparable, are different in tone. The first version of the *Apologeticum* is filled with hope. In it, Ebbo remembered the good periods of Louis the Pious' reign – when he and the emperor had been so close. Moreover, in this version of the *Apologeticum*, Ebbo kept on thinking in terms of solution. His *Resignatio* had been misinterpreted, but he explained what had been going wrong, he explained how his words had been misread and abused and how one should read them. He ended this first version with his return to Reims, confirmed by his own suffrages.

The second version tells the same tale but from a different perspective. As I have argued above, the mood of especially the first part of the second version is very different from that of the first. Although in both cases Ebbo's confession of 835 was the main point of reference, this confession is perceived very differently in his second version. Now the author did hardly dared to try to convince his readers that his confession had been interpreted wrongly. This time, Ebbo's focus was a long diatribe about the moral superiority of the penitent. He clearly felt himself undervalued: he had confessed and he had done penance for his sins – following the great examples: Jesus and the emperor Louis – but he had been deposed nevertheless. It is not just his own sins Ebbo kept on writing about. According to the second version of his *Apologeticum*, the whole world was full of sin and sinners, and the truly humble penitent was not even rewarded. In my opinion, here a much more bitter man was writing. Ebbo's main point in the second version was his own humility; in the first version, just the very last part was dedicated to

²⁷² Werminghoff, 'Ein neuer Text' 375-377, Booker, *Past Convictions* 95.

²⁷³ Cf. e.g. Devisse, *Hincmar* 84-89, Booker, *Past Convictions* 95. Goetting, however, claimed that Ebbo wrote his *Apologeticum* for the lower clergy and laymen in Reims in 840 or 841 but he does not make a distinction between the first and second version either. Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 69 and 69-70 n.103.

²⁷⁴ Patzold, *Episcopus* 322, 324.

this issue. The first version gave the account of a man who was happy to be back in his office. The second version told the tale of a man who was just sent in exile for the second time.

The question remains why Ebbo included the partially forged charter written at the council of Ingelheim to the second version of his *Apologeticum*. It would make no sense to forge Drogo's words if there was a chance that Drogo would ever find out – unless Drogo had agreed with the addition himself. As far as I know, nobody before me ever made this suggestion, but in my opinion, it is not as unlikely as it may seem at first sight. Indeed, Drogo had been one of the architects of Ebbo's deposition, but, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Drogo's position towards Ebbo changed dramatically after Louis the Pious' death. From now on, the two archbishops were both in Lothar's camp – in 840 Drogo signed the document that confirmed Ebbo's return in Reims. Moreover, he could have been the man behind the *Vita Hludowici* in which Ebbo received a rather mild treatment. Finally, we have to consider the fact that in 844 Ebbo and Drogo travelled to Rome together ask for new papal support. Most probably, Ebbo revised his first *Apologeticum* for this occasion so it is not unthinkable that Drogo knew of the existence of this *Apologeticum* and its contents. Maybe Drogo himself even consented with the lines that we find in the second version with his name – in that case, it had not been forged after all. However, if the second version of the *Apologeticum* was indeed intended for Pope Sergio's II, it has not been of much help. Because in Rome in 844 “the prelate [the pope] pronounced them unworthy to receive communion among the clerics; they might have leave only to communicate among the ordinary people.”²⁷⁵

Ebbo defended, 853-867

The Narratio Clericorum Remensium

When exactly the clerics Ebbo had consecrated in 840 and 841 wrote the so-called *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* is not clear – in fact, we are not even certain about their authorship. The *Narratio* survived history only in one manuscript, a twelfth century codex that is kept in Paris.²⁷⁶ From its context we can conclude that it was written after the

²⁷⁵ Davis, *Liber Pontificalis* 82.

²⁷⁶ *Narratio Clericorum Remensium*.

council of Soissons of 853.²⁷⁷ Since the accounts of the councils of 866 and 867 do not seem to mention the *Narratio*, we may assume that it was not presented at one of these meetings. Because of its context, it is highly unlikely that the text was written after 867. As a result, the *Narratio* is thought to have been written between 853 and 866, and according to most scholars in 866.²⁷⁸ As aforementioned, no specific author of the document can be named and a reference to a possible author is absent from its content. However, another group of authors other than those clerics can hardly be imagined.²⁷⁹ Since the actual author, or authors, remain unknown, I will refer to him as the narrator.

The title *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* is certainly not medieval. The document was most probably named by its first modern editor, André Duchesne.²⁸⁰ In the so-called *Narratio*, the narrator repeated Ebbo's complete tale. Starting with the revolt against Louis the Pious and Ebbo's imprisonment in 835,²⁸¹ he told in detail what happened to him before he was taken to Thionville to be judged.²⁸² At Thionville, so it is written, Ebbo was deposed. At this point in the *Narratio*, the *Resignatio Ebonis* is included.²⁸³ The *Narratio* is very brief about Ebbo's deposition, and the legitimacy of his trial is not questioned. For me this shows that the narrator did not know any of the *Apologetici*. Had he known these texts, he would probably have used the arguments mentioned in it to claim that the trial in Thionville had been invalid. Moreover, to the author of the *Narratio* Ebbo's second deposition was probably of greater importance than his first; for the clerics consecrated in 840 and 841 this had been a decisive moment. If it was decided

²⁷⁷ Ibidem 806.

²⁷⁸ Fuhrmann, *Einfluß und Verbreitung* 208-209 most notably n.43, Patzold, *Episcopus* 333. Cf. also note 189 of this thesis. Fuhrmann's work is part of a discussion that is going on for ages already about the so-called Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, a set of texts written in the ninth century about the position of bishops. Fuhrmann a.o. suggest that the decretals have been written by the rebels of 833 who in the end lost their case. In this view, the decretals could have been written in Ebbo's defense. Cf. also E. Magnou-Nortier, 'La tentative de subversion de l'État sous Louis le Pieux et l'oeuvre des falsificateurs', *Le Moyen Âge* 105 (1999) 331-365. According to the main other position historians have taken on those decretals, Wala and Paschasius Radbertus are the master brains behind them, writing in support of their own after 833. Cf. Klaus Zechiel-Eckes, 'Auf Pseudoisidors Spur: Oder: Versuch, einen dichten Schleier zu lüften', in: W. Hartmann and G. Schmitz ed., *Fortschritt durch Fälschungen? Ursprung, Bestalt und Wirkungen der pseudoisidorischen Fälschungen*, MGH Studien und Texte 31 (Hannover 2002) 1-28. In my thesis, I avoided this debate. However, I have to say that if indeed one wrote the decretals in Ebbo's defense, it is very strange that we find no single reference to them in any of the sources written during the ninth century about Ebbo, neither by himself, nor by his defenders or his antagonists.

²⁷⁹ Fuhrmann suggested that Wulfad could have been the author of the *Narratio*. That might be true, but he gives no argument for Wulfad that does not count for any of the other clerics from this group. Fuhrmann, *Einfluß und Verbreitung* 208 and Patzold, *Episcopus* 333 n.535.

²⁸⁰ André Duchesne, *Historiae Franciae scriptores duodecim II* (Paris 1636).

²⁸¹ *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* 807 ll. 9-17. For my summary of the *Narratio*, I gratefully used Mayke de Jong's translation (unpublished).

²⁸² Ibidem ll. 17-28.

²⁸³ Ibidem 807-808 ll. 28-12.

that Ebbo had been deposed illegally they could keep their position; otherwise their ordination would be invalid.

After the *Resignatio*, the narrator continued with a short account of Ebbo's captivity after 835²⁸⁴ to go on with his rehabilitation in Ingelheim in 840. The mere fact of Ebbo's reinstatement is told in one, rather short sentence.²⁸⁵ Much more stressed is the list of bishops who had signed the document that confirmed Ebbo's return to Reims.²⁸⁶ The author of the *Narratio* had the clear intention to show the world that by 840, basically everybody in the empire, at least the whole church, had agreed with Ebbo's reinstatement. In the *Narratio*, not just a list with bishops and archbishops who signed the document is quoted, but the narrator claimed, moreover, that other abbots, priests and deacons had given their confirmation too. Moreover, the narrator included the document in which the suffragan bishops of the archbishopric of Reims confirmed Ebbo's reinstatement.²⁸⁷ The same document we found in both versions of Ebbo's *Apologeticum*. The text of this document as we find it in the *Narratio* is almost identical to the version quoted in both *Apologetici*. However, there is one interesting difference. In the *Apologetici*, the document was signed by a list of eight different bishops.²⁸⁸ In the *Narratio*, however, it is claimed that a certain chorbishop named Vitaus had read out the document on behalf of Theoderich of Cambrai.²⁸⁹ Consequently, this version of the document is not concluded by the list of names of those who signed the document, but with Theoderich personal regrets about what had happened to Ebbo during the previous years.²⁹⁰

Now what should we think about this alternative version of the suffragan's document? As said, the same document had already been presented by the clerics in 853, at the council of Soissons where their case had been judged. At this council, the same suffragans who were supposed to have signed the document claimed it to be forged. First of all, it is uncertain which version of the document was presented to the synod in 853 – it was not included in the acts of the synod. However, the acts of the synod do make clear that in 853 the clerics claimed that more than one bishop had signed the

²⁸⁴ Ibidem 808 ll. 13-19.

²⁸⁵ Ibidem ll. 20-22.

²⁸⁶ Ibidem 808-809 ll. 22-4.

²⁸⁷ Ibidem 809-810 ll. 26-7.

²⁸⁸ Ebbo, *Apologeticum* I, 798 ll. 14-24 and Ebbo, *Apologeticum* II 805-806 ll. 25-3.

²⁸⁹ *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* 809 ll. 22-25.

²⁹⁰ Ibidem 810 ll. 4-7.

document.²⁹¹ Hence, I suppose that they presented the version we know from Ebbo's *Apologetici*. It is quite strange that the same clerics used the same document, in a slightly altered version, once again in 866 or 867. However, in 866 they had a good opportunity to use the same document again, especially by attributing it entirely to Theoderich. He had died in 863, so at least he could not accuse the clerics of forgery anymore.

Hereafter, the *Narratio* continued by elaborating on Ebbo's formal reinstatement in Reims and on the prosperous time during which the clerics were consecrated. The narrator claimed that from 840 onwards, Ebbo had remained archbishop for over two years.²⁹² This is rather a strange idea, for as far as we know, Ebbo was forced to leave Reims in the summer of 841 when Charles the Bald took the town. I will get back to this anomaly later in this chapter. According to the author of the *Narratio*, several bishops and the pope confirmed Ebbo's restitution in the period in which he was back in Reims. In the *Narratio* we even find the claim that Ebbo had visited Pope Gregory in Rome, where he was reinstated once again.²⁹³ This, however, is very unlikely. Firstly, such a visit would be mentioned in other sources (the *Liber Pontificalis*, the second *Apologeticum* et cetera). Moreover, within the seven months he was in his office, Ebbo could not possibly have visited Rome – the period was just too short. Why is this impossible visit mentioned in the *Narratio* nevertheless? The narrator certainly possessed a letter of Gregory IV that Ebbo had forged at the end of his life to support his case in Hildesheim.²⁹⁴ Probably the narrator thought it to be a genuine papal letter. Whether the author of the *Narratio* actually believed that Ebbo had visited to Rome in 840 or 841 is hard to say. If he was a cleric very close to him, he would have known that this information was false. However, he might have hoped that the letter, of which he probably did not know that it had been forged, could convince others of Ebbo's visit. On the other hand, we have to consider the option that the author of the *Narratio* really thought that Ebbo had visited Rome in 840 or 841.

After this period of good fortune, the *Narratio* turns to darker days. As we have seen, an interesting difference with the more general historiography can be found in the *Narratio*'s description of Ebbo's second flight from Reims. It has always been thought that Ebbo left Reims immediately after the Battle of Fontenoy where Charles the Bald had defeated Lothar. Charles took Reims in August 841 and, as one argued, Ebbo took

²⁹¹ Hartmann, *Konziliengeschichte* 246.

²⁹² *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* 811 ll. 4-8.

²⁹³ *Ibidem* 810-811 ll. 26-4.

²⁹⁴ *Ibidem* 811 ll. 3-4. About this letter cf. note 227.

refuge at Lothar's court before Charles' troops entered his town.²⁹⁵ However, *Narratio* it claims that Ebbo left Reims after two years.²⁹⁶ Indeed, Ebbo had formally been deposed in 843 at the council of Bourges so technically this is true. However, it nevertheless seems remarkable that the author would mention this since Ebbo had not been in Reims anymore after Charles the Bald took the town in August 841. Could it be possible that Ebbo stayed in Reims until 843? This is very unlikely. In his *Historia Remensis Ecclesia*, Flodoard noted that Ebbo had remained bishop *per totum circiter annum*: for about one whole year.²⁹⁷ Even though Flodoard seems to be the only other contemporary source about this case, there is no reason to doubt about his words. It is almost unthinkable that Ebbo stayed in Reims the moment Lothar could not protect him anymore. Maybe the author of the *Narratio* used the words *plus quam biennio*²⁹⁸ to refer to a somewhat vague 'certain period.' It is also possible that by 866, twenty-five years after Ebb's flight from Reims and fifteen years after his death, the author just did not know what had happened precisely when. At the end of this paragraph, the narrator of the *Narratio* concludes that since there was no possibility for Ebbo to stay in Reims, he turned to Louis the German who provided him with the see of Hildesheim. Nevertheless, Ebbo never stopped aspiring to return to Reims.²⁹⁹

After the chronological overview of the period between 835 and 845, the narrator went on with a complaint about the way in which Hincmar was elected. Firstly, the narrator claimed, King Charles immediately after he took possession of Reims ordered those clerics to minister. However, the king did not want to accuse the clerics of anything.³⁰⁰ Moreover, the author asserted that Hincmar had become archbishop unjustly. According to the *Narratio*, Hincmar only became archbishop after some monk named Ermenard of Orbais had declared by oath that Ebbo had died. However, the author of the *Narratio* had also evidence for the fact that Hincmar knew very well that Ebbo had been alive in 845.³⁰¹ Firstly, this meant that Ermenard had made a false statement. Moreover, this proved that Hincmar had usurped Ebbo's position. The *Narratio* concludes with a description of the council of Soissons of 853.³⁰² According to the narrator, Hincmar only dared to organize this synod after Ebbo's death in 851. The

²⁹⁵ Cf. e.g. Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 70, Patzold, *Episcopus* 321, Booker, *Past Convictions* 192 etc.

²⁹⁶ *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* 811-812 ll. 4-2.

²⁹⁷ Flodoard, *Historia* 189 ll. 5-6.

²⁹⁸ *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* 811 l. 4.

²⁹⁹ *Ibidem* 812 ll. 3-11.

³⁰⁰ *Ibidem* ll. 12-18.

³⁰¹ *Ibidem* 812-813 ll. 29-9.

³⁰² *Ibidem* 813-814 ll 10-2.

obvious conclusion of the *Narratio*: the deposition of the clerics in 853 had been against church law.

So far, we have considered quite a number of sources and this one probably gives the most headaches of them all. What struck me most when I read this text, is how little the *Narratio*'s author seemed to know – or how little he assumed that a possible reader would know. The text is full of seemingly strange mistakes: did the anonymous narrator really think that Ebbo had remained in Reims until the council of Bourges? It should have been widely known that the council was just a formality and that he had left Reims since 841. Did the narrator really believe that during his short period in Reims Ebbo had visited Rome, or that the forged letter by Gregory was genuine? In this fake letter, 'Pope Gregory IV' almost literally repeated some of Ebbo's arguments. According to Hampe, to create the new papal letter, Ebbo used an authentic letter written by Pope Paschal I in 822. To the model of this genuine papal letter, he added his own arguments. Why Ebbo forged this letter is unclear – most probably he never intended to show it to many people for the risk that is forgery would be discovered was too big. Hampe suggests that he wrote it just to show it to the lower clerics in Hildesheim to strengthen his position as their superior.³⁰³ If the narrator actually believed that Ebbo had visited Rome, he could not have been very close to Ebbo. It is more likely that the narrator knew of the false letter, but in that case, the question remains how the author knew about it. The letter was never publicly used by Ebbo and why and when exactly he forged it, is unclear. As said, Karl Hampe, who 'discovered' Ebbo's forgery, suggested that he wrote it just to show it to the lower clerics in Hildesheim so he could strengthen his position as their superior. According to Hampe, Ebbo did not write this letter to gain support for his case among people in a higher position, as the danger of his risk being discovered was too big.³⁰⁴ Especially at a council the letter could never have been used: from most (important) synods a written account was sent to Rome and in many cases papal legates visited councils in the north.³⁰⁵ However, it is possible to interpret this forged letter in a very different way. In the 830s and early 840s, the pope had hardly been involved with those Frankish interior troubles. During the 860s, the pope's role had changed. As we have seen in my paragraph about the councils of 866 and 867, in this period the pope was very

³⁰³ Hampe, 'Zum Streite Hinkmars von Reims' 180-191.

³⁰⁴ Ibidem.

³⁰⁵ Ibidem.

much concerned with all that happened north of the Alps.³⁰⁶ From the perspective of the 860s, it was logical to expect papal involvement in 840. Therefore, the letter could well have been accepted as a genuine document, not just by the author of the *Narratio* but also at the councils of the 860s.

Then there is the case of the document that, according to the *Narratio*, had been read by Vitaus in Ingelheim in 840 on behalf of Theoderich, whereas according to Ebbo himself, the document had been signed by all suffragan bishops. Did the author of the *Narratio* believe this document to be genuine? Who created at which point in history the alternative end to the text, and left out all the Episcopal subscriptions? At this point, I can hardly give satisfactory answers to all these questions, but the *Narratio Clericorum Remensium* is certainly an interesting source that deserves to be further researched in the future.

Charles the Bald's Letter of 867

In 867, Hincmar had good reasons to be angry. The case he had fought so hard for over twenty years had failed: as argued, after the council of Troyes in 867 Pope Hadrian II had decided that the clerics consecrated in 840 and 841 could remain in their office. Moreover, although Ebbo was not formally rehabilitated, the pope had decided not to confirm his deposition in 841. As I have argued before, Hadrian chose to leave the case alone. Hincmar knew who was to blame for the failure of his synods of 866 and 867: Charles the Bald. After the council of Troyes, Hincmar wrote an account of the meeting to Rome, to Pope Nicholas I who was still in office by then. Bishop Actard of Nantes was appointed as his messenger. According to Hincmar, the letter did not reach Rome untouched. In his entry for 867 in the *Annals of Saint-Bertin*, he wrote:

Actard received the letter drawn up in the Synod at Troyes and signed with the seals of the archbishops present there, and which he was now to carry.

Then along with certain bishops, he went back to Charles, as Charles

³⁰⁶ Cf. e.g. Nicholas II's involvement on pp. 43-44 of this thesis. The matter of the pope's changing position is rather complicated. In my own research that resulted in this thesis, I have observed the interesting change I described above: it seems that during the 830s the pope was not very much interested in Frankish interior affairs. The other way round, north of the Alps one was not very much concerned with the pope's opinion. In the 860s, things seem to have changed: especially Pope Nicholas II interfered more often than not in Frankish church councils. From this period onwards, the Frankish rulers and bishops apparently expected the pope to intervene. It is striking that in all their letters, both Charles the Bald and Hincmar suggested the pope to check his own archives for old letters that, in their opinion, had to be written. I discussed this topic extensively with Mayke de Jong. As far as I know, not much has been written about this interesting matter yet, which deserves future research.

himself had ordered. Charles forgot the fidelity and all the labours which, for his honour and for the secure holding of his realm, the oft-mentioned Hincmar had undertaken for so many years: he ordered Actard to hand over the letter, broke the archbishops' seals, and read all that had been done at the synod. Because Hincmar had not ended up by being silenced at that synod, as Charles had wished, the king had a letter written to Pope Nicholas at his dictation and in his name in opposition to Hincmar and he sealed this letter with the *bull*a bearing his own name and sent it to Rome along with the synodal letter by the same carrier, Actard.³⁰⁷

It is highly unlikely that Charles had opened and read Hincmar's letter, as Hincmar suggested.³⁰⁸ To break a seal, especially of synodal acts, was a serious crime. Probably Hincmar made this suggestion in order to harm Charles' reputation. After all, Charles did not need this letter to know what had been decided at the synod. He definitely had intimates who were present at the synod, allied clerics who could provide him with a report of the synod's decisions. The king took great interest in this council because of Wulfad, one of the clerics consecrated by Ebbo in 840 or 841. As we have seen, he had not been deposed in 853 like the other clerics from Reims, because of his illness during the synod. Instead, Wulfad had made quite a career after 853: via some abbacies he had become bishop of Langres and now he was the new archbishop of Bourges, desired and rapidly appointed by the king. On top of that, he had become one of Charles' main advisors and his close ally.³⁰⁹ The councils of Soissons (866) and Troyes (867) thus dealt with the fate of one of Charles' personal favourites; it must have been a good reason for the king to have a close look at the synods and to intervene, if necessary.

King Charles raised his voice at a decisive moment; the letter Hincmar wrote about in the annals, did exist. Its length is almost as long as the acts of the synod.³¹⁰ Regarding Ebbo's entry in the annals, it is rather certain that Charles wrote (or dictated) the letter himself. In it, the king told the pope Ebbo's full story in order that the pope could form a good image of the dead bishop. As mentioned before, we have to be grateful to Charles for writing this letter since it is the only source available for many details of Ebbo's life, especially about his parentage and Judith's interference on Ebbo's behalf in 835. Because

³⁰⁷ Nelson, *The Annals of Saint-Bertin* 140-141.

³⁰⁸ Devisse, *Hincmar* 627.

³⁰⁹ Already in 866 Charles pushed Wulfad's case in Rome. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* 212.

³¹⁰ Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 239-243.

of Charles' position in the debate, we have to handle this letter with more care than has been done so far by me and by most other historians who wrote about Ebbo.³¹¹ Charles obviously created as positive an image of Ebbo as possible; moreover, we should wonder how Charles knew about the details he gave of Ebbo's early years: in 835, the year of Ebbo's fall, the king was hardly twelve years old. Maybe he knew tales about Ebbo from his mother, the late empress Judith. But since they involved her favourite archbishop, these stories could not have been very objective either. Moreover, this letter was not written because of a life-long bond between Charles and Ebbo. On the contrary: in August 841 Ebbo had been forced to leave Reims by Charles' upcoming armies; in 843 it had been Charles who organized the council of Bourges where Ebbo's deposition was confirmed³¹² and in 845, Hincmar had been appointed by Charles.³¹³ Charles only chose Ebbo's side after the start of his conflict with Hincmar, concerning Wulfad.

Charles' letter starts with the very beginning of Ebbo's story: his birth into an unimportant family at Charlemagne's court.³¹⁴ According to Charles, Ebbo was "taken under his wing with royal goodness by our glorious grandfather Charles, educated intensively in the affairs of the palace, rendered to freedom, advanced to sacred orders because of the excellence of a lively intellect, he was dispatched to serve my most pious father the august Louis who ruled the kingdom of Aquitaine. Before long, he [Louis], discovering him [Ebo] to be vigorous and energetic in this service befitting a free man, made him librarian."³¹⁵ Ebbo and Louis returned to the center of the empire in 816 where Ebbo soon became archbishop of Reims.³¹⁶ According to Charles, Ebbo remained extremely loyal to the emperor throughout this period, and also during the first period of rebellion in 830.³¹⁷ In 833, however, for reasons Charles did not explain, Ebbo became one of the many bishops who rebelled against the emperor. Charles even depicts Ebbo as one of the leaders of the trial against Louis that resulted in the emperor's public penance.³¹⁸ As soon as Louis was released from his imprisonment he captured Ebbo, who tried to flee to Paris. Ebbo was brought to Metz where, in the church of Saint Stephen, he

³¹¹ The exception is Courtney Booker who rightfully claimed that in this letter Charles remained remarkably silent about certain events that did not suit his tale. Booker, *Past Convictions* 202.

³¹² Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe* 70.

³¹³ Devisse, *Hincmar* 31-40.

³¹⁴ I gratefully used Mayke de Jong's translation of the letter (unpublished). On this letter, cf. Patzold, *Episcopus* 344-345 and Booker, *Past Convictions* 200-202

³¹⁵ Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 239 ll. 24-30.

³¹⁶ *Ibidem* 239-240 ll. 30-6.

³¹⁷ *Ibidem* 240 ll. 7-10.

³¹⁸ *Ibidem* ll. 10-18.

publicly confessed that injustice had been done to Louis.³¹⁹ According to Charles, thereafter the emperor summoned to a *placitum generale* in Thionville, where his trial would continue.³²⁰ However, the bishops, who wanted to protect the respect for their position, convinced Louis of the fact that Ebbo's case should be judged *in sacrario*, without the presence of the laity.³²¹ The order of occurrences Charles wrote echoes the account of the trial against Ebbo as we read it in the Annals of Saint-Bertin.³²² Just in Charles' and the annalist's narrative, the idea is to be found that Ebbo first confessed in public in Metz and that thereafter the trial would continue in Thionville. Of course, it is possible that Charles and the annalist knew about the same fact. However, we have to consider the option that Charles, who had just been twelve years old in 835, did not know exactly anymore what had happened at which place, and consulted the annals to help his own memory.

Meanwhile Ebbo had sent a certain hermit named Framergaud with his ring to Judith to beg her for help. According to Charles, the empress used her influence to make Louis change his position: after her interference Ebbo's deposition was not his aim anymore and the bishops agreed with him.³²³ In the end, Charles wrote, the only sentence imposed on Ebbo, was the one he had declared himself in a certain document.³²⁴ This 'certain document' seems to be the *Resignatio Ebonis*. The following sentences are most interesting. Charles wrote:

This authentic document the venerable archbishop Hincmar received from the aforesaid Fulco, the venerable abbot to whom the church of Reims was entrusted at the time, and he sent it to you, as he told us. But whether this has been transmitted to you pure and simple, we do not know. But this we know for absolutely sure: that none of the bishops subscribed it. For the same Ebo, understanding his situation of inevitable danger, brought forward three witnesses who were also his confessors, namely Archbishop Aiulf and the bishops Moduin and Badarad, who, occupying his place, whether it was true, what Ebo had thus confessed, and would give him advice to abstain from the Episcopal ministry, which then again three others would confirm in writing, namely Archbishop Noto, and the bishops

³¹⁹ Ibidem ll. 25-32.

³²⁰ Ibidem ll. 33-35.

³²¹ Ibidem ll. 35-38.

³²² Cf. pp. 29-30 of this thesis.

³²³ Ibidem 240-241 ll. 39-13.

³²⁴ Ibidem 241 l. 13: *nisi quam ipse scripto ediderat*.

Theoderic and Achardus. When these matters had been taken care of, he [Ebbo] was taken back into custody.³²⁵

It is hardly necessary to stress the importance of this passage. First of all, Charles claimed clearly that at the council of Soissons of 835, Ebbo had not been deposed for the bishops had never signed anything. He had just confessed his sins to his own confessors and his confession had been confirmed by three other prelates. In other words: according to Charles, the *libellus* that Jonas of Orléans had added to the *Resignatio*³²⁶ was a false document. Moreover, in this passage the king almost accused Hincmar of sending this altered version to Rome, while he knew that the document partly had been forged.

Charles the Bald's general argumentation shows a striking similarity with Ebbo's in the *Apologetici*. Like Ebbo, Charles claimed that Ebbo had only been accused – and not judged – at a general meeting (a *tribunal palatinum*, in Ebbo's words) while a bishop could only be condemned by a synod without the presence of laity.³²⁷ According to both Ebbo and Charles, Ebbo had never confessed in public and there was no reason why he could not return to Reims, after his proper period of penance. This might be an indication that Charles knew one of the *Apologetici*. However, Patzold argued that both Ebbo and Charles separately followed what he called the 'Paris model', that is, the view of the council of Paris (829) on the position of bishops: they could not be deposed by men and deserved to be honoured.³²⁸

Charles continued the letter by explaining that after the decision was made not to depose Ebbo, Louis the Pious sent a letter to Rome so that Gregory IV could confirm these proceedings. Hereafter, Charles made an interesting remark: he knew that the pope received that message, but his answer was unknown to him.³²⁹ For some modern historians this was reason to suggest that Charles himself had invented this

³²⁵ Transl. De Jong (unpublished). "Hanc autem autenticam scriptionem a praefato Fulcone venerabili abbate, cui tunc ecclesia Remensis comissa fuerat, Hincmarus venerabilis archiepiscopus accepit et vobis eam, ut ipse nobis retulit, transmisit. Sed utrum pure ac simpliciter vobis sit directa ignoramus. Hoc tamen verissime novimus, quod nullus episcoporum eam propria manu subterfirmaverit. Nam idem Ebo, comperta inevitabili sui discriminis causa, protulit tres testes, tamquam suos confessores, Aiulfum videlicet archiepiscopum, Moduinum et Badaradum episcopos, qui vicem illius obtinentes dicerent, si ita verum est, ut ipse Ebo eis confitebatur, consilium ei darent, ut a pontificali ministerio abstineret, quid etiam sibi alios tres adsciverunt, qui eum illis confitentem viderunt, Notonem scilicet archiepiscopum, Teodricum et Achardum episcopos. Quibus expletis reductus est in custodiam." Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 241 ll. 14-24.

³²⁶ *Ebonis Archiepiscopi Remensis Resignatio* 702-703.

³²⁷ Cf. *Apologeticum I* 795 ll. 26-36.

³²⁸ Patzold, *Episcopus* 345. On this model *ibidem* 149-168.

³²⁹ Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 241 ll. 25-30.

communication between the imperial and papal courts.³³⁰ As I suggested above, in the context of the 860s when the popes were often involved in Frankish affairs, it was rather logic that one expected that the pope had been involved in the 830s. However, during the 830s the pope's position had been very different.³³¹ It is not unthinkable that during the 860s one created older papal letters in order to adapt history to changed circumstances. In the ninth century, Hincmar had the very same idea. In 866 and 867, Wulfad and his allies used several letters presumably written by Gregory in support of their case; according to Hincmar, all these letters were false. After the council of Troyes in 867, when he discovered that Wulfad *cum suis* had told Nicholas about those – according to him invented – papal decisions, he subsequently wrote a letter to Rome. In this letter he suggested that in Rome, one should check the papal archives; likely, no letters by Gregory on this case would be found.³³² Indeed, if such a letter from Gregory IV existed, I would expect to find references to it in at least one of the sources I have discussed in this thesis. The only letter by Gregory IV about this case is the letter I have considered before, and which seems to be forged by Ebbo himself.³³³ On the other hand, the reasoning Charles continued with seems plausible: if Ebbo was indeed deposed in 835, why had he not been replaced until ten years later?³³⁴ Moreover, Charles himself made the same suggestion to check the papal archives for the letter Gregory was supposed to have written in 835.³³⁵ Finishing the story of Ebbo's life by summarizing the latter's restitution in 840,³³⁶ Charles then moved on to the second main character of his letter: Wulfad. At great length, the king apologized for Wulfad's all too hasty appointment to the archiepiscopal see of Bourges, claiming that circumstances required it.³³⁷ Ebbo's flight in 841, the end of his career in Hildesheim and his death were apparently not important enough for him to mention.

It is remarkable how many details, particularly about Ebbo's younger years, Charles gave in this letter. He did this, as he states, so that the pope, who probably had already heard

³³⁰ Cf. Booker, *Past Convictions* 202 and his references in n.82.

³³¹ Cf. n. 306 of this thesis.

³³² Hincmar of Reims, *Fragment eines Hincmarbriefes an den römischen Abt Anastasius über die Ebo-Wulfad-Angelegenheit*, ed. Ernst Perels, MGH Epp. 8 (Hannover 1939) 223-225, 224. Hincmar did not address this letter to the pope, but to the keeper of the papal archives, Anastasius Bibliothecarius. Anastasius (811/812-877) is an interesting figure. He is identified with Pope Anastasius, who had been antipope in 855.

³³³ Hampe, 'Zum Streite Hinkmars von Reims' 180-191.

³³⁴ Charles the Bald, *Letter to Nicholas I* 241 ll. 32-34.

³³⁵ *Ibidem* ll. 30-32.

³³⁶ *Ibidem* 241-242 ll. 37-9.

³³⁷ *Ibidem* 242 ll. 10-40.

quite some rumours about Ebbo, would be able to judge the archbishop from a less biased perspective. However, maybe the king also felt some sympathy towards Ebbo? Especially the episode about Judith's ring – a part of the tale we find in no other source – should be stressed here. In 835 Charles was twelve years old and an eyewitness of many things that happened those days. As he wrote in the letter, in 833 his elder brothers had sent him into exile in the monastery of Prüm. Who knows what the young Charles saw and heard during that time, and how all that happened around him affected him? Moreover, we should not forget about the role Judith may have played. As we have seen, according to Charles, Judith used all the influence she had, but never in the public arena. How much did she share with Charles, back in 835 and later? We do not need Freudian theories to believe that a mother's influence on her son should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, the letter was written with one clear aim: to fight for Wulfad's position.

Although rehabilitating Ebbo completely was probably not the main aim of the letter, it provides us with some interesting views on him. Aside from all the details about Ebbo's younger years, Charles' view on the trial of 835 is notable in particular. Aside from this letter, the idea that the initial procedure was invalid because of the presence of laymen in Thionville is an argument only found in Ebbo's own *Apologetici*. However, there is an important difference between Ebbo's and Charles' account of the trial in Thionville: Ebbo is rather vague about the proceedings of his trial, but Charles is very. According to him, the trial was cancelled. In his view, after Judith's interference no public trial took place and all bishops had agreed with this decision in 835. Consequently, Ebbo had only been judged after his secret confession, as Ebbo had argued himself in his *Apologetici* too. Therefore, Ebbo had not been deposed in 835. The *Apologetici* were, as we have seen, hardly read during the Middle Ages, but Charles' and Ebbo's views on the impossibility to depose a bishop gained more and more popularity over the years. As mentioned before, they were not the ones to come up with the idea that bishops could not be deposed in this way. On the contrary, probably they used the proceedings of the council of Paris from 829 in their favour. Ebbo's case was one of the first to be tested according to these ideas.³³⁸ At the same time, more ongoing debates influenced subsequent opinions about Ebbo's case. Especially in Charles' letter, it becomes clear that in the 860s one thought it normal that Pope Gregory IV had interfered in 835. During those thirty years, however, the position of the pope had rather changed. In the 860s, especially under Pope Nicholas

³³⁸ Therefore Steffen Patzold used it as a major case on the position of *episcopi* in the ninth century. Patzold, *Episcopus* 315-357.

I, Rome was very much involved in Frankish affairs indeed. However, this was rather a new situation; during the 830s, papal interference in the north was less common. Finally, ideas about penance were changing. As De Jong argued, the difference between public and secret confession played a major role in the interpretation of Ebbo's deposition.³³⁹ Consequently, the question about the nature of the trial against Ebbo and his confession became more important too over the years.

³³⁹ De Jong, 'Transformations of penance' 202, De Jong, *The Penitential State* 255.

CONCLUSION

If there is one conclusion we can draw from all sources I have analyzed so far, it must be that Ebbo was the subject of a very lively debate in the ninth century. It was a debate to which he could not contribute very much himself – his own *Apologetici* were most probably not widely read in the Carolingian empire. However, the arguments Ebbo used we can observe, in one form or another, in many of the other sources that concern him. The debate concentrated mainly on his deposition in 835. Immediately hereafter, various authors tried to make Ebbo the scapegoat of what had happened two years earlier. In the *Annals of Saint-Bertin*, he is made the “standard-bearer of that whole conspiracy.” In Thegan’s *Gesta Hludowici*, written by an author closely connected to the court, Ebbo is Louis the Pious’ clear opponent and by all means his opposite. Louis was the exemplary Christian ruler: humble, good for his people and devoted to God. Ebbo, on the other hand, was for Thegan almost the personification of evil: a liar, cruel and greedy. Ebbo’s *Apologetici*, especially the second version, can be read as a direct answer to Thegan. Yes, Ebbo agreed, he was a sinner. Yet everybody sinned; he at least was aware of his transgressions and did penance accordingly.

The Astronomer took a milder position. In his eyes as well Ebbo was guilty, but he was guilty among many other bishops. This is a very different position from what we read in the sources that were written between 835 and 840, the year of Louis the Pious’ death. The Astronomer’s different judgment of Ebbo may well reflect the time during which he wrote his *Vita Hludowici*. Although the Astronomer may have already started to work on his biography of the late emperor when Louis was still alive, he finished it after the emperor’s death when, following in the wake of Lothar, Ebbo was back in Reims. From Ebbo’s own *Apologetici*, it becomes clear that he too considered himself to be guilty. However, the difference between the way in which in both versions of the *Apologeticum* Ebbo perceived his own guilt is remarkable. In the first version, Ebbo clearly expressed that he had deserved to do penance, but also that he had completed his penance in 840. Obviously, this version is written from the perspective of an archbishop who just had been reinstated. However, when he wrote the second version of his *Apologeticum*, Ebbo had been deposed again. Therefore, the message from this version is very different. Here, Ebbo stressed much more his own position as a sinner and the sinfulness of the world. According to this second version, the only way to save one’s soul was to follow the

examples of Jesus and the good late emperor Louis, who had confessed and received mercy. This version is written as a lament: Ebbo claimed that he had performed penance, but never had been rewarded accordingly.

Since 835 remained a crucial year in the entire debate, it is no surprise that the one document in which Ebbo seemed to confirm his own deposition was a central issue in both *Apologetici*. The *Resignatio Ebonis*, the document Ebbo had read aloud during his trial, was especially important because the precise nature of his deposition of 835 seemed to be unclear. Had it been definitive, or only temporary? Generally speaking, during the ninth century there was huge debate going on about the position of bishops in the empire. This debate touched upon many closely connected themes, all related to the questions which powers a bishop had, and who had power over the bishops. The congregation of Frankish bishops tried to answer these questions themselves at the council of Paris in 829. According to them, the bishops were of paramount importance in the empire; they were the vicars of Christ, deserved respect and could not be deposed by laymen. If a bishop had to be punished, he did not have to humiliate himself in public. After undergoing a public ritual of penance, the bishop would be deposed. After the council of Paris, the debate was definitely not over. In general, it is a complicated subject – Patzold wrote a monograph over six hundred pages about this subject – and the different interpretations of certain rituals made the specific case of Ebbo all the more complicated. According to my opinion, there were two basic questions in the debate about Ebbo: one, due to which sins could a bishop be deposed and two, who had the power to depose a bishop?

Concerning the first question I have referred to De Jong's theories about the ninth-century difference between secret and public sins, secret and public confession and secret and public penance. The consequences in both cases were very different: everyone was supposed to confess their sins secretly to their own confessor every now and then. Yet, public confession was a very different thing. After a ritual of public penance, the penitent was not supposed to have a public function anymore. Then there was a special form of penance for bishops. To protect the dignity of their office, a bishop never had to do penance in public. However, after confessing certain heavy sins, the bishop would always be deposed. Judging by the letter Charles the Bald wrote about the case of Ebbo in 867, the bishops clearly demanded that Ebbo would be tried according to their rules: out of sight of the laity. We can observe the debate about the different forms of penance at work when we look at the widely varying interpretations of the *Resignatio Ebonis*. This

document exists in two forms: firstly, a basic version, in which Ebbo just announced that he had confessed his sins to his own three confessors. Secondly, there was an extended version. In this second version, the text of the *Resignatio* ended with the statement that by the time he read the text, Ebbo had already been deposed; he signed it as ‘I Ebbo one-time bishop’ (*quondam episcopus*). Moreover, this second version contained a *libellus* in which it was claimed that Ebbo had confessed his sins a second time to three more confessors, who in their turn had reported about this confession to the plenary meeting of the synod. This *libellus* was subscribed by a long list of bishops who had attended the synod.

In the *Apologetici* and also in the *Narratio Clericorum Remensium*, another text written in Ebbo’s defense, just the short form of this document is quoted. Ergo, his sins were definitely not made public. The second, extended, version of the *Resignatio* we find for the first time in a document written in 853 by Theoderich of Cambrai. We have to consider the possibility that Theoderich himself was its creator, or that somebody else had forged the document well after 835. However, it is equally possible that, as Theoderich claimed in 853, already during the late 830s this addition was dictated by Jonas of Orléans and inserted in the *Resignatio*. Whether this addition was genuine or not is probably less interesting than the questions why it was added. The answer is that by adding the *libellus* it was stressed in two ways – six confessors, list of subscriptions – that Ebbo’s confession had been a public affair. Ebbo on the other hand, in his *Apologetici* claimed that the proceedings had been a secret matter. The Annals of Saint-Bertin and Thegan also contributed to this controversy. In essentially every line the annalist wrote about the trial, he had tried to show that Ebbo’s confession had been a public case by all means. Moreover, the annalist claimed that Ebbo had confessed in public in the church of Metz, and not just at the synod of Thionville. In his turn, Thegan did not just try to make Ebbo’s affair public, but even wrote an *invectio*, a torrent of abuse against Ebbo, publicly undermining his reputation. The *Apologetici* can be seen as a reply to both the annalist and Thegan.

The second question – who was able to dispose a bishop? – was maybe even of bigger importance. In Ebbo’s first version of the *Apologeticum*, we catch a first glimpse of the different opinions that prevailed in 835 concerning the question who had to judge Ebbo. According to his *Apologetici*, his antagonists had attempted to have Ebb tried in the presence of laymen. Moreover, he had been forced to appear at the trial. Therefore, this trial had been invalid and never concluded by a proper verdict. In Ebbo’s opinion, a

bishop could only be deposed in a closed meeting of the Episcopal congregation where the accused had come voluntarily. In 867, King Charles the Bald claimed that the bishops themselves had agreed with this point of view. According to Charles, when Louis the Pious wanted to continue the trial against Ebbo, the bishops warned him that such a procedure would not be valid in the presence of laity. Therefore the initial trial in the assembly (*placitum*) was postponed and cancelled in the end, after interference of Judith. Retrospectively, we could suggest that the synod's view as dictated by Jonas was already written to be part of the effort to make Ebbo's deposition as public as possible, and therefore irrevocable. By adding their statement with their subscriptions plus the account of Ebbo's second confession, the bishops made a clear distinction between Ebbo's first confession in the church of Metz, in presence of all people, and his actual deposition at the plenary meeting of the synod where only other bishops had been present. However, asked Charles, if Ebbo really had been deposed, why would it take ten years before a next bishop would be consecrated?

From 853 onwards, Hincmar's attempts to deal with Ebbo's inheritance form an interesting group of sources on their own. As Ebbo's successor in Reims, Hincmar had to go on proving that Ebbo's deposition had been legal; his rehabilitation would imply that Hincmar had usurped his position. Hincmar's main antagonist during these days was Wulfad, accompanied by several other clerics who Ebbo had consecrated during the couple of months had been back in Reims. In 853, they were formally excommunicated by a synod Hincmar had organized. Wulfad, who had been absent during this council, was still in office and moreover, he had made an interesting career. He had become bishop himself and an advisor of Charles the Bald – hence Charles' interference in the case in 866 and 867. Those clerics produced one epistle of their own, the so-called *Narratio Clericorum Remensium*, in which Ebbo was defended and Hincmar attacked. This *Narratio*, however, did not gain much influence. It is just splendid to observe how Hincmar, as a true chameleon, simply changed his colours in order to fit into a new situation, just when he needed to. In 853 he excommunicated the clerics, but in 866 and 867, when he understood that he could not win the case from Charles the Bald and Pope Nicholas I, he already took a more temperate position. Then, when he found out that Charles and Nicholas had had some private correspondence about the case, resulting in the rehabilitation of the clerics and almost in Ebbo's rehabilitation, he first wrote an angry entry for the *Annals of Saint-Bertin*. Later, however, he adapted to this new situation. In the *Visio Bernoldi* he made it appear as if Ebbo's deliverance from the

torments of Hell was his own achievement. At the same time, he made quite sure that there could be no doubt existing about Ebbo's position: even in Heaven he remained a deposed bishop.

The way in which Hincmar, like all the actors in this history, dealt with texts, leads to the concluding remark of this thesis. Non-specialists very often thought, and still tend to think, that the Middle Ages were a barbarous, illiterate period during which conflicts were solved by sword and fist.³⁴⁰ If we look at the debate about Ebbo, it shows that the opposite is true. It is remarkable how the various parties responded to each other, how texts reacted to other ones and how older texts were used, abused or even forged. Thegan never literally killed Ebbo, but his *Gesta Hludowici* was a clear attempt to destroy Ebbo's good image. Hincmar did not call for an anachronistic crusade against Wulfad *cum suis*, but tried to finish off the clerics in subsequent synods. Likewise, Charles the Bald did not hunt Hincmar down with an army, but tried to deal with the case through semi-secret correspondence with Rome. Thanks to all this text production, Ebbo's case was such a rich subject for this thesis.

³⁴⁰ About these prejudices cf. Marco Mostert, 'De ongeletterde middeleeuwen: vooroordelen over analfabetisme', *Kleio. Tijdschrift van de Vereniging van Docten in Geschiedenis en Staatsinrichting in Nederland* 50:2 (2009) 20-23.

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