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The Renascence of Classical Thought and Form in the Carolingian Period

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IN THE CAROLINGIAN PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

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The political stability established under the rule of Charlemagne (768-814) was conducive to the flourishing of the simultaneous resurgence of art and learning. Inspired by the achievements of the Roman Empire, Charlemagne wished to give his subjects a feeling of spiritual unity, a sense of continuity with the past, and an enhanced intellectual life. The classical intellectual tradition is traced from ancient times to the Carolingian present to demonstrate that classicism was a continuum. The thesis examines the classical tradition in the intellectual life of the Carolingian period, its conscious rejuvenation in the figurative arts, and its manifestation in the imperial architecture of the ninth century. It demonstrates that the Carolingian resurgence of classicism was calculated rather than spontaneous. The widespread enthusiastic interest in classicism and its fresh interpretation were new, rather than classicism itself.

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CHAPTER I

THE CAROLINGIAN RENASCENCE

As the political stability of the Western Roman Empire began to falter in the late fourth century and barbarian tribes ravaged the hinterlands, classical culture quietly slipped into obscurity save for a group of scattered isolated monasteries. Western Europe emerged from the chaos nearly a half a millennium later viable and united as the Frankish kingdom and the papacy formed an alliance against the barbarians. The union brought about political stability and in turn economic prosperity providing a climate conducive to the flourishing of art, literature, and culture.

Charlemagne, upon inheriting the Frankish throne, was keenly aware of the climate of the times. He was interested in the restoration of the Roman Empire in its complete form.[1] The cultural expression of this political idea is known as the Carolingian Renaissance. The movement extended from the last quarter of the eighth century through the first half of the ninth. Although it came to an abrupt halt less than a half a century after Charlemagne's death in 814, its influence continued throughout the following centuries.

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[1] Encyclopedia of World Art, 1971 ed., s.v., "Medieval Classicism," by Eugenio Battisti.

Renaissance or Renascence?

The classical tradition did not vanish with the dissolution of the Roman Empire nor did any Carolingian believe that it did. An eighth-century "renaissance" of classicism, therefore, did not occur, for the tradition was never perceived as lost. According to art historian Erwin Panofsky a Renaissance assumes a period of dormancy, looks to the distant past, and claims to be a radical break with the recent past, a rebirth after a period of void.[2] The Carolingian period was a "renascence," a conscious rejuvenation of a continuing tradition. The movement was deliberate rather than spontaneous arising from the perceived necessity to reform dilapidated government and church institutions, language, and art. The goals of the movement were continuity and reform. Originality was never a priority. The approach to classicism was pragmatic, breaking down into individual ideas and forms, taking from them only that which was useful. The classical world was never considered in its entirety or in its own context but only in the way in which individual ideas related to Carolingian needs. The contrived nature of a "renascence" also causes such a movement to be transitory; the Carolingian period lasted only for about seventy-five years.[3]

Charlemagne

The reign of Charlemagne or Charles the Great, as king of the Franks and later as Roman Emperor, spans nearly half a century from 768 until his death in 814. Inspired by the achievements of the Roman

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[2]Erwin Panofsky, Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art, Icon eds. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969; Icon eds., 1972), pp. 29, 36-38.

[3]Ibid., pp. 29, 106-11.

Empire, Charles set out to reform the Frankish political and ecclesiastical administration; to institute an educated civil service; make uniform the units of measure and the monetary system; to revitalize art, architecture, literature, education, and the Latin language; to institute a new simple script; and to give his subjects a feeling of harmony within a political framework. He accomplished his goals by giving his subjects a sense of common heritage based on the old Roman order.

The ideas of Charlemagne were not new nor did he ever believe them to be. His models were Constantine, Theodoric, Justinian, and Augustus among others. The Carolingian word used to describe the movement was "renovatio," which in itself indicates that the trend was seen as a renewal and not as a rediscovery. Classical civilization, though subdued, was not dead. Pockets of classicism existed in parts of Italy, North Africa, Spain, southern Gaul, and England. Charlemagne sought to bring together different ideas from these places and renew their importance, preserving the authentic, and purging the fraudulent.[4]

Charlemagne inherited from his father, Pepin and his grandfather, Charles Martel dominion over a loosely confederated group of Frankish and Germanic people who had formed part of the hinterlands of the Roman Empire. Most of his subjects were Christian although practices varied. The organization of the church was strong and presented a foundation upon which a stable political organization could be built. The ties between the Frankish monarchy and the papacy were strong dating back at least to 732 when Charles Martel defeated the Berbers near Poitiers. The papacy hailed the Franks as the champions of Christianity and

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[4]Battisti; Panofsky, pp. 42-45; Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner, Thoughts and Letters in Western Europe: A.D. 500-900, 2d ed. rev. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957; Cornell Paperbacks, 1976), pp. 191-206.

immediately allied themselves with them. The popes continued to support the Franks during the reigns of Pepin and Charlemagne in exchange for their military protection against the ambitious Lombards. The papal blessing bestowed by Pope Stephen II in crowning Pepin at St. Denis in 754, his blessing of Charles and his brother Carloman and designating them to be heirs of Pepin, and the crowning of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day, 800 as Roman Emperor gave the dynasty the prestige necessary to maintain power.

Thus, Charlemagne, armed with political stability and the papal blessing, proceeded on a deliberate course of action to unite his people and give them a feeling of continuity with the past. Charlemagne established a permanent capitol at Aachen or Aix-la-Chapelle. Situated in the north central part of his kingdom, Aachen was an unpretentious place void of classical culture. From here Charlemagne began to build a political, ecclesiastical, and cultural foundation based on the ideas of the renovatio imperii romani. He sought help from the greatest scholars and artists of the day, gathering them at the imperial palace at Aachen to implement his plan.

The Meaning of Classical Antiquity

Charlemagne's goal was to return to the period in Roman history which preceeded the dominance of Constantinople as the seat of power of the Roman Empire, a time of relative peace and prosperity, and a time when literacy was rather common among the nobility and clergy. Without the detachment of distance, the Carolingians lacked the perspective to see individual classical forms or ideas in the context of their times. Rather, they saw them only as they related to the Carolingian present. Otherwise unrelated classical forms and ideas were thus lifted from the

past and lumped together for the purpose of restoring the Roman order. Charles, in choosing the Rome he wished to recreate, wanted the Christian emphasis of Constantinian Rome, the political stability of the imperial Rome of the Pax Romani, and the intellectual fervor of the fourth-century Roman academies. Obviously, no such composite Rome ever existed. Yet, to the minds of Charlemagne and his contemporaries all blended comfortably into one.[5]

Concurrent with the ambiguous meaning of classical antiquity was its manifestation in the form and content of literature and art, and in the variety of styles that the Carolingians considered to be classical:

> Sometimes it meant the late Hellenism of the Mediterranean basin, with varying degrees of Roman and Oriental influence; sometimes the popular current of Roman art, ever present beside that of the court; sometimes the provincial variants of eastern and western art; sometimes even Early Christian art, with its multiplicity of styles.[6]

With literature the range was also broad: from Cicero to Prudentius, from Virgil to St. Augustine, and from Suetonius to Gregory the Great. Like the meaning of classical antiquity itself, the art and literature it fostered was varied; yet to the Carolingian all was classical. The inconsistency and the lack of precise definition was never a problem.

Further, the Carolingians were not interested in mere imitation but in the idea of "copy" in its broadest sense. Certain outstanding features such as shape, proportion, general iconographic motif, or feeling were sufficient for the Carolingian artist. Similarly, to the poet, classicism meant meter, a certain literary type, or the use of

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[5]Richard Krautheimer, "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture," Art Bulletin 24 (March 1942):14-15.

[6]Encyclopedia of World Art, 1971 ed., s.v., "Antique Revival: The Middle Ages," by Guglielmo Matthiae.

classical Latin. In this fashion, inspiration could be derived from more than one source. In contrast to the modern sense of "copy" as imitation, the Carolingian concept went straight to the essence of controlling ideas and the meaning. Whether the final product resembled the original was of little importance.[7]

Charlemagne's conception of himself and his empire was as broad as the sources from which the art and literature drew. Charlemagne thought of his empire as "Roman" but his broad definition seems to hold many conflicting concepts. Yet, when the ideas are seen individually and only as each relates to a particular facet of the Carolingian present and not in their classical context, the absence of conflict becomes clear. However, because the nature of the Carolingian renascence was so contrived, the period was also short-lived.[8]

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the classical tradition in the intellectual life of the Carolingian period, its conscious rejuvenation in the figurative arts, and its manifestation in the imperial architecture of the early ninth century. I will demonstrate that the classical tradition continued to exist from ancient times, that the Carolingians consciously reinforced its presence to help strengthen Charlemagne's claim to the imperial throne, and that it gave the peoples of western Europe a sense of common heritage. Charlemagne's desire to revitalize classicism and his ambition to restore the Roman Empire were not seen as radical by his educated contemporaries. New to them, how-

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[7]Richard Krautheimer, "An Introduction to an 'Iconography of Medieval Architecture,'" Studies in Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art (New York: New York University Press, 1969), pp. 116-25.

[8]Panofsky, pp. 111-13.

ever, was his enthusiastic interest in classicism and its fresh interpretation. This facet of the Carolingian Renascence causes the period to remain distinctively individual.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION AND THE CLASSICAL INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

When Charlemagne inherited the throne in 768, illiteracy prevailed among people of all classes. In his overall design for his empire Charlemagne planned for more than political conquests. From the beginning he set out to improve the cultural and intellectual life of his subjects. Not only did he need educated government and ecclesiastical officials but he also wanted his subjects to have a feeling of spiritual unity by giving them a sense of common heritage. In doing this he hoped to decrease factionalism among the various tribes. Thus, he looked to the most recent time in which people of means and position were educated, and a large western European populus felt unified; he looked to the Roman Empire. He embraced the ancient but familiar classical tradition and he looked beyond the borders of his kingdom for intellectual leaders to initiate the rejuvenation. The scholars he imported were heirs to a long-standing educational tradition with its roots deep in classical learning, a tradition which had continued uninterrupted since ancient times.[1]

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[1]Walter Oakeshott, Classical Inspiration in Medieval Art (London: Chapman and Hall, 1959), pp. 41-42; and George Zarnecki, The Art of the Medieval World: Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting (New York: Harry Abrams, 1975), pp. 103-4.

Classical Continuity

Roman culture and institutions survived within the confines of the ecclesiastical world after the decline of the academies of the ancient world and the fall of Rome in 476. The monks cherished classical literature and continued its study. Classical learning was never lost. The monks saw much in pagan philosophy to reject but they continued to draw from classical literature that which was harmonious with Christian beliefs. That which was not compatible with Christianity might be used nonetheless as a prototype for style, rhetoric, or syntax much in the same way pieces of antique art or sculpture were incorporated into Carolingian buildings.[2]

Medieval scholars saw the world and the cosmos from a Christian viewpoint. Thus, classical literature was either purged of its pagan elements or reinterpreted as allegories which referred to Christ or Christian teaching. Certain ancient authors were more acceptable in this regard than others to the Carolingians. Among the acceptable were Pliny, Cicero, Statius, and Virgil, while others were classified as "liar poets" and were used for style only. The fundamental basis, however, for the classical character of Carolingian literature was the writings of the early Christian authors, Prudeutius, Ambrose, Augustine, and Isidore of Seville among others.[3]

The Fathers of the Latin Church

The development of Christian writings in Latin begins after the legalization of the religion in the fourth century. Prior to that time

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[2]Richard Krautheimer, "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture," Art Bulletin 24 (March 1942):31.

[3]Ibid., pp. 31-32.

Christian writings were in Greek. No literature for the teaching of Christian doctrine prior to the third century has survived; no treatises on grammar, rhetoric, or the liberal arts except those by pagan authors ante-date the third century. From the beginning of the third century until the end of the fifth, Christian doctrine and the ecclesiastical administrative hierarchy took shape. Many important Latin theological treatises were written during this time. We will concern ourselves with only those which have a bearing on the early Carolingian period.[4]

The four Latin fathers of Christianity: Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory rank just below the Evangelists and St. Paul in their importance in shaping Christian thought. They drew upon classical philosophy in their theological treatises as had their predecessors. From the beginning Christian thought was inured with classical philosophy. St. Paul had incorporated appropriate ideas from pagan philosophy into his Christian preachings to add credibility to the new religion and to broaden its appeal. Lactantius, a fourth-century writer, was the first to synthesize systematically classical learning and Christianity. The Latin fathers built upon the foundation laid by these and other scholars.[5]

Ambrose, the earliest of the four, was the son of a Roman official. He studied Roman law and was a government official himself until he was appointed Bishop of Milan. His knowledge of law and organization was applied then to the administration of the church.

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[4]Max Ludwig Wolfram Laistner, Thought and Letters in Western Europe: A.D. 500-900 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), pp. 44, 64, 70.

[5]Edward Kennard Rand, Founders of the Middle Ages (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), pp. 8, 34-37, 49-60.

Ambrose's admiration of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Homer, and Virgil is apparent in his writings. His De officiis ministrorum was clearly influenced by Cicero's De officiis. He incorporated classical ideas into his writings with the express purpose of revealing to pagans the ethical truths of Christianity.[6]

Jerome, most famous for his Vulgate Bible and the finest scholar of the Early Fathers, was familiar with the classics as well. Educated in Rome under Donatus, author of the grammatical works Ars minor and Ars major, he was well steeped in the Greek and Latin classics and read Hebrew. He was an ardent believer in the simple chaste monastic (or convent) life and his book on the monastic rule, based on the Rules of Pachominus, was influential in the development of monasticism. At one point Jerome had a dream about the evils of depending too heavily upon Ciceronian philosophy. Yet he did not abandon Cicero or the classics altogether; they remained a part of him always. His Bible commentaries, even those of his later years, are rich in quotations from classical writers.[7]

Augustine was educated in Rome and later in Carthage where he taught for a time. His work, The City of God, incorporated examples of ancient philosophy. Here his purpose was to refute the pagan argument that Christianity had brought about the fall of Rome. Although he searched paganism for harbingers of Christianity, he thought that a study of the classics was essential to a Christian education. His De doctrina Christiana is a guide for the Christian teacher, the first such

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[6]Ibid., pp. 72-82.

[7]Laistner, pp. 32-33, 47-49, 67-69; and Rand, p. 31.

book of its kind. Although his illustrations are drawn from Christian writers, the structure of the book is Ciceronian for in book IV he drew heavily upon Cicero's Orator.[8]

Gregory was born to parents of Roman senatorial lineage and received a good education in the classics although he did not know Greek. As an administrator he rose to the prestigious level of praetor urbanus of Rome but after the death of his father, Gregory used his inheritance to found seven monastic houses in Italy. He retired to one founded on his family estate in Rome and became a monk. His chief contribution was the application of his administrative skills to the organization of the church as Pope Gregory I. Using his Roman political experience, he left the church a more organized and stronger institution than it had been ever before.[9]

The greatest of the Christian poets of the late Roman period was Prudentius, a native of Spain. Born about 348, he died sometime after 405. He more than any predecessor, harmonizes the most sublime pagan thought with pure Christian theology. He used successfully many different forms of meter. Many of his works survive ranging from four long poems of a thousand lines or more to two thousand poems, hymns, and short verses. Psychomachia his most popular poem in the Middle Ages, was the first allegorical poem to be written in the West. His fine literary training is apparent. He is so deeply imbued with Virgil and other classical poets that his poems are never stilted or imitative but are fresh and vibrant.[10]

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[8]Laistner, pp. 47-53; and Rand, pp. 135-316, 157-59.

[9]Frederick B. Artz, The Mind of the Middle Ages: A.D. 200-1500 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 190-93; Laistner, pp. 103-13; and Rand, pp. 22-30.

[10]Laistner, pp. 80-82.

The Early Middle Ages

Boethius, born about 480 to a Roman senatorial family, bridged the gap between the early Roman church fathers and the medieval scholastics. Educated in the classics, he was a master of Greek, a rare talent in Western Europe. He is noted for his organization of learning into categories, the trivium and the quadrivium, and for his treatises on each of these various academic disciplines. In his organization he depended heavily upon Cicero. The trivium consisted of grammer, dialectic, and rhetoric; and the quadrivium of arithemetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Boethius passed on this educational system to the Christian west. As a philosopher Boethius is most remembered for his book, Consolation of Philosophy, written in his later years while he was in prison. Here, he drew from Aristotle and other Greek philosophers in a manner which was consistent with Christian thought.[11]

Benedict of Nursia, born c. 480, organized monastic life under his Rule at the monastery of Monte Cassino in northern Italy. In composing the Rule, Benedict applied his knowledge of Roman law and organization to religious life.

Cassiodorus, born c. 490 in southern Italy, is most important for his preservation of ancient texts. In his early life, he was attached to the court of Theodoric and Great in Ravenna, where he also learned the traditions of the Roman civil service. While travelling throughout Europe and the Eastern Empire, he collected manuscripts, many of which he rescued from the libraries of the wealthy. He retired to Vivarium and there furthered his education as he gathered manuscripts

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[11] Laistner, pp. 88-90, 218-19; and Rand, pp. 135-316, 157-59.

in both ancient Greek and Latin. With these manuscripts, Cassiodorus assembled a large library.[12]

Isidore of Seville, born about 570 and educated in the classics, collected a large library making classical authors available to those who followed him. His knowledge was encyclopedic. He put together a compendium of that knowledge, the Etymologiae, which was the first such work of its kind drawing knowledge upon many classical and secular sources. It gave to other scholars scarce fragments of earlier writers which otherwise would have been unavailable to them.[13]

Throughout Europe in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries a network of monasteries grew up preserving the rudiments of classical education. Often situated in isolated areas, far from the threat of attack from warring barbarian tribes, the monasteries provided a network of communication between centers of learning. Travel between the various monasteries was regular. For when war was not an immediate threat, travel was no more difficult than it was as late as the eighteenth century. The Romans had left a fine system of roads and the monks put them to good use. They shared their books, both classical and religious, with one another by recopying the original manuscripts. They shared ideas, also. Early medieval centers of learning included Parma, Bobbio, Pavia, and Pisa in Italy; St. Gall and Fulda in Germany; and York, Jarrow, Lindesfarne, and Iona in the British Isles. It was from the British Isles that a resurgence of classical learning reached the center of the Frankish kingdom.[14]

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[12]Bernard S. Bachrach, ed., The Medieval Church: Success or Failure? (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), p. 14.

[13]Laistner, pp. 119-25, 218-19.

[14]Bachrach, pp. 14-16; and Laistner, pp. 91-92, 103.

The British Isles

Christianity was introduced into Britain in Roman times and after the fall of the Western Empire flourished among the Celts of the remote areas of Cornwall, Wales, Strathclyde in Scotland, and in Ireland. The zealous tenacity of the Celtic people, the savage scourge of the western world a few centuries earlier, was poured with equal intensity into Christianity, scholarship, and missionary work. By the end of the fifth century their monastic schools were the most famous in Europe and were responsible for the preservation and perpetuation of classical literature, which they studied along with Christian doctrine.[15]

Left to themselves, the Celts in the British Isles developed their own system of monasteries. Each was independent and integrally related to the life of the surrounding clanspeople. The Celtic liturgy differed from that of the continental church as did their traditions of the calculation of the date of Easter and the tonsure of monks. Their monasteries produced finely trained monks who were both scholars and scribes. They were thoroughly trained in the classics and theology, and their manuscripts were laboriously copied for use both in Britain and abroad. The scholarship of the Celtic tradition gave birth to a rich and unique tradition of illuminated manuscripts.

After efforts to convert the Picts of Scotland and some of the Britons, and after establishing the monastery at Iona, off the eastern coast of Scotland, the monk Columba (b. 560) and eleven colleagues made the three-day journey across the channel to France. They established

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[15]Lacey Baldwin Smith, ed., A History of England, 4 vols. (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1966), Vol. 1: The Making of England, by C. Warren Hollister, pp. 14, 29; Laistner, pp. 139-41; and Helen Waddell, Wandering Scholars (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1955), pp. 30-31.

monasteries on the continent of which the most famous was St. Gall in Switzerland. They travelled into Italy and established a monastery at Bobbio in Lombardy, which in Carolingian times housed a large library.[16]

The Irish had their own monastic rule written by Columba which came into general use along with the Rule of Benedict. Their monasteries provided the classical texts and much of the religious literature for monasteries on the continent. Missionary monks brought Bibles and religious tracts as well as literary works to the continent. The Irish tracts, notably those of Adaman, show a knowledge of Greek, Virgil, and Isidore of Seville.[17]

The Irish Church in the British Isles remained independent of the Roman Church but not unaware of its existence. The isolation ended, however, in 597 when the Roman abbot Augustine and forty missionaries, sent by Pope Gregory I, arrived on British shores. The expressed purpose of Gregory was to bring Britain under the rule of the Roman See.[18] A second wave of Romanization came in 668 when Pope Vitalian personally consecrated as the Archbishop of Canterbury a Greek man, Theodore of Tarsus, and sent him with Hadrian, an African monk, to Britain. They were accompanied by Benedict Biscop, a Northumbrian priest of the Roman tradition.[19] This reinforcement assured the survival and eventual pre-

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[16]Artz, p. 194; Maurice Helin, A History of Medieval Latin Literature, rev. ed., trans. by Jean Chapman Snow (New York: William Sallach, 1949), p. 28; Laistner, pp. 139-41; Smith, pp. 13, 14, 27; and Waddell, pp. 30-31.

[17]Artz, p. 194; Laistner, pp. 141-49; and Waddell, pp. 30-31.

[18]Caecelia Davis-Weyer, Early Medieval Art: 300-1150: Sources and Documents (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 76; and Rand, p. 23.

[19]Davis-Weyer, pp. 72-73; and Laistner, pp. 150-51.

dominance of the Roman Church in the British Isles and brought all of Western Europe under one ecclesiastical rule.

Archbishop Theodore organized the church in England according to the Roman system of Bishoprics with a central authority in Canterbury. Meanwhile, Hadrian established a school at Canterbury which quickly became one of the leading learning centers of the West. In addition to the usual classics and theology, Roman law was taught. Knowledge of Roman law had all but disappeared from Western Europe but Theodore, being Byzantine by birth, knew the Roman legal tradition and was able to introduce it in Britain along with his native Greek language.[20] The combination of Celtic scholarship with Roman law, organization, and classical literature proved to be a fine incubator for the resurgence of scholarly pursuits. Within a generation England became the intellectual leader of the West, and the church in England assumed responsibility for the preservation and continuation of classical culture.[21]

After the arrival of Theodore and Hadrian, Benedict Biscop established two monasteries at Wearmouth (674) and Jarrow (681). He made trips to Rome to bring back Roman artifacts, ideas, or detailed architectural plans; imported masons to build a church after the Roman style and furnished it with vestments and vessels all imported from the continent; instituted a modified Benedictine Rule; and introduced the latest in Roman liturgy and chants. He received permission from Pope Agatho (678-681) to return to England with a teacher named John to instruct his students in the Roman manner and gathered a fine library

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[20]Albert C. Baugh, ed., A Literary History of England, Part I: The Old English Period (to 1100), by Kemp Malone (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 13; and Smith, pp. 39-40.

[21]Baugh, p. 13.

for their use. Under Biscop and his successor, Ceolfrid, the standard of education at these monasteries was equal to that at Canterbury.[22]

The greatest of these pupils was the Venerable Bede (673-735) who was brought to Biscop at Wearmouth at age seven. After his training Bede spent the rest of his life at Jarrow as a tireless teacher and insatiable scholar. Yet, he found time to write some fifty-five works of his own. From his writings it is clear that he was schooled in the liberal arts, the trivium in particular, and that he knew the works of Pliny, Jerome, St. Augustine, and other authors of the late Roman period. He knew Isidore of Seville, Suetonius, and Virgil and was accomplished in poetic Greek and classical Latin. Bede was the greatest writer of the golden age in England and was one of the finest and most influential teachers of all time. He was, with Isidore of Seville, one of the most widely read scholars at the court of Charlemagne.[23]

Bede's pupils continued the tradition of fine scholarship in Britain and abroad. One pupil, Egbert, became Archbishop of York and established a school there which eventually surpassed Wearmouth-Jarrow. Alcuin received his education at York and went from there to administer and reform the Palace School at Aachen under the auspices of Charlemagne.[24]

Willibrord and Boniface also were students of Bede. Committed to missionary work, they set forth to the continent to convert the Germans and revitalize the Frankish church. Willibrord established a monastery at Echternach in Germany near Trier which became an important

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[22]Davis-Weyer, pp. 72-75.

[23]Artz, pp. 184, 193-94; Baugh, pp. 14-15; and Laistner, pp. 156-66, 215-20.

[24]Baugh, pp. 16-17.

learning center. Boniface, the most famous of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries, worked tirelessly for thirty-five years converting the pagans in Germany and organizing the church, bringing it closer to Rome. He allied himself with the German kings who saw in the church the organization and energy needed for political stability. He founded several monastic houses of the Benedictine order, but he is chiefly remembered for the part he played in the founding of Fulda, a monastery destined to become a major intellectual center in the Frankish kingdom by the time Charlemagne came to the throne.[25]

The Gathering of Scholars

Charlemagne was crowned King of the Franks in 768. From that point onward he set forth on a carefully charted course, that of restoring the Roman Empire. His plans for his kingdom, later to be an empire, were broad in scope encompassing not only political aspirations but spiritual and intellectual ideals as well.

Charles was an educated man. Einhard tells the charming vignette in his biography of Charlemagne's attempt to master the written word:

> He also tried to learn to write. With this object in view, he used to keep his writing-tablets and notebooks under the pillow on his bed, so that he could try his hand at forming letters during his leisure moments; but although he tried very hard, he had begun too late in life and he made little progress.[26]

This is not to say that Charles was illiterate. It simply states that he had difficulty in forming the letters. Today reading and writing are

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[25]Artz, p. 194; Baugh, p. 17; Laistner, pp. 179-83; and Frederic James Edward Raby, A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 1:174-76.

[26]Einhard and Notaker the Stammer, The Two Lives of Charlemagne, trans. with an intro. by Lewis Thorpe (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 79:25.

seen as one discipline; this was not the case in the Carolingian period. Charles could read and did so with an insatiable appetite. Einhard records in the same section that Charles was fluent in Latin and foreign languages and that he was an eloquent speaker. He studied Latin rhetoric, dialectic, mathematics, and astronomy under Alcuin.[27]

Charles recognized the deplorable state of intellectual affairs in the kingdom he inherited and he set out to rectify the situation. He also planned to consolidate the government, using local officials, and to institute a system of travelling inspectors. He created a system of civil service, the first since Theodoric, and he knew that those to whom he entrusted the responsibility of government must be educated in order to perform well. Not since Roman times had any head of state realized the importance of a uniform religion and a common heritage of an intellectual body of learning to reinforce political stability. By achieving this, Charles would govern not a loosely confederated group of tribes, as his father and grandfather before him, but a unified people. By giving his subjects a continuity with the past, a sense of common history, he would legitimize further his claim to the title of Roman Emperor.

In addition to the revival of classical learning, Charlemagne wished to give his Frankish subjects a written heritage in their own tongue. Einhard tells us that he tried to codify Frankish law, that he began a grammar of the Frankish language, and that he directed that ballads and epic poetry should be written down and saved for poster-

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[27]Ibid.

ity.[28] Unfortunately, his successors did not value the Frankish heritage as much as did Charles and much of it was lost.

Charles also set out to revitalize the church throughout the Empire making the liturgy and teachings uniform--all clergy would be educated, all Bibles and other religious text would be standardized, and all monastic rule would be uniform.

Charles chose the Palace School to implement his plan for education. An institution since the days of Charles Martel, the school was established to educate the princes and the sons of noblemen who assisted in the government and in the defense of the kingdom. Charles expanded the school to include commoners as well and made it a permanent part of the palace complex at Aachen. The curriculum was expanded to include all fields of learning. Charles caused no sudden change but drew from the best available resources, bringing the finest scholars of the day from all parts of the known world to participate in the revitalization of learning. Each scholar, carefully chosen by Charles himself, was eminent in his own field of study.

Many different scholarly traditions were represented. Alcuin, educated at York in the tradition of the Venerable Bede, came from England to head the school. From Spain came the Visigoth Theodoric, a scholar with an eye for art and architecture and schooled in the tradition of Isidore of Seville. Italy produced two authorities on classical Latin grammar, Peter of Pisa and Paul the Deacon. Einhard came from the abbey of nearby Fulda to be the court historian and an advisor on architecture and construction. These men and many more worked together to implement Charles's plan for education. Here was a rare

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[28] Ibid., p. 81:29.

opportunity, a chance to exchange ideas and to learn from one another. From this gathering at Aachen came the formation of the finest school that continental Europe had seen in centuries and certainly the most cosmopolitan. Learning was alive and vibrant. From this school would come a codified learning, purged of heresies and inaccuracies, a heritage which would be kept intact and passed on to subsequent generations.

The accomplishments of these scholars as a whole were more important than any of their individual writings. Their personal styles were largely contrived and tedious, perhaps owing to their self-conscious attempt to reproduce a pure classical Latin. Their works were for the most part unimaginative but originality was not their goal. New ideas, new writing styles, or new verse forms were neither wanted nor expected. The mission of this group of scholars was the restoration of classicism and to seek out that which was authentically classical and imitate it. To the Carolingians the term "classical" meant the work of the later Roman period. Thus, Fortunatus was imitated rather than Cicero and Suetonius rather than Plutarch.[29] Building on a foundation laid by these men, the following generation of scholars was able to achieve a more fluid, natural, and original style.

The broad cultural and intellectual spectrum these scholars represented was important to Charlemagne's purpose. He conceived of a fusion of Roman, Christian, and northern cultures. These men represented the blend of the classical Latin tradition with scholarship from Italian, Irish, Anglo-Saxon, and Visigothic sources. Though "vulgar" elements have been lost, Einhard records that they, too, were preserved. Once again all the people of Western Europe were given a common intan-

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[29]Artz, pp. 180, 197-98; Baugh, p. 12; and Waddell, p. 30.

gible bond extending beyond political unity. They had a common religion and were given a sense of history and continuity with the past however contrived it may have been.

Alcuin

Alcuin came to Aachen from the school of York in England in order to organize and administer the Palace School. He had a reputation as a good general scholar and a fastidious organizer. As Einhard testified, "Alcuin, surnamed Albinus, another Deacon, a man of the Saxon race who came from Britain . . . was the most learned man anywhere to be found."[30] He had a strong background in theology and in the classics, and he knew and understood ecclesiastical organization and Roman law.

York was the finest school in England and was reputed to have the largest library in Christendom. Alcuin composed a poem with a partial list of its contents. He warns that the list is incomplete so it is safe to assume that the names of some classical scholars are not included.[31] Among those that are mentioned we find Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory, Boethius, Aristotle, Fortunatus, Virgil, and Donatus. York, along with some of the monasteries in Italy, was a major source of classical manuscripts copied by Carolingian scribes.

For the curriculum at the Palace School at Aachen, Alcuin was guided by such scholars as Donatus and Priscian, and the ancient grammarians Cassiodorus and Isidore, and his English mentor, Bede.[32] Alcuin had written a poem concerning the saints of the church at York and in it he describes the curriculum at his former school, which was under the

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[30]Einhard and Notaker, p. 79:25.

[31]Raby, 1:179.

[32]Artz, p. 73; and Laistner, p. 198.

direction of Aelbert whom he held in high regard. The curriculum included grammar, rhetoric, law, poetry, astronomy, natural history, geometry, mathematics, the Bible, and the manner of calculating the date of Easter.[33]

Alcuin modelled the organization of the Palace School after that of his former school at York. The curriculum consisted of the seven liberal arts, divided into the trivium and the quadrivium, as established by Boethius in the fifth century. The trivium, called "logic" by Alcuin, consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. Within the discipline of grammar could be found the study of literature, composition, elocution, pronunciation, and history. The quadrivium or "physics" consisted of the study of arithemtic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Of the two groups, the trivium was more frequently studied. "Textbooks" included works by Bede and Alcuin as well as the Ars Minor and the Ars Major of Donatus. The Ars Major, like the quadrivium, was subject matter for more advanced students. In addition to Donatus the grammatical works of Priscian were employed. Cicero was studied and it is known that Cicero's De inventione and De oratore were in the library at Aachen because Servatus Lupus wrote to Alcuin asking to borrow them.[34]

Alcuin wrestled with the problem of the place of classical literature in the Christian tradition. In his youth he had a dream condemning Virgil much like that of St. Jerome. In his later years he had admonished two monks for reading Virgil. Yet, like scholastic predecessors, Alcuin knew that it was important to have a thorough knowledge

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[33] Raby, 1:178.

[34] Laistner, p. 217.

of classical texts for their indispensable bond with Judeo-Christian ideas.[35]

Alcuin organized the Palace School into a tightly structured learning center based on the concepts of the Roman universities of the fourth century. He was a conscientious methodical administrator with a broad knowledge but was never a spontaneous or an original thinker. He taught at the Palace School until he retired to the Abbey of St. Martin at Tours, a position given him by the Emperor. He spent the last eight years of his life here teaching in a more relaxed atmosphere. Grimald who was later to be abbot of St. Gall and Einhard who would serve Charles and his successor Louis the Pious as scholar, building supervisor, and court historian were among his prize pupils.

Alcuin had been a loyal subject of his adopted Emperor. He viewed Charlemagne as more than a political leader and saw him as defender of the faith, the leader of Christ's army on earth. He wrote to Charles:

> As greatly as you rise above other men in the power of your kingship, so greatly do you excel in all honour of wisdom, in order of holy religion. Happy the people who rejoice in such a Prince. . . . With the sword of devotion in your right hand you purge and protect the churches of Christ within from doctrine of traitors; with the sword of your left hand you defend them from without from the plundering raids of pagans. In the strength of God you stand thus armed. . . . There is but one power, of the Papacy, of the Vicar of Christ. There is another, the lay power of the Imperial Constantinople. There is a third, that of your own kingship, through which the Lord Jesus Christ has made you ruler of Christian people, excelling in your strength the two which I have named, more renowned in wisdom, more exalted in the dignity of your realm. See! on you alone all hope for the churches of Christ leans for support.[36]

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[35]Rand, p. 13; and Laistner, pp. 198, 215.

[36]Eleanor Shipley Duckett, Carolingian Portraits: A Study in the Ninth Century (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), pp. 7-8, citing Alcuin.

This view, certain to be consistent with that of the Emperor, would place Charles as an heir to the position of Constantine and Theodoric, a further legitimization of his position, a further security for his Empire, and another tie with the ancient past.

Italians at Court

Lombardy was a stronghold of classical learning with noted schools in such places as Bobbio, Monte Cassino, Parma, Pavia, and Pisa. Peter of Pisa and Paul the Deacon came from Lombardy to Aachen to serve Charles. Although neither scholar left a written account of the authors read as had Alcuin and Theodulf, they certainly knew Virgil, Ovid, and the Christian poets Sedulius and Fortunatus, to name a few. Both scholars may have brought classical manuscripts with them for the Carolingian scribes to copy.[37]

Peter of Pisa was educated in his native town. There Roman traditions were still alive. He met Alcuin on one of his journeys from England to Italy. Peter was a meticulous Latin grammarian and his presence at the court of Charles marks the beginning of the purification of the Latin language.[38] He taught Charles Latin grammar as Einhard recorded: "When he was learning the rules of grammar he received tuition from Peter the Deacon of Pisa."[39] In addition to his talents as a grammarian, Peter was also a mathematician and a poet.

Paul the Deacon was an elderly man brought back to the court of Charles as "booty" from the Italian wars. He was, along with Einhard,

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[37]Laistner, pp. 192, 198, 268-71, 336; and Raby, 1:181-82.

[38]Jacques Boussard, The Civilization of Charlemagne, trans. by Frances Partridge (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968; reprint ed., 1979), p. 133.

[39]Einhard and Notaker, p. 79:25.

one of the best educated men of his day. From a noble family of Friuli, he was educated in Pavia at the Lombardy court where he may have served as an official. In midlife he left the secular world, took religious vows, and retreated to the abbey of Monte Cassino where he codified and revised the Benedictine Rule. He studied there with Flavius acquiring a knowledge of theology and classical literature. The library at Monte Cassino was famed for its rich collection of classical texts, and Paul knew the works of Pliny, Isidore of Seville, Gregory the Great, and Suetonius.[40]

Although Paul remained at the court of Charles only a few years, he left many works that he had written: poetry, histories, and writings on grammar and theology. Among his works was an abridged edition of Pompeius Festus' dictionary, De verborum significatu, which contains old Latin and pieces of information about law, religion, and antiquity. His history of the bishops of Metz, based on the style of Bede, was consulted by Einhard as he wrote his biography of Charlemagne. Paul was concerned with a deliberate preservation of the traditions of the past as is evident from his training and his writings. His histories, as important as they were, follow the pattern of writers from the past. Only in his poetry is he original, but these works were not intended for official use.[41]

Theodulf of Orleans

Theodulf, a Visigoth, was forced from his native Spain by politics. He was welcomed at the court of Charlemagne. He was extremely bright, broadly educated, and could converse on any subject. He had a

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[40]Laistner, pp. 135, 163, 267-68.

[41]Ibid., pp. 269-76, 336.

sharp wit. The finest and most original of the poets at court, he could write with ease in the manner of the classical writers. His most famous work, Gloria, laus et honor, is still sung on Palm Sunday. Written in the style of Prudentius it is inseparably tied to the musical accompaniment. He was educated in the tradition of Isidore of Seville and came to Aachen laden with books.[42] Like Alcuin, Theodulf left a poem outlining the contents of his library. The church fathers and the Christian poets occupied a large portion of the collection. Theodulf felt a strong kinship with Prudentius, whom he felt to be a fellow countryman. He also admired Ovid whose verse form he used quite comfortably.[43]

Theodulf had an eye for architecture and fine art. His academic knowledge was transformed into visual imagery for the decoration of his personal chapel. The mosaics in the chapel at Germigny-des-Prés are unique in Gaul, though there is precedent for them in Spain and in Byzantium. He owned a collection of paintings and frescoes in his villa which depicted personifications of the liberal arts and the seasons; he owned a map of the world which depicted personifications of Terra and the twelve winds;[44] he owned a rock crystal cameo which was engraved in Lorraine and contained figures in the same "classical" style seen in the Utrecht psalter a generation later.[45] Although some of his books and artifacts are unique, they do not stand out as peculiar in the age but fit comfortably into the official style.

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[42]Raby, 1:180.

[43]Ibid.

[44]John Beckwith, Early Medieval Art (Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1964), pp. 16, 223 n. 14.

[45]Jean Hubert, Jean Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by Robert Allen, Stuart Gilbert, and James Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), pp. 245-46.

Theodulf travelled throughout southern France as a circuit judge. In his poem Ad Iudices he makes references to bribery attempts with gifts of priceless classical antiques. He goes into detail describing one particular antique silver bowl decorated with the labors of Hercules in repousse. From the description it is clear that Theodulf knew classical mythology and intimately understood the poetry and style of Ovid and Virgil.[46]

The Libri Carolini, undoubtedly a work of collaboration, bears the mark of Theodulf in the use of classical images and the personifications of abstract things, such as winds or rivers, along with Biblical imagery. His thorough understanding of the way in which pagan figures with no inscription could be mistakenly used for Christian purposes is discussed in detail in the Libri Carolini.[47] Of all the scholars at the court of Charles, Theodulf was the most adept at synthesizing his knowledge. His originality never set him apart from the current trends as different but rather as more alive and more fluid. He knew the classical styles so well that to him they seemed natural.

Einhard of Selingstadt

Einhard was an East Frank born about 770 in the valley of the Main. His parents, probably people of means, sent him to the abbey of Fulda for his education. Although he studied at a monastery, Einhard did not take religious vows; he married Englefrit. At Fulda he studied the classics, religion, architecture, and building techniques. The abbey, having its roots in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, had access to

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[46]Davis-Weyer, pp. 106-7.

[47]Ann Freeman, "Theodulf of Orleans and the Libri Carolini," Speculum 32 (1957):48-49.

manuscripts from the English monasteries and was known to have a fine library. Some of the manuscripts written by Einhard still exist at Fulda.

Einhard seems to have been physically a man of small stature. Wallifred Strabo refers to Alcuin as "parvulus" and "Nardulus," and Alcuin compares him to the busy bee, small but capable of large tasks. Theodulf compares him to an ant.[48] He was devoted to Charles and was appreciated by his master for his rare combination of the virtues of strong intellect, sagacity, and honesty. Einhard was nicknamed "Beseleel" at the court, while Charles was called "David" and Alcuin "Flaccus."[49] Beseleel was the craftsman whom the Lord told Moses to have build the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 35). The name could suggest that Einhard was skilled at metalwork, gem-cutting, and wood carving.

Einhard knew classical art. He presented to his abbey at Maastrict a reliquary crossbase which was made in the form of a Roman triumphal arch made to his specifications. Its construction was based on antique geometric principles and the scenes depicted were from Roman models showing not only classical influence but also the Carolingian capability at copying Roman motifs.[50]

Although the architect of the Palace Chapel of Charlemagne was most likely Odo of Metz, Einhard with his background in classical learning, theology, and building oversaw the construction. Perhaps he also served as an advisor to the architect on matters of interpretation. With his nickname of "Beseleel" it is highly likely that he was intimately involved with the construction of this chapel, Charlemagne's

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[48]Einhard and Notaker, pp. 13-14.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, p. 35; and Davis-Weyer, p. 107.

figurative home for the Ark of the Covenant. Einhard certainly had intimate knowledge of buildings built in the ancient style and he must have had a thorough understanding of ancient building principles. He knew Vitruvius, as a letter written by him inquiring about a fine point in Vitruvius' books on architecture has come down to us.[51] Certainly Fulda must have had either a copy of Vitruvius' Ten Books on Architecture, a significant remnant thereof, or a book which quoted the ancient architect.

Einhard is most famous for his Life of Charlemagne, written in his later years long after the death of his beloved master. Here Einhard reproduces the style of a classical writer more successfully than any writer of the Middle Ages, for he imitates Suetonius the biographer of the Twelve Caesars.[52] Einhard "becomes" Suetonius and Charles "becomes" one of the Caesars, primarily Augustus, but with touches of Tiberius, Vespasian, and Titus. Einhard uses Suetonius' method of organizing his material and incorporates many of his idioms and much of his vocabulary.

Thus Einhard further supports Charles' legitimate claim to his title of Roman Emperor by comparing his master to the most revered of the Caesars. The similarity between Charles and Augustus is the most apparent. Charlemagne recognized the need for legal reforms to make his government more cohesive. Augustus also instituted many legal reforms some of which Charles found valuable and put to use.[53] The comparison between Augustus and Charlemagne is closest in their personal habits, piety, and especially in their physical appearance. So close is that

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[51] Davis-Weyer, pp. 107-8.

[52] Laistner, p. 274.

[53] Einhard and Notaker, p. 81:29; and Gaius Tranquillus Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, trans. by Robert Graves, intro. by Michael Grant (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 67-68:34.

comparison that some historians do not feel that Charles is treated accurately. Others think that Einhard's personal observations are sufficient to indicate his fidelity to Charles.[54]

Suetonius is not the only source for Einhard's biography of Charlemagne. Einhard made use of the library at Fulda and drew from other biographers he studied there. He knew the works of the Venerable Bede and the histories of the bishops of Metz composed by Paul the Deacon a generation earlier. His prologue has a flavor of Sulpicius Severus' Life of St. Martin of Tours. Within the biography of Charles there are touches of the influence of Caesar, Livy, Tacitus, and the shortened edition of Trogus by Justin.[55]

Einhard is central in the revitalization of learning and of the arts during the reign of Charlemagne. He bridges the gap between literature and the applied arts, for he did both.

The lives of Einhard, Alcuin, Peter, Paul, and Theodulf exemplify Charlemagne's deliberate attempt to restore, preserve, and expand classical learning. Their writings show that the course of Carolingian classicism was deliberate and pre-planned, and that the revival of classicism was in no way a spontaneous or a radical change. An amplification of that which was available throughout the realm brought together for the first time, the Palace School represents a conscious classical revival of a long standing tradition.

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[54]Einhard and Notaker, pp. 76:22-80:27; Laistner, p. 274; and Suetonius, pp. 85:72-90:82.

[55]Laistner, pp. 274, 346.

CHAPTER III

THE FIGURATIVE ARTS AND THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

Carolingian classicism arose from the revival of classical form. The antique classical style came by way of Rome, Ravenna, and by contact with Greek scholars. The art of late Imperial Rome came to the court of Charles through the illuminations of imported British manuscripts, for the British had been influenced already by classicism. It came from the Lombard monks, notably those of Monte Cassino, who brought books and perhaps illuminators with them to court and it came from direct observation of the art of the Romans. Unlike classical art itself, Carolingian classicism did not arise from the direct observation of nature.

Just as they had preserved the literature of the ancients, the monks of Britain played a part in the preservation of the classical style in painting and the decorative arts. As Italian manuscripts moved north with Roman missionaries, so did the classical traditions of art. For the Italian monks helped to preserve the style of the recent past. The British tried their hand at the new style and blended it into their own nonrepresentational art. This synthetic style was combined at the court of Charlemagne with the imported Hellenistic tradition of Byzantium. Although distinct, both styles were deeply rooted in the

classical tradition and both matured into a new form of expression at the Palace School and its satellites.

Manuscript Illumination

Carolingian manuscripts, done under the auspices of the court, show a distinct break with the Merovingian past. No longer are letters made of bird and fish forms or of interlacing, but a new script is used, clear and readable. The illustrations are separate from the text and old nonrepresentational styles give way to a new "classical" style. Each book of the Gospel is generally preceeded by a portrait of the Evangelist done in the manner of author portraits of Latin and ultimately Greek origin.[1]

The English influence in the classical movement is great because the master of the Palace School was an Englishman, Alcuin of York. As scholars came to the court of Charles they brought books with them from home. Alcuin was no exception. His books were illustrated in the new British fashion and served as models for the court painters. He made available in France the accomplishments of the Northumbrian Renaissance which was an important stimulus in the classical revival of the early Carolingian period.[2]

A major component of the Northumbrian Renaissance was the influence of Italian illumination. During the seventh century contact between England and Rome was frequent. Bishop Wilfrith of York, instrumental in the Synod of Whitby (664), did much to internationalize the

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[1]Dimitri Tselos, "A Greco-Italian School of Illuminators and Fresco Painters," Art Bulletin 38 (March 1956):13.

[2]George Zarnecki, The Art of the Medieval World: Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting (New York: Harry Abrams, 1975), p. 119.

culture of the British Isles. He built a church at Hexam in the Roman style and furnished it in the Roman fashion. Among his artifacts was a Gospel Book which he commissioned. The book was illuminated in gold and various colors on purple vellum, an antique practice. Depicted in the book, the Maeseyck Gospel Book, folio 0, is a portrait of an Evangelist seated on a chair placed in a classical architectural niche.[3] The chair is shown in profile but the Evangelist, writing in a book, turns so that he is in full frontal view. The border still retains patterns associated with Irish illumination. The work, dated from the beginning of the eighth century, does not come from Lindesfarne or Jarrow but in all probability it comes from Wilfrith's own school. This is borne out by the fact that Maeseyck is in an area on the continent affected by Wilfrith's missionary work.[4]

In the Codex Aureus of Canterbury, A. 135, on folio 9, verso, St. Matthew is seated on a throne with a cushion in the fashion of an Eastern Emperor.[5] There is a suggestion of a third dimension in the space beyond the figure, probably the first attempt by a Northern artist at depicting space.[6] The style of the portrait is modeled after the author portraits of the recent classical past with the apocalyptic symbol of the evangelist replacing the inspiring Muse. Although the

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[3]An Evangelist from the Maeseyck Gospel Book, seventh century, Folio 0, St. Catherine's Church, Maeseyck. Illustrated in Andre Grabar and Carl Nordenfalk, Early Medieval Painting, trans. by Stuart Gilbert (n.p.: Skira, 1957), p. 120.

[4]Ibid., pp. 120-22.

[5]St. Matthew from the Codex Aureus of Canterbury, A. 135, Folio 9, verso, Kunglia Biblioteket, Stockholm. Ibid., p. 123.

[6]Ibid., pp. 123-25.

Canterbury artist shows evidence of being inspired by a sixth century Italian manuscript, he did not copy it. Rather, he took artistic license and chose only that which was meaningful to him.[7] The face is modeled but the patterning of the clothing flattens the body into an abstract pattern. This type of portrait reappears later in the century at Aachen, for the style of the Canterbury School spread to the continent with the arrival of English scholars at the court of Charlemagne.

Another variation of the classical style found at the court of Charles was that of the Greek and Syrian scholars residing at court and in Rome at the end of the eighth century. There is increasing evidence that Greeks and Syrians came to Italy to escape iconoclastic problems. Rome in the eighth century was more than half Byzantine; Ravenna, whose ties with Constantinople were always strong, was even more Byzantine than Rome. The immigrant Byzantines brought with them illuminated Greek books contributing to the renewed interest in classicism which spread north.[8]

As the English style filtered down into Gaul, the Italian and Byzantine styles moved northward in the same fashion. Travelling monks and scholars brought manuscripts to France and Carolingian scribes copied them. Their style of illumination, like their literature, was new but not original. It was faithfully copied from these earlier sources both primary and secondary. Again, originality was neither desired nor expected. Gradually local styles developed but they never lost their foreign flavor. At Aachen two distinct styles developed.

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[7]Walter Oakeshott, Classical Inspiration in Medieval Art (London: Chapman and Hall, 1959), pp. 36-38.

[8]Tselos, p. 24.

The first was the Ada School which had its roots in the late antique style of the Northumbrian Renaissance and whose compositional format was formal much like contemporary Italian wall paintings.[9] The second was the Palace School whose style reflected the Hellenistic tradition of Byzantine either directly or via Italy.[10]

The Ada School

The Godescalc Gospel

The Godescalc Gospel Book, commissioned by Charles and his wife Hildegard in 781 and completed before her death in 783, commemorates the baptism of their son Pepin in Rome by the pope. The manuscript is believed to have been done by a scribe named Godescalc. He may have been a Lombard and possibly completed the work in Lombardy during Charles' lengthy visit at the time of the baptism, or the scribe may have been brought to Aachen by Charles or Paul the Deacon and executed the work after his arrival at the palace.[11]

The four Evangelists' portraits from the Godescalc Gospel may have been modeled after the author portraits of a lost sixth-century Byzantine manuscript from Ravenna, for the style reflects that seen in the mosaics of San Vitale.[12] The figures are close to the picture plane

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[9]Ernst Kitzinger, Early Medieval Art, Midland Ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), pp. 43-45.

[10]Ibid., p. 43.

[11]John Beckwith, Early Medieval Art (Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1964), p. 38; Grabar and Nordenfalk, p. 137; Jean Hubert, Jean Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by Robert Allen, Stuart Gilbert, and James Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), p. 78; and Zarnecki, p. 120.

[12]Mosaics are used as a point of comparison, as manuscripts and frescoes of the period were destroyed in the east during the Iconoclastic Controversy. See Elizabeth Rosenbaum, "The Evangelist

and like those of San Vitale they are lean, bearded, and clothed with a similar style of drapery. The posture of St. Mark (figure 1) sitting with his head turned toward his lion symbol, is characteristic of classical representations of poets, muses, and philosophers.[13] The inclusion of such details as inkstands, thrones, and specific plants reflects similar motifs found in contemporary Byzantine or Italian works. Such naturalistic foliage did not appear in Italy before the sixth century and then only in Ravenna and Parenzo.[14]

The illumination of the Fountain of Life (figure 2) includes the representation of a baptistry with a shallow pool for immersion beneath a canopy. The shape of the baptistry is octagonal, a form typical of Early Christian baptistries such as those in Rome and Ravenna. The Fountain of Life seems to have no earlier model in manuscript illumination but it is repeated in later manuscripts in equally elaborate fashion including the use of classical details.[15]

Saint-Médard-de-Soissons

The Gospel Book of Saint-Médard-de-Soissons displays the more confident style of the late Ada School, more Italian in feel than Byzantine.[16] The figures tend to be smaller, the detail rather busy, and the color vivid. Like the Godescalc Gospel, the Gospel Book of Saint-Médard-de-Soissons includes a Fountain of Life (figure 3) and in

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Portraits of the Ada School and Their Models," Art Bulletin 38 (March 1956):82-83.

[13]Ibid., p. 84.

[14]Tselos, pp. 13-14; and Zarnecki, p. 120.

[15]Zarnecki, p. 120.

[16]Rosenbaum and Zarnecki place the Soissons Gospel in the Ada School and Beckwith places it in the Palace School.

FIGURE 1

PORTRAIT OF THE EVANGELIST ST. MARK,
THE GOSPEL BOOK OF GODESCALC

SOURCE: Book of Godescalc, folio 1, verso, Nouv. acq. Lat. 1203, Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. Photo: J. Hubert, J. Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by R. Allen, S. Gilbert, and J. Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), fig. 64.

FIGURE 2

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE
THE GOSPEL BOOK OF GODESCALC

SOURCE: folio 3, verso, Nouv. acq. Lat. 1203, Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. Photo: Grabar and Nordenfalk, Early Medieval Painting, trans. by S. Gilbert (n.p.: Skira, 1957), p. 139.

FIGURE 3

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE
GOSPEL BOOK OF SAINT-MÉDARD-DE-SOISSONS

SOURCE: folio 6, verso, Lat. 8850, Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. Photo: J. Hubert, J. Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by R. Allen, S. Gilbert, and J. Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), fig. 75.

its form it echoes that of the earlier manuscript. The perspective and the landscape are more convincing but there is no feeling of weight or mass. The animals that come to drink from the waters in the baptismal basin are rendered with a quick brush stroke. The architectural setting is significant as well. In the canon page on the opposite folio there appears a spiral Solomonic column that recalls those recently installed in St. Peter's Church in Rome, a conscious attempt at imitation of an earlier classical model.[17]

The Palace School

The Coronation Gospels (figure 4) and the Juliana Anica Codex (figure 5), completed between the years of about 790 and the death of Charles in 814, show a marked stylistic change from the manuscripts of the Ada School. According to legend, the Coronation Gospel Book was buried with Charlemagne and exumed when his grave was opened by Otto III during the celebration of the year 1000.[18] While the Ada School manuscripts exhibit the influence of the formal Italio-Byzantine style, the Palace School shows a direct influence of Hellenic antiquity.

Scholars generally agree that Greek artists and scholars, having come west to escape the iconoclastic controversy, were present at the court of Charlemagne. A "perennial Hellenism" had continued to flourish in Constantinople long after the time of Justinian.[19] Coming west these Greek scholars brought with them their traditions and their illuminated books. Greek texts had been a part of the royal collection for some

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[17]Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, pp. 84-88.

[18]Beckwith, p. 39; and Oakeshott, p. 43.

[19]Beckwith, pp. 139-43; and Grabar-Nordenfalk, p. 143.

FIGURE 4

PORTRAIT OF THE EVANGELIST
ST. MATTHEW, THE CORONATION GOSPELS

SOURCE: The Coronation Gospels, folio 15, recto, unnumbered ms. Schatzkammer, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photo: J. Hubert, J. Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by R. Allen, S. Gilbert, and J. Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), fig. 81.

FIGURE 5

THE FOUR EVANGELISTS
JULIANA ANICA CODEX

SOURCE: Juliana Ancia Codex, Evangeliar, folio 14, verso, Cathedral Treasury, Aachen. Photo: G. Zarnecki, The Art of the Medieval World: Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting (New York: Harry Abrams, 1975), fig. 130.

time, for Pope Paul I had presented Byzantine works to Pepin.[20] Perhaps Greek books were also a part of the royal collection prior to this gift. Concurrent with the movement of the Greeks to the west was the appearance of Byzantine fresco painting in the Church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome and in the Lombard Chapel at Castelseprio. The drapery style of the figures in the Palace School manuscripts resembles that found in these frescoes which in turn reflect the traditions of Roman wall painting.[21]

The painting style of the manuscripts of the Palace School is spontaneous, superbly executed, and understood owing in all probability to the first-hand knowledge and understanding of the style and technique by the Greeks at court. The palette is soft using purple, white, grey, and blue often on purple vellum. The style seems too spontaneous to be a copy of a Hellenistic manuscript by a northern or Italian artist. There is a convincing rendition of a modified perspective and a modeling of a human form beneath the drapery in the true classical style. Here for the first time we find the use of highlights, one of the most characteristic of classical techniques embraced by the Carolingian artists.[22] The style as a whole comes into full maturity under Archbishop Ebbo of Reims at his school, the former librarian of the royal collection at Aachen, which is an offshoot of the Palace School.

The Coronation Gospels

On folio 15 of the Coronation Gospel of the Holy Roman Empire

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[20]Tselos, p. 4.

[21]Ibid.; and Oakeshott, p. 44.

[22]Oakeshott, pp. 43-44; and Tselos, p. 19.

(figure 4), the figure of the youthful Evangelist St. Matthew sits alone on the page filling most of the picture space. Close to the picture plane, he is seated upon a stool with a cushion. He works at a bookstand, stopping to collect his thoughts in order to continue his writing. His left foot rests in a naturalistic manner on the pedestal of the bookstand as if to keep it steady while the right foot is solidly planted on the ground. There is a suggestion of a landscape in the background. The figure is painted in soft colors on purple vellum and is clad in a heavy Roman toga which, through the careful use of line and shadow, reveals the body beneath. He is shown in three-quarter view in an attitude of arrested motion.

The Juliana Codex

The Juliana Codex (figure 5) depicts the four Evangelists and their corresponding symbols in a rocky landscape. The unusual feature here is that all four evangelists are placed on the same page, each in a corner, representing the four corners of the earth into which they were sent to preach.[23] Although usually the portraits were done separately, there appears to be a Greek precedent to the idea of such a group being on one page.[24] The inclusion of the apocalyptic symbols is a western motif since the Greeks did not use these symbols before the twelfth century.[25]

The use of illusionistic landscape in the Juliana Codex is more extensive than in any other Carolingian manuscript.[26] The brushstrokes

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[23]Grabar-Nordenfalk, pp. 143-44.

[24]Oakeshott, plate 59.

[25]Tselos, p. 18.

[26]Ibid., pp. 13-14; and Zarnecki, p. 130.

are quick, creating an "impressionistic" effect, a trait common to Hellenistic painting. Each figure is poised in a moment of arrested action and is seen in three-quarter view. The modeling of the figures and the drapery is achieved with shadow.

Superbly executed, the illumination reveals a thorough understanding of the Hellenistic style and technique. If the illumination was not executed by a Greek at court, then the artist must have been trained by a Greek at the school.[27] The Juliana Anica Codex, like the Utrecht Psalter of a slightly later period, continues the initial phase of the Greco-Italian School represented by the Coronation Gospels.[28]

The manuscripts of the Palace School as a whole incorporate the style of another era and geographical area, a style that really is foreign as its own. But such was the nature of Charlemagne's culture. Although contrived, the Carolingian revival of the classical tradition initiated a trend which would influence the development of painting for the next four hundred years.[29]

Decorative Arts

Although no large scale sculpture of the Carolingian period has survived, ivories, book covers, reliquaries, and similar objects reveal the influence of the past upon Carolingian sculptors. We will examine two examples.

The Lorsch Gospels Covers

As might be expected, Carolingian ivories bear a strong resem-

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[27]Zarnecki, p. 131.

[28]Tselos, p. 19.

[29]Zarnecki, p. 131.

blance to contemporary manuscript illumination. The most magnificent of all Carolingian ivories are the front and back covers of the Lorsch Gospels (figures 6 and 7) now divided between the Vatican and Victoria and Albert Museum. Although two artists with individual styles appear to have been involved in the execution of the cover, the classical influence is strong in both pieces.

The back panel (figure 7), closer in style to the manuscript illuminations of the Ada School, depicts the Virgin and Child flanked by Zaccharias and John the Baptist. The columns supporting the niche of the central figures are divided into four sections each fluted in a different pattern. The column capital is a patterned variation of the Corinthian capital. The figures are flat, covered in drapery which swirls for its own sake, ignoring the human forms beneath. The shallow space is not clearly defined, for the figure of the enthroned Virgin and Child tends to "float" on the surface. The Magi, in the panel below, are seen before Herod as they adore the Christ Child who sits on his mother's lap.

The front panel (figure 6) is quite Hellenistic in feeling. The Greek influence is strong, bearing a resemblance to the manuscript illuminations of the Palace School. The figures have weight and mass, and the angels which flank the central figure of Christ are shown turning in space with their heads poised in the classical three-quarter view. The drapery reveals the body beneath in the manner of classical "wet drapery." The architectural setting is pure Corinthian, carefully copied. The carving is deep, giving a feeling of the third dimension. Below, in a horizontal panel, are scenes from the Nativity and the Appearance of the Angel to the Shepherds. The landscape is shallow with

FIGURE 6

FRONT COVER, THE LORSCH GOSPELS,
CHRIST TREADING THE BEASTS
FLANKED BY ANGELS

SOURCE: Museo Sacro, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican City. Photo: J. Hubert, J. Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by R. Allen, S. Gilbert, and J. Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), fig. 210.

FIGURE 7

BACK COVER, THE LORSCH GOSPELS,
THE VIRGIN AND CHILD FLANKED BY ZACCHARIAS
AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

SOURCE: Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo: J. Hubert, J. Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by R. Allen, S. Gilbert, and J. Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), fig. 211.

little attention to proportion or perspective, yet there is a feeling of naturalism in the pose of the sleeping Joseph, in the cattle keeping the babe warm with their breath, and in the startled expressions of the shepherds and the sheep.

The covers, while distinctive in figurative style, are similar in composition. Both are divided into five panels: three vertical and two horizontal, top and bottom. Each top panel represents angels in swirling drapery holding a medallion as they float through space. The motif is reminiscent of a panel from the fifth century Roman sarcophagus of a Princely Child now in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul. Here angels, having evolved from classical victory figures, hold the Roman wreath of victory now turned into the Christian Crown of Life.[30]

The three vertical panels of each cover which contain one figure each, reflect those found in manuscript illuminations, Roman saracophagii, and most especially in the ivory panels found in the Cathedra of Maximianus, a sixth century Byzantine episcopal throne in Ravenna.[31] Like those earlier panels of the Cathedra, the figurative relief of the Lorsch panels is shallow. The foliated classical arcades of both works are similar as are the posture of the figures, a modification of the classical contraposto. The episcopal throne was well-known to ninth-century artists, both Greek and Italian, and since it has been associated with the Emperor Justinian, its influence would have been another significant connection to the recent classical past for the

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[30]George Maxim Anossov Hanfmann, Roman Art: A Modern Survey of Imperial Rome, paperback ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1975), p. 125, fig. 143.

[31]Ibid., fig. 131; and Walter Lowerie, Art in the Early Church, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., The Norton Library, 1969), plates 29, 79-89.

Carolingian artist. The connection was a political one as well as an artistic reinforcement of the reign of Charlemagne as a continuation of past glories.

Reliquaries

The Einhard Crossbase

Roman architectural concepts are echoed in the art of reliquary design. Einhard, educated in the Anglo-Saxon founded monastery of Fulda, was himself an artist. He was well-steeped in Vitruvius and genuinely interested in classical art. He supervised the building of the Palace Chapel at Aachen and is credited with gathering together a collection of manuscripts and artifacts to be used as models for the artists at court.[32]

Einhard designed a reliquary for his abbey at Maastrict (figure 8), which was modeled after a Roman triumphal arch. Made of wood and covered with chased silver, the arch is based on the geometric principle of the square as outlined by Vitruvius. Each leg of the arch covers the ground in a perfect square and the three register divisions repeat this shape. Decorated with scenes and medallions reminiscent of ancient sculpture, the interior of the arch is coffered in the manner of the triumphal arches of Constantine or Septimus Severus in Rome.[33] The use of such a reliquary was not just decorative but didactic, for Einhard, writing to Wussin, advises him that if he wants to clarify his understanding of Vitruvius' principles, he should consult a similar reliquary

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[32]Zarnecki, p. 119, n. 7.

[33]Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, p. 35; and Caecelia Davis-Weyer, Early Medieval Art: 300-1150: Sources and Documents (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1971), p. 107.

FIGURE 8

MODEL OF THE EINHARD RELIQUARY

SOURCE: Private Collection, Paris. Photo: J. Hubert, J. Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by R. Allen, S. Gilbert, and J. Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), fig. 29.

with ivory columns made by Eigil in the style of the ancients.[34] As we shall see, the classical revival, a renascence, would carry over into architecture as well.

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[34]Davis-Weyer, p. 107.

CHAPTER IV

ARCHITECTURE AND THE PAST

Little remains today of Carolingian architecture. Excavations have revealed something of the plan and size of a few structures and some descriptions and drawings survive of others. The most significant surviving Carolingian structures include the Lorsch Gatehouse, the Oratory of Theodulf at Germigny-des-Prés, and Charlemagne's Palace Chapel at Aachen.

The new prosperity of Charlemagne's reign which was based on political stability, coupled with the renewed interest in the Roman Empire, were the stimuli for early Carolingian architecture. Old city walls were removed in some places to make way for urban expansion. New churches were built, usually based on the Roman basilican plan, such as the Church of St. Denis near Paris, which was rebuilt by Pepin and finished by Charlemagne. The Gatehouse at Lorsch was built after a Roman triumphal arch and still stands outside the abbey there; all were based upon earlier models but re-interpreted in the medieval manner. Few Carolingian buildings could be called duplicates of antique structures, unlike literature, ivory carving, or manuscript illumination.

The Palace Chapel of Charlemagne (figure 9) is the sole remaining example of Carolingian Imperial architecture. This building represents an expression of a political idea, the re-establishment of

FIGURE 9

INTERIOR OF THE PALATINE CHAPEL, AACHEN

SOURCE: Photo: J. Hubert, J. Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by R. Allen, S. Gilbert, and J. Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), fig. 35.

the Roman Empire. Here the age of Charlemagne is reflected and expressed. In reconstructing the age, this one building which is part of a much larger complex, reveals the essence of the Empire and the apotheosis of its Emperor.

Aachen: The Site and The Buildings

The Carolingian court, like its Merovingian predecessor, did not have a permanent capital. The court moved from place to place and from palace to palace as the business of government dictated. In the second half of his reign, with a stable political situation and his vast resources, Charlemagne embarked upon a massive building campaign emulating Rome and its mighty Emperors of the fourth and sixth centuries.[1] In 786 Charlemagne set out to build a palace befitting of his station in life, vowing to surpass the works of the ancients, and to supervise the construction himself.[2] The palace complex was larger than any other in Europe and built on a scale similar to that of Diocletion at Spalato. It was superceded in size only by that of the

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[1]John Beckwith, Early Medieval Art (Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1964), p. 11; and George Zarnecki, The Art of the Medieval World: Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting (New York: Harry Abrams, 1975), p. 104.

[2]Einhard and Notaker the Stammerer, Two Lives of Charlemagne, trans. with an intro. by Lewis Thorpe (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 125:28.

Eastern Emperors in Constantinople which Charles knew only from secondary sources.[3] The architect of the project was Odo of Metz.[4]

The site of Aachen was chosen because it was between the Rhine and the Meuse Rivers, thus near a direct river route to Rome and situated near the geographical center of the Empire. In addition, the aging king, like his Roman predecessors, enjoyed the mineral baths, and like the palace of Diocletion at Spalato, a large mineral bath was incorporated into the palace complex. Also, certain relics had been deposited at Aachen by Pepin.[5]

Little remains of Charlemagne's great palace complex today. Originally it covered several hundred acres extending some 650 feet on one side. The complex contained numerous buildings laid out in a north-south axial plan. At the northern-most end was the huge Royal Hall and at the south end, connected by a covered portico, was the Palace Chapel, the most marvelous and richly furnished of all the buildings. The chapel was an integral part of a much greater whole.[6] Its appearance, stylistic origins, inconography, and function related to the entire complex and most directly to the ruler who so lovingly saw to its construction.

And so the Aachen complex, planned and built by Charles, was named the Lateran. The chapel was important to him, for in the

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[3]Jean Hubert, Jean Porcher, and W. F. Volbach, The Carolingian Renaissance, trans. by Robert Allen, Stuart Gilbert, and James Emmons, The Arts of Mankind (New York: George Braziller, 1970), p. 46; and Eugene Kleinbauer, "Charlemagne's Palace Chapel at Aachen and Its Copies," Gesta 4 (Spring 1965):2.

[4]Beckwith, p. 11.

[5]Kleinbauer, p. 2.

[6]Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, p. 45; and Kleinbauer, p. 2.

tradition of Constantine and Theodoric, he saw himself as God's vicar on earth, the spiritual as well as the political leader of his people. He sought to glorify God, as well as himself, in the grandest manner possible, exceeding the splendor of the past. His chapel was built as an eight-sided dome structure and included material pilfered from Rome and Ravenna. The ambulatory, unlike that of San Vitale, expanded the eight sides upon which the dome rests to sixteen exterior walls.[7]

The shape of the interior space of the building, therefore, is that of an octagon, a shape which was significant. To the medieval architect the circle and the octagon were interchangeable and thus the octagon, or any polygon vaguely resembling a circle, took on the symbolic meaning of the circle. As early as the fourth century the octagonal plan of a church was described by Gregory of Nyssa as a "'circle with eight angles.'"[8] According to St. Augustine the circle was the perfect shape and stood for virtue, an interpretation which went back to Horace. The circle is first among the geometrical symbols in its comparability to virtue because of the harmony and rational correspondence of its necessary parts.[9] Candidus likened the circle to the church ". . . never ending and containing the sacraments; also it signifies to him the reign of eternal majesty, the hope of future

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[7]Arthur Kingsley Porter, Medieval Architecture: Its Origins and Development (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1969), pp. 150-51; and Zarnecki, p. 113.

[8]Richard Krautheimer, "An Introduction to an "Iconography of Medieval Architecture,'" Studies in Early Christian Medieval and Renaissance Art (New York: New York University Press, 1969), p. 119.

[9]Ibid., p. 121.

life and the 'highest measure for those who by just merit are crowned for all eternity.'"[10] The comparison would also hold for Charlemagne's hope for his Empire.

Within the interior space of the octagonal chapel, the space between the floor and the dome is divided into three levels: the ground level with its majestic piers and rounded Roman arches made of alternating green and white marble; a gallery with Corinthian columns dividing each opening of the larger arcade into three arches and surrounded by a bronze parapet; and a third level made up of an arcade supported by Corinthian columns. The two upper levels are contained in an overall large arcade which repeats the shape and design of the ground level arcade, only on a slightly larger scale.

The dome of the Palace Chapel contained what was undoubtedly the most important mosaic program of the Carolingian period. We know the theme of the program from a drawing by Ciampini (1699) and from the underdrawings which were found during the restoration of 1879-81. The iconography is derived from Early Christian sources. Christ was depicted either in a mandala or as the Lamb of God and was surrounded by the four Apocalyptic symbols. Below, encircling Christ and the Evangelists, were the Twenty-four Elders of the Apocalypse who carried golden crowns (Revelation 4:4-8; 5:6-8).[11] The Twenty-four Elders are the Twelve Apostles and the Twelve Patriarchs of the Old Testament. They symbolized the old and new orders as well as divine government.[12]

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[10]Ibid., citing Candidus Vita Eigilis MGH, SS. XVI, p. 231.

[11]Encyclopedia of World Art, 1971 ed., s.v., "The Palatine Chapel at Aachen," by Hans Thummler; and Kleinbauer, pp. 2, 7.

[12]Howard Saalman, Medieval Architecture (New York: George Braziller, 1967), p. 23, n. 33.

Such a mosaic program could hardly be more appropriate for a ruler who wished to symbolize the old and new government of Rome and his position of ruler and spiritual leader of his people.

The proportions of the building and the complex as a whole was based on a module of twenty-five Carolingian feet or a square measuring fifty-eight modern feet. By using a grid it was possible to transfer the proportions to the whole complex and place the buildings in the proper position on the land. The symmetry and harmony between the various parts are careful and deliberate; they are meant to reflect the proportions of the ideal human body and are close to musical proportions as well.[13] The use of the proportions of the human body goes back to Polykleitos and is the basis for ancient architectural proportions. The Aachen complex reflects Vitruvian principles as well,[14] for the overall grid plan had a more noble role than simply a method of layout. As in ancient times, it imposed harmonious and symmetrical proportions on the separate parts of the greater whole,[15] giving the entire complex as well as its subordinate individual parts dignity, order, and continuity.

The west facade is simple and monumental without the clutter of extraneous detail and is divided into three vertical parts. The lowest part contains a tri-partite doorway, the center double door being larger. Above this, divided into two by an unobtrusive corbeling, is a deep recessed rounded arch and like the overall arcade pattern inside, it

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[13] Encyclopedia of World Art, 1971 ed., s.v., "Proportion in Architecture," by Eugenio Battisti.

[14] Ibid., "Medieval Classicism," by Eugenio Battisti; and Kleinbauer, p. 3.

[15] Hubert, Porcher, and Volbach, pp. 45-46.

functions as a triumphal arch.[16] In the concave recess is an entrance at the gallery level and above it a large tri-partite window. Presumably from this door the Emperor could come onto the balcony created by the protruding doorways and make appearances for state and religious occasions in the Imperial tradition.

In front of the chapel was a courtyard in the center of which was placed a bronze equestrian statue brought back from Ravenna and thought to be of Theodoric, the model of a humanist monarch.[17] Placing the statue in this location paid homage to Theodoric and the tradition of the Roman Emperors, but more directly, it was in emulation of the statue thought to be of Constantine in front of the Lateran Palace in Rome. Although Charles' statue was in actuality that of Emperor Zeno and the equestrian monument of Constantine was later realized to be of Marcus Aurelius, it is the attempt to recreate the splendor of Rome that is important. Further, in the vestibule of the chapel was a small bronze Gallo-Roman bear echoing the she-wolf of the Capitoline in Rome.[18] The doors of the chapel are cast bronze, a feat in itself not short of a miracle. They are the first example of bronze casting since the fall of Rome. They are each divided into eight panels and have lionhead door-knockers revealing one more attempt at Roman splendor.[19]

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[16]Kenneth J. Conant, Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture: 800-1200 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959), pp. 1-6, 14-16; and Richard Krautheimer, "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture," Art Bulletin 24 (March 1942):34.

[17]Battisti, "Medieval Classicism."

[18]Krautheimer, "Carolingian Revival," p. 34.

[19]Zarnecki, p. 114.

Sources of Inspiration For The Palace Chapel

Charlemagne was well travelled. Not only had he fought in Italy, he had made other visits there as well. He was, therefore, familiar with its great architectural monuments. He is known to have visited Spalato where Diocletian built a large palace complex, which included an octagonal building for his burial. He visited San Vitale in 787, the same year as construction was begun in Aachen for the Palace Chapel.[20] Further, he imported workmen from all over the world and he frequently entertained foreign visitors. "To help him in this building he summoned from all lands beyond the seas architects and workmen skilled in every relevent art."[21] Thus, his access to ancient monuments for inspiration was extensive regardless of whether his knowledge was first or second hand.

San Vitale

Many scholars postulate that the Palace Chapel at Aachen was planned as a copy of Justinian's Imperial Church of San Vitale in Ravenna. In Carolingian times Ravenna was still seen as a seat of the power of the Roman Empire and San Vitale was seen as the Imperial Chapel. Like the chapel at Aachen, San Vitale, a sixth-century structure, is a domed building with an octagonal central space encircled by an ambulatory and a gallery with an apse at the eastern end, a towered entrance, and an atrium. The exterior of San Vitale is constructed of brick and is austere. Through a complex system of vaulting in the ambulatory a

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[20] Kleinbauer, p. 3.

[21] Einhard and Notaker, p. 80.

circular dome is set on the octagonal space. The building interior is faced with colored veined marble and porphery, and the apse is richly decorated with mosaics. Although the constituent parts are the same the design principles are different. Thus, the feeling of the interior space at Aachen differs entirely from that of Ravenna.[22] Where Aachen is set upon heavy majestic piers, San Vitale, a much larger structure, is set upon undulating piers interspersed with columns forming niches which arch into the ambulatory to form a pattern which resembles the petals of a flower. The space seems light and airy.

While it is reasonable to believe that the architecture of San Vitale influenced Charlemagne as he embarked upon his ambitious task, it is unsatisfactory to suggest that San Vitale alone is the model for Charlemagne's Palace Chapel. The differences between the two buildings were too great to assume that Aachen was intended to be a direct copy of San Vitale. The relationship between the two buildings can be no more than spiritual.[23] The key reason for believing this can be found in the writings of Charlemagne's contemporary Notaker: "He [Charlemagne] conceived the idea of constructing on his native soil and according to his own plan a cathedral which should be finer than the ancient buildings of the Romans."[24] If Charles intended to surpass the glories of Rome, he would not stop with Justinian's church. Further, it is not Justinian who is mentioned as a source of inspiration but Constantine and the warrior kings such as David, Joshua, and Solomon of the Old Testament.[25]

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[22]Kleinbauer, p. 3.

[23]Thummler.

[24]Einhard and Notaker, p. 125.

[25]Ibid.

And in this regard the Carolingian architect preferred to be more than an imitator.[26] By combining various models into one building the structure already becomes more than an echo of the past. The Palace Chapel combined only the best from the past and therefore in Carolingian eyes, it was not only finer than any building from the past but a continuation of the classical tradition on a more refined scale.

Furthermore, we must consider the medieval concept of "copy." Simple imitation ignores that which was most important to the medieval architect: purpose, content, and function of a structure.[27] Not interested in imitation, although capable of it in many areas of art, he wished to "copy" in the broadest sense of the word. Certain outstanding features such as shape, proportion, general iconographic motif, or feeling were indeed more important than mere duplication. In this fashion inspiration could be derived from more than one source. No model was duplicated in all respects; rather, it was broken down into component parts and rearranged and other elements, sometimes quite foreign to the original, were added.[28] Thus, the sources for Charlemagne's Palace Chapel at Aachen may extend far beyond the narrow limits of San Vitale. From each source came a significant part to help make up a more glorious whole.

By seeking a wide range of inspiration, Carolingian artists could "express more eloquently and intelligently their increasingly

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[26]Battisti, "Medieval Classicism"; and Norman E. Sullivan, Aix la Chappelle in the Age of Charlemagne (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), pp. 35-38, 54-55.

[27]Krautheimer, "Iconography of Medieval Architecture," p. 127.

[28]Ibid., pp. 116-20.

sophisticated ideas and more subtle emotions."[29] Their architectural iconography and symbolism became more complex.

> Those who visited the church at Aix in the age of Charlemagne were to witness an important event in art history, one compounded out of the vigorous German spirit seeking to enrich itself from the tradition of antiquity so it could better honor God.[30]

Palatial Predecessors

The idea which underlies the palace complex is directly related to the larger meaning of the single building of the Palace Chapel. The concept of such a well-planned, self-contained community was not original with Charles. Most of the old Roman Imperial residences in the provinces were set up on a similar plan. There was a Roman Imperial palace in nearby Trier as well as in Milan, Ravenna, and Spalato which Charlemagne is known to have visited. Charles also had first-hand knowledge of the Lateran complex in Rome and knew of the great palace of the Eastern Emperors in Constantinople from secondary sources. These palaces were still extant and were a symbol of the power of the Emperors.

Spalato

Spalato was a self-contained fortified complex containing the imperial residence, ceremonial halls, a bath, galleries, pavilions, and an octagonal building which later served as the Emperor Diocletian's tomb. Spalato had been in continual use since the time of Diocletian and was still functioning as a town in the time of Charlemagne, retaining much of the original Roman structure. The octagonal mausoleum had been "cleansed" and converted into a church and was stripped of some of its

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[29] Sullivan, p. 55.

[30] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

pagan decoration.[31] Like other fortified palace complexes built in the hinterlands near Aachen, Spalato was, in the early Middle Ages, a symbol of the power once held by the Roman Emperor.

The Sacred Palace of Constantinople

The Chrysotriclinos (Golden Triclinium) was the nucleus of the Great Palace of the Emperors in Constantinople. The palace complex was begun by Constantine and expanded by Justinian. The Chrysotriclinos, built by Justinian II (565-578) as a ceremonial hall with both religious and secular functions, may also be a model for Charlemagne's Palace Chapel. Although Charles was never in Constantinople, some of his retinue were Greek and probably knew the building first-hand or by reputation. Although Byzantine in design, it was regarded by the Carolingians as classical.[32]

Though secular in purpose, the Chrysotriclinos was an octagonal building and was decorated with mosaics with religious themes. The mosaic over the throne was that of Christ Enthroned and that over the doorway was of the Virgin.[33] The building also housed the throne of the Emperor and relics of the Virgin similar in kind to those found at Aachen. Although Charles did not go as far as to place his throne above the high altar at the east end of the church, his ideas of the importance of the Emperor and the relationship of the Emperor to God and to his subjects were clearly Byzantine in character.[34] Since the

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[31]Sheila McNally, "Split in the Middle Ages," Archaeology 28 (October 1975):249, 254.

[32]Kleinbauer, pp. 2-3.

[33]Ibid., p. 3.

[34]Battisti, "Medieval Classicism"; and Beckwith, pp. 11-12.

Chrysotriclinos was the embodiment of the Byzantine Emperor, it is fitting that Charles should look to this building, whose significance he fully understood, for inspiration.

The Influence of Constantine

The image of Constantine was all important in Carolingian thought. It is he, more than any other Roman Emperor, who is mentioned as Charlemagne's secular ideal. Indeed, he called Aachen the New Rome and the New Constantinople.[35] By linking himself with the first Christian Roman Emperor, Charles was not only legitimizing his claim to the throne but also he was cementing his dual position as defender of the faith and political ruler.

Charlemagne's association with Constantine was not just philosophical. There were practical, political, and legal reasons as well, all of which seemed connected with the Donation of Constantine, a document which came to light under the reign of Pope Stephen II in 754 and which since has proved to be a forgery. The document stated that the spiritual leadership of the world was given to the pope by Constantine since the pope was the successor to St. Peter. When Constantine transferred the capital of the Empire to Constantinople, he gave the pope dominion over the territorial rule of the West. Thus, the pope had the power to designate who would govern and had the right to crown the rulers who would exercise this authority in his place.[36] Therefore, if the pope had ultimate dominion over the West, then it was

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[35]Krautheimer, "Carolingian Revival," pp. 35-37; and Sullivan, pp. 34, 96.

[36]Paul Gray, "Fakes That Have Skewed History," Time 121 (16 May 1983):38; and Krautheimer, "Carolingian Revival," p. 14.

he who must give the imperial power to Charlemagne. This was done when Leo III crowned Charles the Roman Emperor on Christmas Day, 800. This formal gesture further legitimized Charlemagne's claim. Secondly, since the new Roman Empire would be wholly Christian, Christian Roman Emperors would be most appropriate to choose as models. The two imperial rulers who had combined Christianity with Roman sovereignty were Theodosius and Constantine.[37] Of these, Constantine was the first. Constantine and Charles, first and foremost. The parallel seemed to fit and Charles used it.

The Lateran Palace

It is not coincidental that Charles chose the name "Lateran" for his palace complex in Aachen. Constantine had been given the Lateran Palace by the church and upon his departure to Constantinople, he bestowed the complex upon the pope. In Carolingian times the Lateran still bore Constantinian significance.[38] Charlemagne further honored the memory of the first Christian Emperor with the equestrian statue he had looted from Ravenna and brought treasures to his Palace Chapel which were similar to those at the Lateran. And, lastly, the dedication of his chapel to the Savior may have been to emuluate and honor the Lateran Chapel of Constantine, also dedicated to the Savior.[39]

Constantinian Buildings

Several Constantinian buildings may have also influenced the final form of the chapel at Aachen. Not far from the Lateran complex

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[37]Krautheimer, "Carolingian Revival," pp. 36-37.

[38]Kleinbauer, p. 2.

[39]Krautheimer, "Carolingian Revival," p. 35.

was the octagonal Baptistry of St. John the Baptist built under Constantine and rebuilt under Pope Sixtus III in the fifth century.

A Constantinian church in Rome which may have influenced the decoration of Aachen was Old St. Peter's. Einhard mentions that "Charlemagne cared more for the church of the holy Apostle Peter in Rome than for any other sacred and venerable place."[40] Old St. Peter's, during the Middle Ages and perhaps earlier, had a mosaic on the western facade which was Apocalyptic in theme. The dome mosaic at Aachen was similar in nature. It is reasonable to assume that Charles may have wished to incorporate something of his favorite church into the decoration of his Palace Chapel.[41]

A third Roman building to be considered as a model for the Palace Chapel is the church of Santa Costanza which was built by Constantine as a mausoleum for his family. The building is domed with a peristyle separating the central domed area from the ambulatory. This building would have been known first-hand by Charles.[42]

The arch of Constantine may also have played a part in the inspiration of Aachen. The arched entrance at the west end of the Palace Chapel through which Charles and his retinue entered could be seen as a triumphal arch representing the triumphant Christ. The Arch of Constantine in particular represented to medieval man the victory of

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[40]Einhard and Notaker, pp. 80-81.

[41]Saalman, p. 23.

[42]Krautheimer, "Iconography of Medieval Architecture," p. 135; Walter Lowerie, Art in the Early Church, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Norton Library, 1969), pp. 140-41; and Saalman, p. 23.

Christianity over paganism, as the battle depicted on the Arch was the one during which Constantine was converted to Christianity.[43]

The Ultimate Meaning of the Palace Chapel

Like the palace complex as a whole, Charlemagne built the chapel to confirm his authority and to help legitimize his claim to the throne of the Roman Emperors. By following in the footsteps of his Christian predecessors using the traditional symbols, iconography, and pilfered materials, he accomplished this goal.[44] If the purpose of the building were multi-fold, then so was its function.

Charles did not write in his will where he wished to be buried, nor do contemporary historians mention that he had the Palace Chapel in mind as a tomb. The shape of the building is certainly reminiscent of imperial mausolea and its place in the palace complex is similar to that of Diocletian at Spalato. In addition, the height of the central space, its several altars, the elaborate liturgical furnishings, and the general geometric symmetry of the building as a whole give the chapel a unique quality and atmosphere. This lends credibility to the idea that Odo of Metz and Charles may have had his final resting place in mind from the beginning.[45] However, the chapel was first conceived as an imperial church for religious and ceremonial purposes and only perhaps secondarily as a tomb structure.

The chapel, though primarily religious in conception, had its secular function as well, for church and state were inseparable: Charles

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[43]Krautheimer,"Carolingian Revival," p. 34; and Sullivan, p. 42.

[44]Conant, p. 16; Beckwith, pp. 11-13; Sullivan, p. 174; and Thummler.

[45]Conant, p. 16.

saw himself as Christ-appointed and as a mortal, but with a divinely ordained purpose. Since his power was bestowed by God, it was fitting in his eyes that his church also serve as a throne room, an idea of Byzantine inspiration. Because he was a step above his subjects, he placed his throne on a higher level but unlike his Byzantine counterparts, who placed their thrones above the high altar, Charles placed his throne at the west end of the church facing the altar of the Savior who gave him his own power for guidance.[46]

The Palace Chapel of Charlemagne was carefully planned to the last detail. His subjects must have seen it as a "reflection of the great cosmic order of government."[47] In the Byzantine tradition Charles had planned the iconographic program to reflect just this. The first level was for the people and the altar on the ground floor was that of the Virgin who was an intercessor between the people and Christ. Charlemagne, being an intermediary between the "chosen" people and God, and owing to God the same position of service as his subjects owed to him, placed his throne at a level above the people. The altar on the second level was that of the Savior, the source of Charlemagne's power. He never expected nor did he attempt to surround himself with any sort of quasi-divine splendor. He was a man of common sense, a pious man who never tried to overstep his mortal limitations.[48] And finally, Charles reserved the third level of his chapel, the level closest to God, for the mosaic representing the divine order of the cosmos depicting Christ

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[46]Beckwith, pp. 11-13; and Sullivan, p. 23.

[47]Heinrich Fictenau, The Carolingian Empire: The Age of Charlemagne, trans. by Peter Munz (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1964), p. 55.

[48]Ibid., pp. 54-56; Saalman, p. 23; and Sullivan, pp. 99-100, 174.

among the Elders and Beasts of the Apocalypse. The divine government above paralleled the terrestial government below. Charlemagne, therefore, carefully placed his throne in the chapel to reflect the position he held in this world.

The Palace Chapel is an appropriate culmination to a study of the "classical" influence on the reign of Charlemagne, for no other art form so completely exemplifies the diversity of the meaning of that term. As far as Charles was concerned, the chapel was a classical building but in the Carolingian sense of the word. For as we have seen, the Carolingians took from the past that which they felt was appropriate, blended and synthesized it, and created from this vast classical tradition a culture, an art style, an architectural form, and a literature as much their own as it was an echo of the past. A culture calculated, yet original; stilted, yet fresh, it was and remains unique.

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