ART, DEVOTION, AND THE UTILITY OF SIGHT

IN THE CAROLINGIAN CHURCH

by

JORDAN M. KOEL

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Student: Jordan M. Koel

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This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture by:

Dr. Charles Lachman          Chair
Dr. Nicola Camerlenghi       Advisor
Dr. Richard Sundt            Member
Dr. Rebekah Perry            Member
Dr. William Diebold          Member

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy        Vice President for Research and Innovation
                             Dean of the Graduate School


Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Jordan M. Koel

Master of Arts

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This thesis is an exploration of Carolingian art within the context of religious devotion. The second chapter investigates the theoretical aspects related to the use of images by examining historical sources. These texts offer insight both into the types of anxieties images raised as well as contemporary attempts to reconcile these concerns. In order to determine how these theories were put into practice, the third chapter considers the manners in which the visual experience was orchestrated. To do so, shrines and reliquaries, as well as textual accounts describing encounters with them, are used to explore the messages that religious art conveyed and the means by which they did so. The fourth chapter focuses on the figure of the maker of sacred art. The theories of religious art and implementation of them, as discussed in Chapters II and III, fundamentally relied on the craftsman who fashioned them.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Jordan M. Koel

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED

University of Oregon, Eugene
University of Wisconsin, Madison

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, History of Art and Architecture, 2014, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, Art History, 2005, University of Wisconsin-Madison

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Late Antique and Medieval Art and Architecture

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Department of the History of Art and Architecture,
University of Oregon, Eugene, 2012-2013

Symposium Co-Chair, Art History Association of the University of Oregon,
Eugene, 2013

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Art History, 2012-2013

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# DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents, Myron and Alice Raasch.

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### INTRODUCTION

In the early hours of the morning, just before dawn, a tired cleric prostrated himself on the cold pavement of a Carolingian church. The object of the man's veneration was neither a cross, nor an image, but rather a small jeweled box resting on an altar. This box contained the ashes of a saint who had died long ago and far away. As the cleric recited the words of the Psalms in the empty church, the jeweled box began to ring, as if it had been a bell struck with a hammer, and the doors of the church clattered as if agitated by an unseen force. Alarmed by these extraordinary circumstances, the cleric fled the church. Shortly after, in a nervous dream, he was visited by a mysterious figure who commanded him to reunite the relics in the jeweled box to the remainder of the saintly body from which they had been taken. This episode was recorded by Einhard a prominent intellectual around the year 830.[1]

For modern-day historians of Carolingian art, this short scene offers a number of intriguing insights into the place of art in religious practice. At the core of Einhard's account was a small work of art, in this case a jeweled box containing the relics of a saint. It is revealing to note what it *wasn't*—it was not an image painted on a wall or a wooden panel. Instead, it was towards this small reliquary that the cleric directed his veneration. Indeed, divine power made itself known through this object, signaling divine presence. In sum, art was a key component of Carolingian devotion, however, its precise place in religious practice was hotly debated. This thesis examines some of the intricacies surrounding Carolingian art and its function within the Carolingian church.

Throughout the eighth and ninth centuries, Carolingians found themselves grappling with the matter of art and its place within devotional practice. The persistence of these concerns in contemporary evidence is indicative of both the complexity of the issue as well as its importance. To parse the complexity of this issue, I will proceed by examining the subject through three distinct lenses. It is my intention that the composite

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[1] Paul Edward Dutton, ed., *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader* (Orchard Park: Broadview Press, 1999), 214–215. (Einhard's *The Translation and Miracles of the Saints Marcellinus and Peter*, Book 2, §11.)

generated by these three lenses, as if each were capturing a unique spectrum of light, will yield an image of Carolingian art that acknowledges the complexity of the subject. By layering these distinct spectrums over one another, it may be possible to appreciate what details or relationships might be missed if only one is viewed alone. The first is theoretical and encompasses the theological arguments that appeared as discourses over images, art, and worship unfolded. Accordingly, this component of the study relies on historical and textual sources. Through such evidence we can ascertain the critical anxieties that images raised and explore the various approaches taken to reconcile these concerns. Through a second lens, I will examine the implementation of the aforementioned theoretical concepts. Consideration of the manners in which visual experiences of holiness were orchestrated indicates the extent to which art was actually incorporated into devotional practice. To this end, in order to illuminate how devotional art was perceived and interacted with, I will consider shrines and reliquaries as well as textual accounts describing encounters with them. My third and final lens shifts its focus to the production of sacred art. Here, the role of the maker will be given prominence of place. Within the scheme of theory and implementation, it was the maker who was fundamentally responsible for the execution of the work of sacred art. Their role, however, is often overlooked or absorbed by that of the patron. This final lens is pointed onto popular and religious legends as well as biblical exegesis to reveal how makers of devotional objects were themselves reflected onto devotional objects.

The second chapter lays bare the theoretical concerns associated with images and their function in worship. Its primary aim is to determine where—that is, in what *things*—Carolingians believed sanctity was found. To answer this question, I examine textual sources. As a means to defend distinctively Christian forms of worship against the potential infringement of pagan practices, the Carolingian authorities were compelled to demarcate the criteria for identifying holy objects. The identification of holy objects was the first fundamental step in the Church's aspiration to regulate holiness and thereby maintain control over the means of salvation. This foundational investigation is necessary because it orients the exploration of Carolingian sacred art by directing attention towards objects that not only represented sanctity, but were considered to be holy themselves. For

the Carolingians, images were not deemed holy. Instead, that classification was reserved for items essential for salvation or with a direct association with God—the sacraments, the liturgical vessels necessary for worship, the cross, and relics. The Church granted that none of these things ought to be worshiped as God is worshiped, but insisted that unlike images, these things did deserve a degree of veneration. This solution was restrictive and restricted, in that holiness was defined by a select number of objects and invested in the hands of the clergy.

Incidentally, the majority of this thesis will focus on shrines and reliquaries to the exclusion of the sacraments and the cross. The performative nature of the liturgy and of the sacraments, while integral to the representation of holiness, falls outside the scope of an art historical study concerned with objects. I also exclude crosses, which beyond representations in manuscripts, exist in few extant Carolingian examples. Instead, I focus my attention on the remains of saints found at shrines or beneath altars, and in reliquaries that served as the engine for pilgrimage. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the presence of a relic was integral to the creation of a holy site. In turn, the sanctioned holy site, anchored around the presence of a relic, was where holiness was made visible.

Chapter III considers the implementation of the theoretical concepts that were discussed in the second chapter. Its purpose is to examine how Church officials manipulated the presentation of holy objects such as shrines and reliquaries in order to orchestrate the visual experience of sanctity. The chapter explores the regulation of the visual experience by the Carolingian episcopate and considers how their methods were manifested in artistic fabrications. The visual experience was in need of defense against prevalent attitudes toward images or manufactured things outlined in the second chapter. In contrast to the purely abstract and contemplative spirituality espoused by conservative Carolingian theologians, Jonas of Orléans and others attempted to reconcile the senses— primarily sight—with the spiritual needs of Christians. The prominence ascribed to vision, coupled with the longstanding program of curtailing unsanctioned or unauthenticated holy objects, focuses this third chapter on how patrons of art orchestrated the visual experience of sanctity. Their management of the visual experience relied upon the presence of relics, often comprised of little more than ash or shards of

bone. Not only did reliquaries visibly mediate for these fragments, but their formal qualities conveyed specific metaphors meant to guide devotion. Despite common critiques during the Carolingian era that art was manufactured by human hands, the Church relied heavily on such fabrications to communicate holiness. In such a scheme of patrons who orchestrated the visual experience and of pilgrims and votaries for whom reliquaries were intended, one figure remains unexamined—the craftsman.

My fourth chapter considers these producers of sacred art, who forged the physical objects wherein holiness could reside. But how did the maker factor into the perception of holy objects? This chapter studies the archetype of the craftsman, specifically the smith, within the early medieval understanding of art. In accounts drawn from popular culture and from religious exegesis, smiths appear to have been far from marginal figures; indeed, within the medieval system of fabricating devotional art, they possessed meaningful spiritual connotations. A smith's pagan and biblical pedigree assured that his efforts to purify and form metals associated him with the spiritual perfection of the soul. That the greater population understood the smith as an exemplar of spiritual progress added yet another layer of metaphorical meaning to the art they produced.

A substantial component of this thesis is the investigation of primary and secondary sources that directly or indirectly inform the understanding of art and its place within religious practice. To this end, the work of Carolingian historians has been invaluable in the contextualization of major figures and their works. Thomas F.X. Noble, professor of Medieval History at the University of Notre Dame, provided an instrumental resource for Carolingian art historians with his 2009 publication, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*. From the ancient rumblings of the image debate, to Byzantine Iconoclasm, through the reign of Louis the Pious, Noble explored the historical factors, texts, and influential figures that guided the development of the discourse on images. What this book lacks in actual images—none are published aside from the cover—it compensates for in incomparable breadth and detail. In Noble's book, the topics of tradition, order, and worship are repeatedly used as themes used to untangle the diverse threads of the colorful history of the subject of images. Complimenting Noble's

investigations are the publications of historian David F. Appleby of Thomas Aquinas College. Appleby has written extensively on many of the prominent figures of Carolingian intellectual and theological life, often with an interdisciplinary eye towards the role of the senses and issues of art and religion. His work gives valuable insight into such figures as Jonas of Orléans, Paschasius Radbertus, and Hrabanus Maurus, all of whom are essential in understanding the medieval relationship between spirituality and art. Particularly relevant to this thesis have been Appleby's articles "Instruction and Inspiration Through Images in the Carolingian Period," published in 2002 and "Sight and Church Reform in the Thought of Jonas of Orléans," published in 2008. Finally, Celia Chazelle of The College of New Jersey has contributed in no small way to the art historian's view of the Carolingian period with works such as her 2002 book, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and the Art of Christ's Passion*. Together, these historians offer the most authoritative and recent contributions of medieval historians to the subject of Carolingian art.

From an art historical perspective, this thesis is considerably influenced by the work of the eminent scholars Cynthia Hahn of the City University of New York and Hunter College and William Diebold of Reed College. Hahn's recent book, *Strange Beauty*, published in 2012, is in effect a compendium of her research on relics and reliquaries over the last two decades. *Strange Beauty* is a chronologically expansive work, stretching from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries. Throughout, Hahn forefronts the utilitarian nature of reliquaries, noting now they are more often than not designed to be objects that were manipulated as a component of ritual, or at least ritually displayed. Hahn also demonstrates how these extraordinary objects were capable of communicating complex messages through their formal qualities, manner of display, and their manipulation in the hands of the clergy. Given the centrality of relics and reliquaries in the Carolingian discourse on images and sacred art, Hahn's insight sheds light on a core component of Carolingian devotion. For my thesis, the drawback is her wide chronological scope. Hahn's goals are not tied to a particular era, but to enriching the understanding of relics in general within medieval religious culture. Indispensible to comprehending the specifically Carolingian appreciation of art are the contributions of

William Diebold. Critical to his approach is the acknowledgement of the importance of biblical exegesis and other texts that ascribe meaning to specific materials and methods. Through a careful study of eighth– and ninth–century sources, Diebold has shown that far beyond figural representation, material and technique could serve as primary carriers of meaning in the Carolingian work of art. This methodology is exemplified in "Medium as Message in Carolingian Writing About Art," published in *Word & Image* in 2006. The second chapter of this thesis, which examined the Carolingian critique of images, also took cues from the article, "The Carolingian Idol: Exegetes and Idols," which appeared in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (2005). In this article, Diebold postulated that the Carolingian conception of idols serves as a mirror for their understanding of the meaningful, licit image. Finally, my fourth chapter is inspired by Diebold's "The New Testament and the Visual Arts in the Carolingian Era, with special reference to the *sapiens architectus*," from *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era* (2003). Here he explored how Carolingian exegesis can inform the understanding of the figure of the artist and builder, elaborating on the spiritual implications linked to the figure of the wise architect. My fourth chapter extends such a method to the figure of the Carolingian smith (*faber*).

Carolingian religious art is an intriguing and complex subject. The following pages are a limited inquiry into the matter and, as such, justifiably only scratch the surface of profound matters about the nature of religious art. This thesis, as a contribution to the field of Carolingian art, is intended to not only be a summation of recent scholarship on the religious art of the period, but to also be a unique synthesis of both the historical and art historical approaches in order to better understand the development of the perception of religious art of the ninth century.

CHAPTER II

LOCATING SANCTITY

*Taken altogether, Iconoclast, Carolingian, Iconodule were asking the same question throughout the eighth century: where is the holy? what belongs to it and what does not?*[2]

### *Introduction*

With this quote, Peter Brown distills the essence of the dilemma that religious leaders confronted each time they attempted to grapple with the subject of art and its place within religious practice. Often construed as a controversy literally defined by icons, Brown reminds us that it was about much more. The image crisis, which had plagued Christianity since its earliest days and had appeared as the phenomenon of Iconoclasm in Byzantium, had at its core little to do with images themselves and everything to do with locating sanctity. The aim of this chapter is to survey the particularly Carolingian response to this crisis by examining the textual evidence generated by Carolingian writers, primarily bishops, who were directly involved in formulating an answer to this crucial question. The importance of locating where divine presence or power resides is directly linked to issues of devotional practice. Indeed, the anxiety over distinguishing the holy from the ordinary was spawned by the Carolingian episcopate's fears of idolatry and the unease it caused in relation to proper forms of worship. A brief survey of Carolingian texts such as the *Opus Caroli Regis*, the Paris *Libellus*, or *On the Cult of Images* by Jonas of Orléans (b. ca. 780), immediately make it clear that what truly amounted to a dialogue regarding religious art extended far beyond the perception of figural likenesses. The underlying theme of all the discussion of art—which encompassed not only images, but signs and symbols such as the cross, as well as reliquaries and shrines, tacitly discussed as they argue over devotion to the saints—is how to identify if any of these things are truly capable of aiding one in achieving salvation or giving one access to divine power. The utility of art and the importance of physical acts of worship were intrinsically bound to this issue. Through the course of the following pages, a comparison is also made between

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[2] Peter Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," *The English Historical Review* 88, no. 346 (January 1973): 8.

the early "conservative" Carolingian view of art, typified by the *Opus Caroli Regis*, and the assessment of art by the younger generation of churchmen, such as Jonas of Orléans and Dungal of Pavia (fl. ca. 827), that appeared in the first half of the ninth century. Differences in themes and approaches make it clear that either the *Opus* was far out of touch with the reality of image practice or that a sea-change had occurred between the late eighth and early ninth centuries. In either case, the discussion was dynamic and the differences in opinion and subtlety of argument seen in the early ninth century reveal it as worthy of attention in the search to understand the Carolingian perception of religious art.

### Images, Idols and the Carolingian Roots of the Image Crisis

To begin, why was there was such concern over images in the first place? There is no denying that news of the Iconoclastic controversy, repeatedly coming to a head in Byzantium, aroused interest in the Carolingian empire. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the Carolingian iteration of the controversy indicate that it was an issue with native roots. Like a chemical reaction, some elements were the same as those in Byzantium, however, it was driven by unique reagents, proceeded under distinct conditions, and produced idiosyncratic results.[3] Perhaps the most critical difference between the Carolingian empire and Byzantium in the eighth and ninth centuries was the threat, real or perceived, of paganism. While Constantinople, with the luster of Constantinian tradition, shone like an ancient jewel at the center of Christendom, Francia stood in the dim periphery, so to speak. There, the Christianization process was still a work in progress during the eighth and ninth centuries. Charlemagne's wars with Saxons had resulted in mass conversions (often at the point of a sword). One of the most famous Carolingians saints, Boniface, was in fact an Englishman who had proselytized among the

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[3] David F. Appleby, "Holy Relic and Holy Image: Saints' Relics in the Western Controversy over Images in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries," *Word & Image* 8, no. 4 (October 1992): 333. Appleby notes that among the tendencies in modern scholarship that obscure the study of religious images in the Middle Ages is precisely that of seeing the Carolingian episode as a mere offshoot of the Byzantine debate. He writes, "The eighth- and ninth-century debate was a western phenomenon, not simply a crude version of the iconoclastic controversy of the East."

Frisians—and was martyred by them—in the early eighth century.[4] Missions to the Avars, to the southeast, occurred during the late eighth century, while during the reign of Louis the Pious, a mission began to the Danes. As missionaries ventured to the frontiers to add to the flock, Christians in the heart of the empire lived in the shadow of generations of pagan tradition, and traditions do not die easily. In this atmosphere, where pagan and Christian practices comingled, it is inevitable that anxieties arose regarding how to distinguish between Christian worship and pagan superstition and idolatry. Throughout this thesis, I acknowledge traditional pagan (or non-Christian) practice and myth as often-overlooked yet primary factors in the development of early medieval devotional art in Western Europe. If the *Opus Caroli Regis* is viewed as a codification of the Carolingian "party line" with regards to images, it becomes clear that the line was grey and fuzzy at best. William Diebold notes that while there may have been an orthodox theory of images, "these guidelines were so few and so general that it was difficult to know what to think about images."[5] To complicate matters, the *Opus Caroli Regis* and Christian tradition acknowledged that there was in fact a particular class of objects that was holy. These objects—relics, the cross, liturgical vessels, the sacraments—were those things that were directly associated with God and represented the essential means of salvation. Speaking to the problematic repercussions of this concession, David Appleby comments that, "to acknowledge that a class of objects was worthy of veneration not merely as symbols but as holy things was to raise the question of how to identify these venerable objects."[6] The tension that arose from the ongoing clash with non-Christian practices was

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[4] See Ian N. Wood, "The Northern Frontier: Christianity Face to Face with Paganism," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity* (New Haven and London: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 230–246; Richard E. Sullivan, "The Carolingian Missionary and the Pagan," in *Christian Missionary Activity in the Early Middle Ages* (Variorum, 1994), 705–740; Richard E. Sullivan, "Carolingian Missionary Theories," in *Christian Missionary Activity in the Early Middle Ages* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1994), 273–295; David F. Appleby, "Spiritual Progress in Carolingian Saxony: A Case from Ninth-Century Corvey," *The Catholic Historical Review* 82, no. 4 (1996): 599–613.

[5] William J. Diebold, "The Carolingian Idol: Exegetes and Idols," in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison, and Marco Mostert (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2005), 457.

[6] Appleby, "Holy Relic and Holy Image," 339-340.

no doubt a predominant motivating factor in the Carolingian discourse on images and image practice.

Nowhere is this tension more apparent than in the *List of Superstitions and Pagan Practices* (*Indiculus Superstitionum et Paganiarum*), appended to the Canons of the Council of Leptines (ca. 743).[7] This pithy text catalogues thirty distinct sacrilegious practices, beliefs, and objects that were to be policed, providing insight into what manner of threats the Church perceived to be dangerous. While some items on the list appear quite puzzling and alien to a modern reader, most are easily recognized as habits of a Christian population that still struggled to find the boundaries between their new religion and traditional practices. Several items concern unsanctioned holy places, rituals, or sacrifices made to saints, while others deal with the various illicit forms of divination. Of particular interest to the study of image practice are articles twenty-six through twenty-nine, which specifically deal with idols and objects used in pagan rites. Little information is given as to what these idols looked like exactly, but the list specifically mentions those made of dough (*de simulacro de consparsa farina*) and rags (*de simulacris de pannis factis*), as well as idols in general which were carried in procession through fields (*de simulacro quod per campos portant*). Finally, mention is made of wooden feet and hands used in pagan rituals (*de ligneis pedibus vel manibus pagano ritu*).[8] What this list offers the discussion of images and image practice is insight to the extent to which pagan practice was entwined with sanctioned Christian practice and how diverse those practices could be. The examples singled out are best read, not simply as markers that distinguish the pagan *from* the Christian, but instead as instances where orthodox Christian practice had

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[7] A translation of the list can be found in Paul Edward Dutton, ed., *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader* (Orchard Park: Broadview Press, 1999), 3. Dutton's list is reprinted from J.T. McNeill and H.M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 419-421. For further references and discussion see also Richard E. Sullivan, "The Carolingian Missionary and the Pagan," in *Christian Missionary Activity in the Early Middle Ages* (Variorum, 1994), 731. Also Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997); Holger Homann, "Der Indiculus Superstitionum et Paganiarum Und Verwandte Denkmaler" (Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen, 1965).

[8] I find this reference particularly curious, as it can perhaps be seen as evidence of a pagan antecedent for the arm, hand, and foot reliquaries that became popular in the following centuries.

to become more clearly defined. Discussing the complex Christianization process that was underway in Europe, historian Ian Wood observes that,

> In reality deviance must have been as varied as orthodoxy. Moreover, the image of Christian deviance to be found in the sources is such that historians have sometimes regarded it as defining paganism rather than Christianity. The eighth-century *Indiculus Superstitionum et Paganiarum* …was addressing activities performed by Christians, although in origin the rites were pagan. Christianity was neither monolithic nor pure. Any discussion of its interface with paganism needs to recognize this.[9]

The *Indiculus* was neither the first nor the last Carolingian attempt to define and regulate proper religious practice. This terrain of a heterogeneous array of Christian practices must be recognized as the battlefield where the Carolingian discourse on images occurred. The Carolingian *renovatio* sought a strictly codified and homogenous brand of Christianity. Bishops, occupied as they were with the pastoral care of their communities, were on the front lines formulating practical criteria for the proper use of images.

### The Ninth-Century Image Crisis

Dungal of Pavia, while not a bishop but a schoolmaster, was a figure battling in the trenches. Louis the Pious (r. 814–840) recruited Dungal to travel to nearby Turin in order to engage a wayward bishop. Dungal summed up the state of the image question, particularly its divisiveness, when he authored his *Responses*:

> In this area the people are separated and divided into two parts on the matter of ecclesiastical practices, that is on the image of the Lord's passion and the holy picture. Grumbling and arguing the Catholics say that a picture is good and useful, worth almost as much for instruction as sacred letters. The heretic, on the other hand, and the party seduced by him, say 'No, it is all the seduction of evil and idolatry.'[10]

This short passage is incredibly revealing about a number of topics. First, iconoclasts are referred to as heretics, which suggests that the status of images was an issue with deeply meaningful theological and social import. These few lines also echo one version of the

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[9] Ian N. Wood, "The Northern Frontier: Christianity Face to Face with Paganism," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity* (New Haven and London: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 231.

[10] Thomas F.X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 307.

standard Carolingian position on images up to that point, conceding that they have a particular utility, in that they can be used for instruction, albeit one that by their very nature is left wanting when compared to the written word. The supremacy of the written word, as the conveyer of abstract principles, is a typically Carolingian position.[11] Finally, in the passage, Dungal hinted at the types of images that were under scrutiny, specifically "the image of the Lord's Passion," which was likely a reference to the Crucifixion or simply the cross. Indeed, the ninth century saw the rise in prominence of the cult of the cross.[12] Both the representation of Christ's death and the sign of the cross itself would be subjects of frequent debate.[13] As we will see, the cross became the direct antithesis of images, in the West.

In 825, a meeting was convened of bishops from throughout the Carolingian Empire to once again consider the place of images in the Frankish church. Known as the Paris Colloquy, this event serves as a nexus where several of the most important characters and ideas regarding images in the early ninth century intersect. There are two primary incidents, which together can be considered to be the catalyst for the Paris Colloquy. The first is the case of Claudius of Turin (d. 827), who instigated a unique and short-lived episode of Carolingian iconoclasm. The second is the arrival at the Carolingian court of news that idolatry—in the form of image worship—had once again reared its ugly head in the Byzantine Empire.

Between 816 and 818, Louis appointed Claudius to his post as Bishop of Turin. Several years later, around 824, the abbot Theutmir brought charges against Claudius at

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[11] See Celia Chazelle, "'Not in Painting but in Writing': Augustine and the Supremacy of the Word in the Libri Carolini," in *Reading and Wisdom: The De Doctrina Christiana of Augustine in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edward D. English (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 1–22.

[12] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 336. "The cult of the cross was growing in significance right across the Carolingian period. By the ninth century, there were three major liturgical celebrations dedicated to the cross: the *Inventio Crucis* (May 3), the *Exaltatio Crucis* (September 14), and the *Adoratio Crucis* (Good Friday). Depictions of the crucifixion were growing in frequency and the iconography of the finding of the True Cross took shape in the years around 800. Church dedications to the Savior or the cross proliferated as did shrines possessing relics of the True Cross."

[13] Ibid., chapter 7; Celia Chazelle, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ's Passion* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

the imperial court, claiming that he had been speaking against, not only images and the cross, but against pilgrimages, papal authority, and the efficacy of relics and the saints.[14] In response to these allegations, Claudius authored his *Apology* in which he attempted to explain his actions and justify what he knew to be an extreme position on images.[15] Claudius's narrative depicts him as an orthodox bishop carrying out the will of God and Emperor in a near martyr-like fashion:

> …It came to pass that as soon as I was constrained to assume the burden of pastoral duty and to come to Italy to the city of Turin, sent there by our pious Prince Louis, the son of the Lord's Holy Catholic Church, I found all the churches filled, in defiance of the precept of truth, with those sluttish abominations— images. Since everyone was worshiping them, I undertook singlehanded to destroy them. Everyone thereupon opened his mouth to curse me, and had not God come to my aid, they would no doubt have swallowed me alive.[16]

It is worth noting how even Claudius himself acknowledges the anger of the people when he began to destroy images and crucifixes. The adoration of the cross is a particularly fraught subject. The image of Christ on the cross, for Claudius, is flawed and dangerous because it only helps recall Christ at his most humiliated, saying that "they have not learned to think anything of him except that they believe and hold him in their heart as tortured and dead and always twisted in agony."[17] His defense continued with what either comes across as extreme sarcasm or extremely simple-minded zeal. Claudius launched into a diatribe whose basic point is that just because Christ was crucified on a wooden cross, wooden crosses are not meaningful in any way. He asks, then, if virgins, mangers, boats, or asses (and a laundry list of other items) ought to be adored, simply because the

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[14] See David Ganz, "Theology and the Organization of Thought," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, vol. II c.700–c.900 (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 758–785; Appleby, "Holy Relic and Holy Image," 336; Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*; Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 247-251.

[15] *Apology and Response of Bishop Claudius of Turin Against Abbot Theutmir* is the full title. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 287.

[16] Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 247.

[17] Ibid., 248.

Gospel accounts mention them in reference to Christ.[18] Above all, Claudius is horrified, not by the images themselves, but by what people do in their presence. The physical gestures done before images, especially bowing, were an affront to God in that it was a perversion of our nature.

> Why do you humiliate yourselves and bow down to false images? Why do you bend your body like a captive before foolish likenesses and earthly structures? God made you upright, and although other animals face downward toward the earth, there is for you an upward posture and a countenance erect to heaven and to God.[19]

The meaningfulness of bodily action is a point that Claudius stresses. The ideas on which Claudius built his teachings were not entirely exceptional. We see various authors using much the same concepts. What sets Claudius apart and makes his case unique are the extremes to which he went as well as the timing of Theutmir's allegations. At nearly the same time that news reached Louis' court of an outbreak of iconoclasm in his own empire, he also received a letter from Michael II, the new emperor in Constantinople, on the matter of images.

Michael's letter of 824, less than a third of which actually deals with images, was worded carefully not to antagonize the Frankish court. The Byzantine Emperor offered no arguments on the theology of images, nor did claim that the most recent Byzantine council was ecumenical, a point of contention in previous Byzantine relations with the Carolingians.[20] Instead, Michael seemed more concerned with informing Louis of the types of practices that had become commonplace. He noted that crosses had been thrown

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[18] This brand of rhetoric is remarkably familiar, and can also be found in the *Opus Caroli Regis*. In chapters twenty-five and twenty-six, Theodulf builds a case to undermine the idea that a sign produced by an image makes the image worthy of adoration. Theodulf asks if all bushes ought to be adored since God spoke to Moses in a burning bush, or if since Christ was circumcised with a sharp stone, if sharp stones should be worshiped. It is, of course, possible that Claudius had at some point read the *Opus*, however, I see it more as in indicator of a particularly extreme position indicative of the Visigothic variety of Christianity. This strict prohibition on images can be seen as dating back to the early 4th century Council of Elvira. Both Theodulf and Claudius were Spanish/Visigothic, as were Prudentius of Troyes and Agobard of Lyon. Agobard was the only author to cite Elvira. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 319. All of these writers were among the most conservative in their attitudes towards images. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 355.

[19] Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 248.

[20] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 261.

out of churches, and in their place, icons were raised, in front of which people placed lamps and burned incense.[21] What is remarkable is that within what was a matter of months, the Carolingian court was hit with two high-profile events dealing with images— the complaint that a rogue bishop was taking extreme and unauthorized measures to destroy images and news that iconophilia had once again become popular in Byzantium.

The issue of images had long been something of a political football, kicked back and forth between Constantinople and Aachen as each center vied for legitimacy as the true inheritors of the Roman Empire. Louis could not let an opportunity such as this pass him by, especially when we remember that his father, Charlemagne, had been directly involved with the *Opus Caroli Regis,* which sought to bolster the Carolingian Church's claim of theological rigor and orthodoxy. Before Louis could respond to Michael II with authority or approach the Pope for the assistance that Michael sought, he had to bring matters in his own realm to order. Claudius had been appointed to his office as early as 816, and according to his own *Apology*, began his rampage against images and the cross immediately upon his arrival in Turin.[22] It wasn't until the fall of 824 that Michael II's letter reached Aachen.[23] Thomas Noble observes that it is unlikely that Claudius's actions had gone unnoticed for what could have been as long as eight years, but there is no evidence that any action had been taken. Michael II's letter and the ensuing Paris Colloquy, however, meant that to let Claudius's activities go unabated and without official attention any longer would have been a potentially damaging embarrassment to Louis and his court.[24] Louis quickly charged Jonas of Orléans and Dungal of Pavia to refute Claudius. Claudius, it appears, was summoned to defend himself at the Paris

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[21] For a partial translation of Michael II's letter, see Ann Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy and the Fate of the Libri Carolini," in *Theodulf of Orléans: Charlemagne's Spokesman Against the Second Council of Nicaea* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 100. Originally published in *Viator* 16, 1985.

[22] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 287. Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 247.

[23] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 263.

[24] Ibid., 290.

Colloquy, but refused to attend what he considered a "collection of asses."[25] There is good reason to believe that Jonas was among those that took part in the Paris Colloquy.[26] His own work in refutation of Claudius, *On the Cult of Images*, was begun sometime between 825 and 827. Upon hearing of Claudius's death in 827, he ceased writing, leaving the work unfinished for a time.[27] Dungal had arrived in Turin the spring prior to the Paris Colloquy, and was presumably occupied with writing his *Responses* and dealing with Claudius on his own turf.

The *Libellus Synodalis*, the primary document composed during the Paris Colloquy, is remarkable for the broad range of topics it addressed, and more so considering the speed at which it was prepared.[28] Lacking obvious subdivisions, Noble has extracted four major themes addressed in the *Libellus*, indicating the primary areas of concern. These themes can be summarized as follows: the stance that images are not to be destroyed; an exploration of correct and incorrect forms of worship; an argument that images cannot be equated with the cross; and finally the full case that images are permissible, although they are not to be worshiped.[29] The position that images are neither to be destroyed nor worshiped is an echo of the Carolingian "party line" as professed in the *Opus Caroli Regis*. Where the *Libellus* departs significantly with the *Opus* is that it devotes such time and attention to the issues of physical acts of worship and the defense of the cross as an object of devotion.[30] That these issues are fore-fronted in the *Libellus*

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[25] Ibid., 266+289–290. The exact details surrounding what events specifically precipitated which are somewhat cloudy. The language in the documents from Paris and from associated letters are often vague. Noble suggests educated and logical possibilities, but a concrete reconstruction is impossible. What is clear is that these events and authors were deeply intertwined.

[26] Ibid., 265–266.

[27] Ibid., 295. Jonas later resumed his text around 840 at the request of Charles the Bald when it seemed as though Claudius's teachings had not died with him.

[28] Ibid., 269.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 123–124. "The *Opus Caroli Regis* does not praise crosses or defend their veneration. Indeed, it has nothing explicitly positive to say about physical acts of worshiped performed toward any inanimate material things except relics, even other res sacratae."

indicates both the growing popularity of the cult of the cross as well as the increasing concern over acceptable types of image practice. The themes of the *Libellus* generate three pressing questions. First, why are images viewed as being deficient by the Carolingians? Second, if images are found to be lacking, what is it that made the cross different? Third, how did the Carolingians rationalize physical acts of worship in the context of the increasingly popular cults of the cross and the saints? The remainder of this chapter will attempt to address the Carolingian responses to these questions. First, the rational behind the Carolingian's narrow view of images will be explored, showing that not only were they viewed as deficient, but according to some, they were even dangerous. As the Carolingians discussed images, the cross was frequently cited as their antithesis. By addressing this question, we can move closer still to determining the Carolingian criteria for truly sacred art. Finally, by looking at how physical acts of worship that were related to art objects, we can shed light on art's utility in worship.

### The Case Against Images

The typical Carolingian outlook, which at best viewed images as deficient, resulted from a thoroughly Platonic view of the world. Even if one removes the issue of sanctity from the equation, all material images are twice removed from the truth. To borrow Plato's example, the painter's representation of a bed is only an imitation of the physical bed, which in turn is only a manifestation of the true form of the bed.[31] An image, therefore, no matter how alike in appearance to its model, is always separated from truth by an impassable chasm. Throughout the writing regarding images, idols, and representations of all kinds, Carolingian authors use terms such as "deaf," "mute," and "senseless" to point out the deficiencies of images. For example, Archbishop Agobard of Lyon (ca. 779–840) wrote: "we look at a picture only as a picture, devoid of life, feeling, and reason. It feeds only the eye; but God is worshiped by the spirit."[32] No matter how

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[31] Plato's *Republic*, Book X. "[The painter] is by nature third from the king and the truth, as are all other imitators."

[32] Herbert L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art, Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 120.

accurate in appearance, the painted image could never be said to be at all the same as that which it represented. Aside from a superficial gloss, the image shared nothing of the true essential likeness with its prototype, and was thus empty. One cannot help but think that Agobard and others that shared his opinion would have greatly appreciated René Magritte's declaration that "*ceci n'est pas une pipe.*"[33] (Granted, a real pipe is, as far as I can tell, a senseless thing to begin with.) The Carolingian's distrust of images nevertheless stems from a Platonic understanding of images. Haimo of Auxerre (d. ca. 878), an author of biblical commentary, expresses his opinion of the hollowness of images when he comments that "*simulacra* take their name from 'pretending' (*simulando*), because they pretend to be a man but are not a man, pretend to be a horse but are not a horse, and so forth."[34] Such cynicism about representation is characteristically Carolingian. This attitude may also account for the fact that *Opus* did not even afford images the ability to teach.[35]

That images and all manmade representations are by definition an inferior means of communication is certainly the predominant view during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. The *Opus* considers images as deficient, and thus inert, ineffectual things. As previously mentioned, the *Opus* allows for the display of images in churches, but this is because they are neither necessary nor threatening, saying, "since we recognize that [images] play no role in accomplishing the mystery of our redemption, it follows that no

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[33] See Diebold, "Exegetes and Idols," 448–449. See also Carlo Ginzburg, "Idols and Likenesses: Origen, Homilies on Exodus VIII.3, and Its Reception," in *Sight & Insight: Essays on Art and Culture in Honour of E.H. Gombrich at 85*, ed. John Onians (London: Phaidon Press, 1994), 66–67.

[34] Diebold, "Exegetes and Idols," 448.

[35] Ann Freeman, "Scripture and Images in the Libri Carolini," in *Theodulf of Orléans: Charlemagne's Spokesman Against the Second Council of Nicaea* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 173–174.. That the *Opus* does not promote the didactic use of images may stem equally from a cynicism as well as Theodulf's rhetorical needs. "The possibility that the scene being commemorated might serves the needs of the unlearned is nowhere suggested, except in the extract from Gregory…The notion that [an] image might serve as a vehicle for instructing simple people…would have been much too positive an element to fit into the framework of Theodulf's rhetoric, which is obliged by its polemical purpose to accentuate the negative."

damage to Catholic faith can result from either their omission or display."[36] Although Theodulf, as the author of the *Opus*, may have had a stark view of images, he was certainly not the most pessimistic. Where he saw images as deficient, others considered them as dangerous. Agobard of Lyon was among those who adhered to a strictly Platonic view of the physical world from which he developed an overtly negative opinion of images. "Just as visible things are harmful to the comprehension of invisible things," he wrote, "so too the love of corporeal things, even good ones, is damaging to the contemplation of spiritual things."[37] For him, nothing that our senses gave us access to would aid in our mental and spiritual ascent. The physical world only provided distractions, and was therefore brimming with potential stumbling blocks on the road to salvation. Agobard claimed that to place one's hope in anything in the material realm was to reveal, in the words of David Appleby, a "fundamental misunderstanding of the entire created order."[38] In a way, Agobard's unease is similar to that of Claudius's. If we recall, Claudius viewed physical acts of worship, specifically bowing before an image or the cross, as a perversion of the created order.[39]

The grimmest warning of the consequences of improper devotion to images comes from Haimo of Auxerre. We have already seen that images are often considered to be nothing, as they only pretend to be what they are. For Haimo, acts of devotion to such empty things also have a negating effect on the perpetrator. Haimo takes his cue from the book of Isaiah where it is written that "Before Him all nations [who worship images] are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing."[40] Haimo warns

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[36] Ann Freeman and Paul Meyvaert, "The Meaning of Theodulf's Apse Mosaic at Germigny-Des-Prés," *Gesta* 40, no. 2 (2001): 127.

[37] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 316.

[38] David F. Appleby, "Instruction and Inspiration Through Images in the Carolingian Period," *Word, Image, Number: Communication in the Middle Ages* (2002): 97.

[39] Ibid., 96.

[40] Isaiah 40:17 (NIV). See also Diebold, "Exegetes and Idols," 543 for the use of this passage by Haimo. It should also be noted for that Haimo's purposes, he may have intentionally misread the prophet, inserting "who worship idols" to better serve his needs. See also Isaiah 44:9.

that if an idol is nothing, "its adorers and worshipers and those who consecrate food to it are nothing, because their worship and consecration make them nothing."[41] Such an alarmist stance on images was an extreme position and one that, not surprisingly, did not gain much traction in the Carolingian orbit. It was irreconcilable with common practice, which would take more than the words of a few bishops to change.

The literalist view of images made it impossible for the Carolingian authors to see any man-made representation as divine, regardless of whether it was an image of Christ, the saints, or any scene of a holy figure. A critical component of the image debate stemmed from the importance placed on mediation between mankind and God carried out by the saints, and especially, Christ. To deal with this issue, Carolingian theologians had to wrestle with two related concepts.

The first was that of the presence, of Christ or the saints, in the midst of the faithful. We have already seen the Carolingian concept that images do not share in the existence of their model in any meaningful way. If an image of a saint was nothing, bearing no possibility of the presence of the individual it pictured, it was nothing more than the mundane materials used to create it and completely devoid of anything greater. The *Opus* makes this point with force and clearly distinguishes between the true human and the painted human (*homo verus* vs. *homo pictus*)—one is a "true" man with reason and the breath of life, while the other is a mere simulacra and inert.[42] The *Opus* maintained that for any mediation to take place, there had to exist some essential likeness between the parts involved. Since the painted image of a man shared nothing of the essential characteristics of a man, thinking that it could offer a means of mediation was folly. Christ, as possessing the natures of both God and man, stood as the ultimate mediator. Even a picture of Christ, though, fell victim to the same logic. Christ's human nature, just as any man's, could not be represented by any artificial means and his equally essential divine nature was utterly impossible to circumscribe. The authors of the *Opus*

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Karl F. Morrison, "Anthropology and the Use of Images in the Opus Caroli Regis (Libri Carolini)," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: The Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, 2006), 36.

and the *Libellus* from Paris agree that while an image can be said to have a holy subject, such as a saint or Christ, the image itself is never holy.[43]

The second issue relevant to the idea of mediation is that of reference. The "referential" theory of image worship considers that acts of devotion directed at an image are then "referred" on towards the prototype in a transitive manner. This view does not necessarily require that the image and prototype share an essential nature, but it was nonetheless a topic on which there was little consensus. The *Opus* calls such an idea "flatly absurd."[44] In direct contrast, and another indication of the arguably un-representative nature of the *Opus* (or of the changing tide of medieval thought), the Paris *Libellus* supports the referential argument.[45] This is also an area in which the authors of the *Libellus* evinced some of their subtlety, which conservatives such as Claudius and Agobard tended to lack. The authors of the *Libellus*, in formulating their reasons why it is wrong to destroy images, relied on Augustine and declared that to destroy an image of God would be to somehow bear injury to God, while maintaining that only God, not images, are to be worshiped.[46] The conservative side was of course closer to Theodulf and his *Opus*. Agobard, for example says that "no other mediator is needed between God and man except the One who is God and man," which Noble reads as an implicit denial of the necessity of any thing that someone may direct their attention towards in seeking divine aid.[47] For the Carolingians, images were at worst dangerous and a hazard to salvation. At best, they could serve some sort of utility, but they were never holy and were always found to lacking in some essential way. If the goal was to recognize the holy, what did the holy look like? What were the traits that distinguished it?

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[43] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 343.

[44] Thomas F.X. Noble, "The Vocabulary of Vision and Worship in the Early Carolingian Period," in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison, and Marco Motert (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2005), 225.

[45] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 342.

[46] Ibid., 270.

[47] Ibid., 342.

*Signs of Holiness*

Contemporary texts about images bear out the notion that images, by and large, were not perceived as having miraculous qualities. There are, however, at least two exceptions, but it is these exceptions that prove the rule. The first is the story of the glowing image at Gravedona. The *Royal Frankish Annals* record an unusual incident that occurred in the year 823 in a northern Italian village.

> Near the Italian city of Como, in the village of Gravedona, there was a picture painted in the apse of the Church of St. John the Baptist of Holy Mary holding the infant Jesus in her lap and the Magi offering presents that was dimmed and almost wiped out with age…[this picture] shone for two days with such clarity it seemed to viewers that its ancient beauty almost surpassed the splendor of a new picture. But the same clarity did not brighten the images of the Magi except for the presents (*munera*) which they offered.[48]

The second case of an image, or in this case three, breaking ranks is that of St. Maura's visions as recounted by Prudentius of Troyes (d. 861). Written approximately twenty years after the incident in Gravedona, the visions of Maura are preserved in a sermon by Prudentius that contains the saint's prayer.

> I have often heard the child crying on his mother's knee, and the young man moaning on the cross and the king thundering on his throne, but who would yet extend a gold scepter to me in a friendly way…It is not to the realm of nature, but to that of the miraculous that one can attribute the fact that a piece of dry wood should wail or moan in order to remind to our faith the awe-inspiring sacraments and to strengthen them in the minds of the faithful.[49]

Maura, a member of a well-off family who were patrons of the church, would daily prostrate herself before the images found in the crypt.[50] It was in this state—alone and lying prostrate in a crypt—that Maura was prone to her visions. The images described are that of the Virgin and Child, the Crucifixion, and Christ in Majesty. What is more, it is

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[48] Found in Florin Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift Giving," *Speculum* 81, no. 3 (July 2006): 671. See also Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 344.

[49] Found in Eric Palazzo, "Visions and Liturgical Experience in the Early Middle Ages," in *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art & History*, ed. Colum Hourihane (University Park: Index of Christian Art, Department of Art & Archeology, Princeton University in association with Penn State University Press, 2010), 18.

[50] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 335.

suggested that at least the crucifixion that Maura speaks of was in fact not a painting, but a sculpture, unless the reference to "a piece of dry wood" moaning refers to a panel painting.

Both the incident at Gravedona and Maura's multi-sensory visions of Christ involve images in some way, however, neither seems to have been a truly miraculous image. Noble notes how both "are obscure, one-time events with no antecedents and no consequences. No miracles are associated with either image story."[51] We could certainly consider an ancient and worn image that glowed as exhibiting some form of supernatural power, but there is no mention of it affecting a cure or protecting anyone as is typical of other tales of miracles. Instead, it is recorded in a list of portents and no mention is made of it having happened before or since.[52] Maura's images stand on even shakier ground. In this case, we are led to believe that the images that she prayed before came to life before her eyes. These visions, however, were the result of private—and it should be noted—physical gestures of worship (Claudius would have been appalled!). No one else shared these visions and no perceived intervention in the physical world was evidenced (as it is unlikely that Maura repeatedly left the crypt with golden scepters which almost certainly would have been noticed). These two events are anomalous within Carolingian texts. Images, as a general rule, were not perceived as miraculous. This was perhaps one of the more consistent features of the Carolingian view.[53]

The notion of where divine power resided or what it acted through was perhaps the greatest point of divergence between Byzantium and Francia. While the Byzantine iconophile looked to the icon as a locus of holy presence and power, the western devotee looked to relics and the cross.[54] Iconoclasm in Francia was a rarity, the most famous case

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[51] Ibid., 343–344.

[52] Ibid., 344.

[53] See Noble, "Vocabulary of Vision," 237. "On one point alone all the Frankish writers agreed: Images were not holy, performed no wonders, and deserved no worship. East and West were sharply divided on this point. No one in the West looked at an image and saw an agent of miracles or even saw miraculous possibilities in images."

[54] It seems that Rome and the papal attitude fell somewhere in the middle. "After all, at Rome, relics and the tombs of saints were not as a rule sites of miraculous activity. In this respect, Rome was fundamentally

of which is that of Claudius. The closest analogue to iconophilia is the particularly enthusiastic embracement of the power of relics and the cross.[55] The criterion spelled out in the *Opus* for distinguishing between holy, and therefore venerable matter, and inert meaningless matter is one based on necessity and direct association with God. In chapters twenty-seven though twenty-nine of Book II of the *Opus*, Theodulf makes his most direct attack on the sanctity of images, comparing them against the cross, the Eucharist, and liturgical vessels.[56] All of these things, he says, were instituted by God and are essential means to mankind's salvation.[57] Elsewhere in the *Opus*, Theodulf defends the holiness of relics on the grounds that they are the physical remains (he also acknowledges contact relics) of holy individuals. These saints are now with God, and what is more, their remains will participate in the resurrection—something that images will not do.[58] The direct association that these things share with God places them in a category unto themselves.

### The Cross

The fervent defense of the cross that appears in the Paris *Libellus* is perhaps its most characteristic feature. Never before had the virtues of the cross been elaborated to

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different from Gaul with its profusion of miraculous objects and places. In other words, Hadrian may have deemed images holy and worthy of veneration without thereby concluding that they were naturally miraculous. He was not prepared to deny the possibility of miraculous activity connected with images but neither was he prepared to defend it." Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 218.

[55] See Appleby, "Holy Relic and Holy Image," 340. "One approach that seems to hold promise for continued progress in understanding the western debate over images involves interpreting the ideas of the participants in light of contemporary attitudes towards material objects that westerners regarded simultaneously as holy in themselves and as symbolic of transcendent sanctity, for example the Cross, the Eucharist and also saints' relics. Such an approach illuminates the various phases of the conflict in the West. But it also helps clarify a common ideological substratum of the debate, namely the importance of regulating which objects would be recognized as holy and which would not." This is a point that forms an integral component of the approach of this thesis as a whole.

[56] See Freeman, "Scripture and Images in the Libri Carolini," 168. See also Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 193.

[57] Appleby, "Holy Relic and Holy Image," 335. Freeman, "Scripture and Images in the Libri Carolini," 168.

[58] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 200.

such length and with such intensity in relation to the problem of images.[59] While the typical argument that the cross is among those signs essential for salvation, due to it's central association with Christ's mission forms a hefty component of their case, the authors of the *Libellus* begin their argument by stressing the miraculous capabilities of the cross. Miracles are associated with it, they argued, but not with images. They mentioned how relics of the cross have driven away flames and recount the incident of a woman healed of cancer by its power. To this list, we can add the story of how a stolen cross once revealed its thief by bleeding on the perpetrator, a story recorded by Gregory of Tours, supporting a long local tradition.[60] The stance—espoused by Theodulf in his *Opus*—that miracles did not mark something as holy was abandoned. Interestingly, miraculous occurrences are used to undermine the status of images, while simultaneously championing the status of the cross.

The cross was such a powerful "image," that when it is written about, actual crucifixes, plain crosses, painted images of crosses, and even the gestural sign of the cross were often conflated. The Paris *Libellus*, in its continued defense of the cross as an object worthy of some degree of veneration, enumerates all the instances where the cross and its sign were used. Not only is the cross capable of producing miraculous cures, it is also the sign used to confer blessing and consecration. What is more, the cross is cited as an apotropaic sign with the power to counter Satan himself.[61] The *Libellus* puts forth the challenge to name another sign by which any of these things, especially the transformation conferred by consecration, can be effected.[62] Dungal, in his *Responses* aimed at Claudius, also expounds on the power of the cross, making no concrete distinction between material crosses, relics of the true cross, or even mental images of the

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[59] Ibid., 276.

[60] The Crucifix at Narbonne. From *De gloria martyrum* of Gregory of Tours. See Herbert L Kessler, "Pictorial Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul," in *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler and Marianna Shreve Simpson, vol. 16 (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1985), 85.

[61] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 277.

[62] Ibid.

cross.[63] For Dungal and the authors of the *Libellus*, the cross surpassed all the constraints of simple categorization. They placed it on a level of its own. The centrality of the cross and its sign in the celebration of the liturgy is proof positive for Jonas and Dungal of its nature as an essential and powerful sign. In fact, both Jonas and Dungal take Claudius to task, asking how he, as a bishop, can perform his sacred duties *without* the cross. Does he not make the sign of the cross over the elements of the Eucharist? How does he confer blessings or confirmations?[64] A painted image could never compete with the cross as a tool essential for salvation or as a medium of miraculous power.

The consensus that the cross, in any form, was superior to images is a fundamentally important point in the discussion of Carolingian attitudes towards religious art. What remained, however, was the problem of determining the forms of behavior that were proper to its status. Up to this point, I have deliberately avoided the minefield presented by attempting to untangle the definitions of words such as adoration, veneration, honor, and any of the Greek or Latin terms that appear in these texts. This is not an oversight, but an intentional decision to not get wound up in terminological wrangling. Much, perhaps too much, is made of seeking our answers in the uses of such terms as *adorare*, *colere*, or *venerare*. The fact that their particular usage was something often argued about by contemporary authors should clue us in to the notion that they were not terms with hard and fast definitions and standard uses.[65] Often, these terms were used interchangeably, while others attempted nuanced definitions, almost always different from yet another's definitions. A popular Carolingian solution was to simply concede that there were degrees of worship, with the highest form due only to God. In the end, though, focusing on these terms clouds our vision of actual practices. Deborah

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[63] Ibid., 310.

[64] Ibid., 337.

[65] "We have seen that modern scholars have sometimes too quickly differentiated between adoration and veneration as if this distinction were iron-clad and highly revealing of positions in the images quarrels of the early Middle Ages. In fact, as we have also noted repeatedly, early medieval writers understood that there was a distinction but never created a precise, systematic language to express it." Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 323.

Deliyannis, attempts to reorient our attention towards aspects much more revealing about image practices:

> Crucial to the whole controversy is the question of what is meant by "worshiping" images. The technical terms used to differentiate the types of worship offered to God and to the saints-*proskynesis* and *latreia* in Greek, *adorare* and *venerare* in Latin-do not explain actual practices. Ernst Kitzinger has discussed manifestations of image worship, which include the following: practicing devotional rituals such as bowing or lighting candles to the image; believing in the magical or miraculous properties of images and correspondingly asking things of them; using images apotropaically, as amulets or charms; and revering divinely produced images as divine because of their creation. In all of these cases physical acts are performed which indicate that the distinction between the image and the thing or person it represents has become blurred. While some of these aspects of worship merely imply reverence for the subjects of the images, others show the expectation that the divine nature of the images will be manifested for the worshiper through a miracle.[66]

Deliyannis reminds us that it is these physical acts and gestures that are the true indicators of mental attitudes towards religious objects. Given the cross's status as a vehemently defended and popular object of praise, evidence of the types of practices associated with it should yield reliable insight into how certain holy items could be treated.

Recalling Claudius's *Apology*, we remember that what seemed to be most offensive to his sensibilities were the acts of bowing and prostration that he witnessed before images, and even it seems, representations of Christ and the cross. Claudius was not a man suited to subtlety. According to him, "to adore is to praise, venerate, ask, beseech, entreat, invoke, pour forth prayer."[67] He was uninterested in making any type of distinction between forms of worship—all were useless and offensive. As previously noted, Theodulf's *Opus* had given little attention to the cross and forms of veneration.[68] While, the Paris *Libellus* in response to the burgeoning cult of the cross, explicitly condoned such behavior:

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[66] Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, "Agnellus of Ravenna and Iconoclasm: Theology and Politics in a Politics in a Ninth-Century Historical Text," *Speculum* 71, no. 3 (1996): 572.

[67] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 291.

[68] See note 30.

When he wished to redeem the human race, Christ chose to be hung upon a cross, not upon an image…And so wherever they see [crosses/crucifixes] they may if they wish *venerate them by bowing*…and *adore it by prostration* as is done with all devotion by the entire order of the clergy and all the people.[69] [emphasis my own]

There is, however, one caveat that is potentially complicating. The lines in which this quote is embedded indicate that the writers of the *Libellus* situated their defense of the cross primarily in a liturgical context. While they do say that a devotee may bow "wherever they see [crosses]," emphasis is given to "the holy day of the Lord's Passion that is celebrated throughout the world."[70] The *Libellus*, instead of attempting to curtail the things that Claudius and Agobard may have deemed idolatrous, seemed to be taking its cues from contemporary practices that were only growing in popularity. By the time the *Libellus* was written, two other major liturgical celebrations dedicated to the cross besides Good Friday were observed: the *Inventio Crucis* and the *Exaltio Crucis*, and brand new compositions were created for recitation before the cross.[71] By contextualizing their arguments within the liturgy they could provide an existing and irreproachable framework for their defense of the veneration of the cross, one that only the most hardline ecclesiastics would dare to contend with.

### Changing Notions of the Utility of Sight

The early ninth-century discussion of images evinces the confluence of a heightened concern over appropriate practices and an emerging view of the human body and its senses. This new attitude was more sympathetic to a votary's relationship and interaction with images and objects than previous generations. Earlier writing (and still some strains of the more conservative factions) stressed the importance of contemplation, to the complete exclusion of the physical world. The generation of the Paris *Libellus*, which included Jonas, Dungal, Einhard, Hrabanus Maurus, and Amalarius, (all of whom are figures that in some manner contributed to the understanding of art and ritual in

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[69] Ibid., 277.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., 336. See also Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, 139–140.

worship, although they cannot all be addressed here) tended to promote a more sympathetic view of the body and the senses, therefore allowing an expanded utility of images as well as the basis for the justification of physical acts of worship that had previously been attacked as idolatrous. Jonas, in contradiction to the stance put forth in the *Opus* a generation before, attempts to argue that images, because of their immediacy and ability to impact a viewer emotionally, can in some cases be equated with the written or spoken word, as well as with the exemplary lives of saints.[72] This is a significant departure that cannot be overstated. David Appleby remarks on Jonas by stating:

> His high estimate of the spiritual utility of sight suggests that like his main sources, Augustine and Julianus Pomerius, Jonas refused to equate the body and sensory perception with the flesh and carnality of Pauline teaching. His understanding of the religious value of sight and certain visible things represents a moderate alternative to the spiritualizing pronouncements of the *Libri Carolini* written in the previous generation, and to the Dionysian theology of ascent later presented by John the Scot.[73]

Jonas, in fact, was probably at least moderately acquainted with the works of Pseudo-Dionysius. The Paris *Libellus*, which he was almost certainly involved with, is the only ninth-century text on the subject of images to cite Pseudo-Dionysius.[74] Whether or not the authors of the *Libellus* truly grasped the intricacies of the Dionysian arguments, their use of it was an attempt to bolster their claim that images, although they may not be holy, could still function to elevate man spiritually. It could certainly be argued that without the intervening step taken by early ninth-century authors, the re-emergence of Neo-Platonic conception of art would never have taken hold in later centuries.

The expanded notion of the utility of images and the newfound justification for physical acts of worship were based predominantly on the ability of "things seen" to

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[72] Appleby, "Instruction and Inspiration," 107.

[73] David F. Appleby, "Sight and Church Reform in the Thought of Jonas of Orleans," *Viator* 27, no. 1 (2008): 13.

[74] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 343. See also George Duby, *The Age of Cathedrals: Art and Society 980-1420*, trans. Eleanor Levieux and Barbara Thompson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 99. Copies of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius being present in Francia are attested to from the late eighth century. The pope had sent one book to Pepin the Short in 785, while another copy was sent as a gift from Byzantium in 807. Prior to the translations of John Scotus Erigena in the mid to late ninth century, only mediocre translations existed.

evoke an affective response in the viewer.[75] Jonas argued that if a devotee who, upon seeing an image of the crucified Christ or a martyred saint feel to the ground in a gesture of humility and respect, their actions should not be called idolatrous. Instead, he argued, the devotee must have experienced an important step towards salvation, having felt either love or compunction, which he sees as key components that lead to or strengthen faith.[76] These physical acts of veneration could be justified in two closely related ways, both of which are predicated on the notion that these gestures are the manifestation of mental or emotional states. The first returns to the concept of reference. To show humility before an image of Christ refers that act of submission and respect onto Christ himself. As already noted, this was a concept officially endorsed by the Paris *Libellus*. The second, while not explicitly stated as such in Carolingian times, can be called the ethical theory of images.[77] Simply stated, the ethical theory of images is based on the notion that a representation of a man shares none of the true qualities of a man. To truly create a likeness of a saint, the argument goes, one must imitate their zeal and their virtue in one's own life. This was a common theme among the iconoclasts in Byzantium. The Council of 754 (Council of Hiereia) delivered the following warning:

> If anyone ventures to set up profitless figures of all the saints in soul-less, speech-less images made of material colors—for this is a vain invention and the discovery of diabolical craft—and does not, on the contrary, reproduce their virtues in himself as actually living images, with the aid of what has been recorded about them in books, in order to be stimulated to zeal like theirs, as our inspired fathers have said, let him be anathema.[78]

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[75] For elaboration on the things heard/things seen dichotomy of Jonas, see Appleby, "Sight and Church Reform."

[76] Appleby, "Instruction and Inspiration," 107. "The vividness, immediacy and particularity of images make their anticipated impact upon viewers comparable to that of verbal and personal exempla; both may evoke an affective response, whether of compunction or love, strong enough to impel those who encounter them along the v*ia regia* toward salvation."

[77] See Milton V. Anastos, "The Ethical Theory of Images Formulated by the Iconoclasts in 754 and 815," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954): 151–160. The phrase "ethical theory" of images is apparently coined by him as shorthand to indicate a certain argument often advanced by the iconoclasts in the Byzantine debates.

[78] Ibid., 155.

This was a strain of thought not unfamiliar to the Carolingians elite, who were acquainted with Isidore of Seville's *Sententiarum*.[79] This work predated the Council of Hieria by well over one hundred years and contained the following passage:

> Many imitate the life of the saints, and from the morals of another take a picture [*effigies*] of virtue, just as if some image [*imago*] were under scrutiny, and from its likeness [*similitudo*] a painted appearance [*species picta*] were formed; and in this way the one who lives after the likeness of the image becomes like the image.[80]

The ethical theory of images placed the burden of true likeness on the viewer themselves. While images themselves could not be holy, it was argued by Jonas and others that the sight of a saint's martyrdom or his or her saintly deeds could spur the viewer on to live a more virtuous life. This strain of thinking shifts the burden of the artist away from reproducing likenesses and histories to means whereby a viewer might be moved to act more virtuously and contemplate more deeply those virtues. Likenesses and histories, of course, had their part to play in this scheme, but for art that was meant to participate in this relationship with a viewer, the stakes were now much higher and the methods more abstract.

*Conclusion*

The Carolingians took up the challenge of identifying the holy with great enthusiasm. The wide range of opinions and approaches that can be found throughout the discussion has previously led some to regard the Carolingian contribution to this topic to be uninformed, unorganized or misguided. Despite rare exceptions, the Carolingian perception of religious art that emerged in the early ninth century has traits that we can safely consider to be stable for that time period. The first, and most fundamental, is that images were *never* holy. Even in instances such as Gravedona, the image was not looked at as an object that actually contained or retained an essence of holiness. Second, in the place of images, the Carolingians looked for the holy in objects and symbols. Thus, the cross, relics, and the sacraments became the Carolingian analogue

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[79] Appleby, "Instruction and Inspiration," 108.

[80] Ibid.

to icons. It was these things, with their direct association with God and the mission of salvation, that most closely participated in the essence of divinity. These were also things that affected miracles. Crosses healed, relics protected, and the sacraments were essential to the greatest miracle, man's salvation. Third, physical acts of worship, which had been practically ignored by the *Opus*, became a topic of great concern. Finally, while images could not be regarded as holy in their own right, some ninth century authors gradually began to move toward an expanded utility for images. The response of the viewer, which was utterly neglected in the *Opus*, became an essential point by which to defend the use of images. They could move one emotionally, and in doing so, act as a catalyst for virtuous deeds. Although it is impossible to state that there was a perfectly cohesive attitude towards religious art during the Carolingian era, I believe it is possible to discern at least a growing trend towards a more sympathetic and positive attitude towards art and the utility of sight. This trend took root due to native practices as well as existing Christian ideas that had until then, at least in the Carolingian empire, remained a minority voice. A rapidly expanding Christian population that had been, at best, hastily Christianized, forced the Carolingian Church to reevaluate its use of images to put them to greater effect. The strength of this trend is evidenced by the relatively unimpeded profusion of reliquaries, crosses, and even images in the succeeding centuries.

This chapter has been a survey of the theoretical responses to the issues integral to the problems of art and its place in worship. The Carolingians spilled their fair share of ink on these matters, making it apparent that they felt there was a great deal at stake. Theories, however, are not always indicative actual practice and offer dubious insight into the reality of the matter. What is clear is that the Carolingian church attempted to maintain control over sanctity by restricting it to a class of objects that they could easily regulate. The following chapter shifts the focus to examine if and how these theories of sanctity and art were implemented. Priority is given to answering the question of how the visual experience of holiness was orchestrated through devotional art.

# CHAPTER III

## SHRINES, RELIQUARIES, AND THE VISUAL EXPERIENCE OF SANCTITY

*Never before have so many and so great things been done at one time by the relics of saints since the beginning of the world, for everywhere saints in this kingdom and those brought here excite each other to song even as cocks at cockcrow.*[81]

### Introduction

Judging by these words of Paschasius Radbertus (785–865), the Carolingian empire was teeming with the miraculous activity of saints. Divine power was at work in the everyday: the blind were given sight, the crippled made to walk, and the saints themselves appeared in visions and dreams. The saintly remains that had long inhabited the kingdom were joined by a drastic influx of new relics imported especially from Rome. A more established site that acquired fresh relics enjoyed a resurgence of popularity, while the places outfitted with new saints quickly became coveted destinations for the faithful. Local populations and pilgrims alike gathered to seek the intercession of saints, to beseech them for cures to their maladies, and above all, to bear witness to the miraculous power of the relics. Those who gathered at the shrines of saints came to be in the presence of holy personages and their power, concepts Peter Brown has termed *praesentia* and *potentia,* respectively.[82] *Praesentia* and *potentia*, however were not, in and of themselves, visible things, and thus required mediation through a complex matrix of visual experiences.

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[81] The words of Paschasius Radbertus. See Gerda Heydemann, "Relics and Texts: Hagiography and Authority in Ninth-Century Francia," in *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, ed. Peter Sarris, Matthew Dal Santo, and Phil Booth, vol. 20 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 187; John Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West C.300–1200* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 22; Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 18. "Nequaquam igitur dixerim sine causa miracula sanctorum longe diu in Christo quiescentium nuper coruscasse, quanta et qualia nunquam sunt audita a saeculo facta uno in tempore ad reliquias sanctorum: quia omnino, quasi in gallicinio, sancti hoc in regno hue illucque delati, se inuicem excitarunt quasi ad concentum cantus."

[82] See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: It's Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 86–127.

The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, it examines the defense and regulation of the visual experience. A defense was required against the traditional Carolingian position that tended to downplay or outright dismiss sensory experience, particularly sight. Beyond the defense of the visual experience from an adverse ideological strain, the episcopate was also compelled to regulate the visual experience against heterodox threats in order to maintain its authority to project a cohesive manifestation of sanctity. I have generated this construction of defense and regulation through observations of textual sources, such as those examined in the second chapter as well as in what follows, especially in relationship to the repeated attempts to curb pagan practices and the attention given to the use of images in devotional contexts. Furthermore, as an adamant defender of visual experience, Jonas of Orléans stands out, in my opinion, as a figure worthy of greater attention by modern art historians. Second, the particular methods that were employed to project this image are examined. For this aspect, I turn to the work of Cynthia Hahn. As Hahn makes clear, the entirety of the visual experience of a holy site functioned in unison to proclaim the sanctity of a site. Adding to the vivid spectacle were tales of miraculous events that took place in close proximity to relics and during the celebration of the Eucharist. Such occurrences signal that pilgrimage and liturgy contributed to the spectacle associated with holy places. The question then arises: how could the sacred character of a holy site be asserted through visible means? How did pilgrims know that *this* place was a sacred place, and that *these* bones were the remains of the saint whose help they sought? It fell to the medieval patron to generate experiences that could broadcast holiness.[83] A bare and lonely relic could only whisper, but a profusion of art embellishing a holy space and the ritual that accompanied it harmonized in a resounding chorus of holiness.

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[83] "Shouts, prayers, and hymns might have greeted a miracle, and wondrous odor confirmed the presence of an incorrupt body; but in most miracle stories it was 'things seen' that turned the heart towards faith. This primacy on the visual settled a burden of proof squarely upon early-medieval artists (and now upon the art historian): how could the body of the saint, if not continually working miracles, be shown to be holy? More reliable sights were needed, and the shrine of the saint was called upon to supply them." Cynthia Hahn, "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines," *Speculum* 72, no. 4 (October 1997): 1079.

The first thing that requires attention will be what I refer to as the defense of the visual experience. A number of Carolingian churchmen voiced a growing appreciation for the role of vision versus the anti-material stance of some strains of thought. Among the most vocal was Jonas of Orléans, who wrote *On the Cult of Images*. This text went above and beyond many of the ideas contained in the Paris *Libellus* as Jonas directly attacked the iconoclastic Claudius of Turin. The defense of the visual experience is followed by evidence of the Church's conscious and intentional program of localizing the holy by their regulation of holy sites, primarily through the monopoly on the authentication of holy relics. I will show that by maintaining control over the proliferation of places of worship, patrons of these churches could exercise greater control over the orchestration of the experience of sanctity. Since the importance of the holy site is paramount, attention is then turned to what the place of holiness looked like by attempting to recover the general appearance of shrines. This furnishes the context in which holiness was experienced. Following this, I turn to an examination of the specific messages that were conveyed in the mediation of holiness through both architectural arrangements of holy spaces and in the formal qualities of individual objects, specifically reliquaries. Let us begin by considering the importance of the visual experience as expressed by Jonas of Orléans.

### The Defense of the Visual Experience

Shortly after the year 840, Jonas of Orléans presented Charles the Bald (r. 840–877) with the completed text of his work, *On the Cult of Images* (*De cultu imaginum*).[84] Begun decades earlier as a response to the extreme iconoclasm of Claudius of Turin, Jonas's text is underpinned by a strikingly progressive notion of the faculty of sight. In his dedication letter to Charles, Jonas explicitly stated his position that "it is peculiar to the human mind to experience compunction less through things heard than through things

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[84] See David F. Appleby, "Sight and Church Reform in the Thought of Jonas of Orleans," *Viator* 27, no. 1 (2008): 11–34 and Thomas F.X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 295.

seen."[85] Compunction, the mental distress or guilt felt by an individual was, for Jonas, essential to foster Christian devotion. The self-examination that began in the mind could, in turn, become heartfelt contrition for one's sins, ideally leading one to cultivate one's faith. The dichotomy of "things heard" (*auditis*) and "things seen" (*visis*) that Jonas devised intentionally confronted a dominant rhetorical motif employed by Carolingian writers, who tended to glorify the abstract qualities of the word as the purest conveyor of truth—this accounts for their often-dismal opinion of images.

For Jonas, "things heard" encompassed all written and spoken language. He did not attempt to elevate "things seen" to a level that surpassed "things heard," nor did his text argue that images could be holy. Instead, as a bishop deeply concerned with reform and the spiritual well being of his flock, Jonas defended the important devotional utility of visual experiences. While Jonas was certainly more progressive in his thinking than theologians of the generation prior, he was still not willing—or able—to defend visual experience as the primary means catalyzing spiritual ascent that would come into fashion in the succeeding decades.[86] As a compliment to "things heard," Jonas considered images as well as the entire matrix of sights that was experienced by Christian votaries. Jonas understood the importance of spectacle. To see a holy place, to be in the presence of the saints, to be awed by the beauty of a church, and above all, to witness miracles were all aesthetic experiences that could have profound spiritual implications.

Miracles, as one of the most profound examples of a visual experience, were invaluable in the scheme of constructing sanctity. In the eyes of Jonas, "things seen" encompassed the panoply of wonders that a votary would experience at the holy site, not the least of which were miraculous events. Miracles, in Francia, did not occur through images, however, but through relics. As discussed in the second chapter, the anxiety that surrounded religious images hinged, in great part, on the recognition of where holiness

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[85] See Appleby, "Sight and Church Reform." "Sane et etiam proprium humanae menti non adeo compungi ex auditis sicut ex visis." The letter of dedication to Charles the Bald edited by Ernst Dummler, MGH Epistolae Karolini aevi (EKA) 3 (1898-1899; repr. Munich 1978) 353-355.

[86] "[Jonas's] understanding of the religious value of sight and certain visible things represents a moderate alternative to the spiritualizing pronouncements of the *Libri Carolini* written in the previous generation, and to the Dionysian theology of ascent later presented by John the Scot." Ibid., 13.

resided. Images were not holy, but relics were and the latter served as the engine of pilgrimage across the Carolingian Empire. As the cults of saints drastically increased in popularity during the ninth century, concerns arose that were closely allied with the contemporary discourse on images, and the two matters were often addressed together. Dungal of Pavia, who had been sent to investigate Claudius of Turin, informs us how concerns about images and relics were closely related:

> Of the three principal issues which the impudent calumniator [Claudius] argued in his letter, the first concerns breaking and throwing out images; the second pertains to honoring the cross no more than an ass or a thorn; the last, that is the third, prohibits traveling to the memorials of the saints and especially to the church of St. Peter for the sake of praying, saying that this work is empty and useless, without any benefit, and calling those who are seized with a desire to do this blind, foolish, and stupid. He affirms that the bones of any holy man whatsoever are like the bones of cattle, or actually like wood or stones or any other earthly thing you can imagine that is worthy of no more reverence.[87]

Dungal's discontent regarding Claudius's view of relics and pilgrimage far outshines his concern over images. David Appleby credits Claudius of Turin for initiating "a thawing effect" on the Carolingian discourse regarding relics in their relationship to images, and he sees Dungal's *Response* as the first fruits of this change.[88] While Claudius and Dungal were at opposite extremes of the matter, their common ground was that the issue of relic veneration could not be dealt with separately from that of images.[89]

Despite the numerous calls for contemplative spirituality laid out in both the *Opus Caroli Regis* and the *Paris Libellus*, in common practice, church leaders prioritized the visual experience. Both Jonas and Dungal espoused a more progressive attitude toward "things seen" that was rooted in practical concern over the pastoral care of their congregations. Of all the tools at the disposal of a bishop, relics and images could be used to instruct and edify, and therefore should not be overlooked or discarded. Accordingly, Claudius's attack on the cross and relics was not only an affront to theology and tradition,

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[87] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 310.

[88] David F. Appleby, "Holy Relic and Holy Image: Saints' Relics in the Western Controversy over Images in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries," *Word & Image* 8, no. 4 (October 1992): 337–338.

[89] Ibid.

but, according to Jonas, it threatened some of the most useful tools available to the bishop. Among the most essential prerogatives of bishops was their ability to authenticate relics and their miracles. This authority fell within the same jurisdiction of those whose job it was to consecrate holy places and to dispense the sacraments.[90] To be holy, an image demanded consecration, while a relic required authentication and contextualization. Claudius was threatening because his nearly complete dismissal of the physical trappings of the church—the cross, images, relics—in essence denied the episcopate the ability to exercise its control over what could be considered holy.[91] If left unattended, Claudius and his followers had the potential to upset the hierarchy of the Church, which had long endeavored to present itself as the mediator between the sacred and the profane. The cult of saints was a powerful tool in the construction of this perception, as long as it could be controlled.[92] Though Claudius of Turin was dangerous, he was never officially tried for heresy.[93]

### *Localizing the Holy*

Concern over the control of holy places and relics had come to the fore approximately eighty years prior, when a certain Adalbert drew the ire of St. Boniface (ca. 675–754) who rebuked him at the Synod of Soissons (744) and Pope Zacharias (r. 741–752) who censured him the next year in Rome.[94] Adalbert was one of a number of Carolingian ascetics who wandered the countryside preaching their own brand of spirituality, gathering a sizable following in the process. According to Boniface, Adalbert's crimes were many, but among the most offensive were that he claimed to be able to

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[90] Ibid., 339.

[91] Ibid., 335+339.

[92] Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ichaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 168.

[93] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 290.

[94] Abigail Firey, *A Contrite Heart: Prosecution and Redemption in the Carolingian Empire* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 114; Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 180. The name may also appear as "Aldebert." This figure is not to be confused with Adalbert of Prague, a Bohemian-born missionary to the Baltic region, martyred in 997. See Wood, "The Northern Frontier: Christianity Face to Face with Paganism," 241–244.

acquire miraculous relics from God whenever he wished, that he set up crosses and shrines throughout the countryside, and that he led his disciples in public prayer at these places and absolved them of sin.[95] Adalbert's countryside crosses and shrines were a threat to the established holy places of the Church. To add insult to injury, it is said that Adalbert even distributed his own hair and fingernails as relics and often dedicated his outlaw oratories to none other than himself. The cumulative effect of these offenses is that they threatened to draw populations away from the established churches—and the sacraments risked falling out of episcopal control. In sum, Carolingian authorities had a long history of attempting to curtail the proliferation of sanctity in the form of unauthorized holy men, relics, and holy sites.

Adalbert is emblematic of the persistent and pervasive threats, which mandated that the authenticity of holy people, places and things be constantly under watch. The *List of Pagan Superstitions*, which was discussed in my second chapter and contemporaneous with Adalbert, speaks of "undetermined places which they celebrate as holy" (#18) as well as "that they feign for themselves that dead persons of whatever sort are saints" (#25).[96] The issue of sanctioned holy places is routinely found alongside concern over the regulation of holy persons, alive or dead.[97] A half century later, the Synod of Frankfurt (794) decreed "that no new saints should be revered or invoked in prayers, nor memorials of them erected by the wayside; only those are to be venerated in church which have been deservedly chosen on the basis of their passions or their lives."[98] In this instance again, the Church vehemently defended its monopoly of the holy. It did this by maintaining that only church leaders could verify the authenticity of saints, thereby casting any external claimants as empty and powerless.

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[95] Firey, *A Contrite Heart: Prosecution and Redemption in the Carolingian Empire*, 114–115; Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 180–181.

[96] Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 3.

[97] The Synod of Frankfurt also decreed, "that no men should become recluses." Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History*, Third (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003), 305.

[98] Ibid., 307. Frankfurt, 794 #42. For a comparison of Eastern and Western asceticism see also Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 184; Julia M.H. Smith, "Saints and Their Cults," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 3 (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 589.

The ability of the church to project their desired image of sanctity relied on their capability to define and limit the venues where holiness was experienced. The authentication of relics was directly linked to the regulation of holy sites. The tradition of Frankish Christianity in regards to holy places and relics was reaffirmed in the early ninth century. The ancient canon *Item Placuit* of the Fifth Council of Carthage, commanding that any altar that did not contain the relics of saint must be destroyed, was reaffirmed twice by the Franks, in 801 and again in 813.[99] As Patrick Geary noted, these proclamations focused attention on the altar and the relics it contained. Furthermore, it generated a demand for relics in cases where a church may have lacked a proper relic.[100]

Like official legislation, contemporary accounts make it clear that the holy place—the *locus sanctum*—was a site that enjoyed a special and extraordinary status. Einhard's account of his translation of the relics of Marcellinus and Peter contains accounts of visions that commanded people to journey to the relics and described how miracles occurred in close proximity to holy places. Furthermore, Einhard's text cumulatively suggests that it was *at* a church and *during* Mass that miracles took place. Whether consciously or not, Einhard was supporting the Carolingian monopoly on the holy. Intercession, healing, and salvation were not to be found at unauthenticated holy sites that did not enjoy the Church's endorsement.

This insistence on particular places of worship, however, demanded a certain amount of justification. If God is omnipresent, why does it matter where one worships? The ecclesiastical assertion of designated and controlled holy places was at odds with major aspects of theology. Jonas defended consecrated holy sites on the grounds that the human condition was better served by them rather than having no set places. David Appleby summarizes Jonas's position:

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[99] Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 37.

[100] Ibid. It was only in cases where no relic could be found that the Eucharist could serve as a substitute. Geary notes the English Council of Chelsea of 816 where the Eucharist is considered "sufficient" if the bishop cannot find a suitable relic to accompany it. While not a Carolingian example, a similar stance can be assumed. Ibid., 35. See Arnold Angenendt, "Sacrifice, Gifts, and Prayers in Latin Christianity," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 3 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 462. See also Revelation 6:9, "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained."

> In view of *humani generis mens*, divine providence recognized that it was best to establish a set place for the Israelites to offer sacrifices and commemorate the covenant… Because of the character of the human *mens*, it was better to build the temple in Jerusalem to house the Ark of the Covenant than to weaken the enthusiasm of the faithful by celebrating the cult in many places.[101]

As already noted, Jonas's view of the senses—through which we experience "things seen" and "things heard"—was rooted in an acceptance of human nature. The human body was bound to its God-given senses. This was unavoidable and something that could not be altered, and therefore ought to be embraced and utilized to spiritual benefit. In the same way, Jonas accepted the human condition and understood how inspiring and edifying designated places could be. He looked to the Old Testament and listed examples where God commanded his people to offer sacrifice or worship at particular spots.[102] Jonas noted how God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, not just anywhere, but on a certain mountain. So to, God, through Moses, commanded that the Israelites offer their sacrifices at a place that God dictated. One *could* worship anywhere, but in light of human nature, an established place of worship was preferable. The pagan shrines of the *Indiculus* and the countryside crosses of Adalbert did nothing but weaken Christian enthusiasm by diluting the experience of the holy.

### The Sight of the Shrine

Having discussed the importance and control of holy sites during Carolingian times, it possible to address the visual experience. How was the spectacle of the holy site orchestrated to project sanctity? How did the ornamentation and arrangement of the church space, particularly the shrine, function to manifest holiness? Carolingian pilgrims would have encountered either of two distinct arrangements. Prior to the early decades of the ninth century, church layouts predominantly followed a traditional Merovingian plan, which was characterized by the remains of a saint residing at the main level of the church. These remains were often contained in a stone sarcophagus or casket, usually

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[101] Appleby, "Sight and Church Reform," 17.

[102] Ibid.

placed behind the altar in the apse, and covered by a ciborium, usually of wood and lavishly decorated. Without extant examples, we must rely on textual sources. Rudolf of Fulda, for example, recorded that his abbot, Hrabanus Maurus, "placed the leaden loculi," which contained the relics of the martyrs Alexander and Fabian, "in a stone casket (*arca*) to the east of the altar…erecting above them a wooden edifice made with craftsmanlike skill, which he decorated with a wonderful variety of silver, gold, and precious stones."[103] Several other instances of relics being installed at Fulda are also recounted, and all include similar features. Likewise, in Einhard's translation account we encounter comparable details:

> The next day we placed the holy bodies of the blessed martyrs [Peter and Marcellinus], enclosed in a new shrine, in the apse of the church, and, as is the custom in Francia, we erected over it a wooden frame and covered it with cloths of fine linen and silk for the sake of beauty.[104]

Einhard's display, utilizing linen and silk, while perhaps slightly less resplendent than Hrabanus Maurus's, still conforms, as he notes, to the standard practice of his day. The portable Altar of Arnulf of Carinthia (850–899) [figure 1; see the Appendix for all figures] may give an impression of what an ideal ciborium structure may have looked like, albeit in miniature.[105] In sum, towering structures draped in silk or sheathed in gold and silver gave prominence to a holy space. The hallmark of the Merovingian shrine was its visible and monumental presence.

As the ninth century progressed, a new arrangement appeared as the Carolingians began to build *Romano more*, that is, in the Roman fashion. Saints were placed in less conspicuous locations, most commonly in crypts beneath the altar. In Rome, this solution was an adaptation to early martyria intended to give pilgrims access to the previously

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[103] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West C.300–1200*, 250. From pages 248-251, a number of relic translations are accounted for, all conforming to this basic formula. See also David F. Appleby, "Rudolf, Abbot Hrabanus and the Ark of the Covenant Reliquary," *American Benedictine Review* 46, no. 4 (1995): 419–443.

[104] Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 209. (Einhard's *Translation*, Book 1, §15) See also Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West C.300–1200*, 251.

[105] See Peter Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800-1200* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 73–74; Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400-Circa 1204* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 187.

unreachable or invisible grave of a martyr. Entranced by this precedent, the Carolingians included crypts even in their ex-novo buildings.[106] The St. Gall plan, [figure 2], while never executed, embodies the new ideal layout of a church, specifically the new fashion for crypts. At the east end of the basilica, an altar is situated at the center of a raised platform, reached by a set of seven steps on either side. This space sat above what was meant to be a partially subterranean crypt. Labels on either side of the stairs indicate the presence of a corridor that gave access to the saints' resting place.[107] Further access to the crypt is marked in the space between the sets of stairs, were the plan reads "*accessus ad confessionem*."[108] Finally, another label states that, "the holy structures of the saints will shine forth above the *crypta*."[109] This implies the presence of an open shaft (*cataracta*) that would have visually linked the remains of the saint with the altar that was located above it.[110]Although the placement of the relics of the saint in the crypt removed them from view at main level, this new arrangement made their connection to the performance of the liturgy more concrete.

Whether this design made the saint more or less accessible to the common votary is debatable. Gregory of Tours (ca. 538–594) relates that even in his time, many visitors did not even enter a building where the saint rested, relying on the monks to offer prays on their behalf.[111] Still, numerous eighth- and ninth-century accounts describe individuals venerating saints next to their tomb. Certainly class may have played a role. Maura, the woman whom Prudentius (d. 861) wrote of as introduced in the second chapter, was a member of a wealthy family that patronized the church. Her status may have allowed her special access to the crypt where she received her visions. In either case, Cynthia Hahn remarks that a visit to a shrine in the west was "a cooler, more controlled experience than

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[106] Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West C.300–1200*, 249.

[107] Ibid., 136. "In criptam introitus & exitus" and "In criptam ingressus & egressus."

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] See Ibid., 94.

[111] Hahn, "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines," 1100.

that promoted in the East."[112] Hahn points especially to the extensive use of epigrams and other written guides that directed the visitor through their encounter with the saint. The placement of a shrine beneath the high altar but in a crypt, although inspired by a desire to imitate the Roman fashion, fits into the existing framework of clericalizing the holy.[113] Though the clergy was increasingly claiming control over relics—and crypts were one way to attain such oversight—this new arrangement did not entirely supplant the Merovingian style of a main-level shrine covered by a ciborium. These two styles coexisted, sometimes within the same holy site.

### The Messages and Means of Religious Art

The spatial arrangements of shrines employed by the Carolingians each had their own virtues, but the shrine was but one component of the visual experience. What other means heightened the visual experience and proclaimed sanctity? Perhaps the most essential means was through sheer opulence and splendor. We have already encountered descriptions of shrines bedecked in silver, gold, and silk, but the significance of such ornament of the shrine itself and the church in its entirety cannot be overstated. A holy site that could not boast at least a modicum of decoration was in danger of loosing the confidence of its congregation. Furthermore, a lack of ornament might signal that the saint was incapable of protecting his or her own property and such a message did not instill confidence in potential worshipers. The reality of this problem is illustrated by an episode in the miracles of Prüm, written by Wandelbert, a monk of Prüm (fl. ca. 840). Wandelbert's account recorded that a wealthy woman refused to pray at a certain shrine and denied its sanctity because of its lack of ornamentation.[114] Clearly, presentation mattered. Ornament was critical to generating the spectacle of sanctity.

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[112] Ibid., 1097.

[113] Ibid., 1100. For other advantages of this type of relocation see Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West C.300–1200*, 94.

[114] *Historia ss. Chrysanti et Dariae*, Cap. IX. See Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 35. Also found in Hahn, "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines," 1083.

Ornament and splendor were essential as a means to signal the saint's status as well as to provide the practical necessities for worship. Accordingly, Carolingian bishops, like Jonas sought to orchestrate the perception of sanctity at holy sites. Proper ornamentation communicated prestige and power and carried with it royal, or courtly, associations. A holy site was a place where the earthly realm comingled with the heavenly court. The saints that resided in the church, existed simultaneously in the heavenly court, ready to intercede on a votary's behalf. A fitting visual impression indicated not only that a saint was present, but also that they merited reverence suited to their position in the heavenly court. Although prayers may be heard regardless of where they are made, many Christians, like the woman at Prüm, did not take this message to heart. Jonas defended the use of relics, images and other objects on the grounds that fostering devotion was an episcopal obligation. A bishop who allowed a holy site to fall into disuse because of a lack of ornamentation failed to fulfill his pastoral duties. On a more practical level, without proper accouterments Mass could not be performed. For example, in the seventh century, the ornaments of the Church of Saint Columba were stolen. Saint Eligius (ca. 650) was forced to call on Saint Columba, threatening that if the wealth of the church was not restored, he would "have the entrance sown over with thorny plants so that veneration will never be offered again to you in this place."[115] The next morning, the custodian found everything returned, "down to the tiniest curtain."[116] With the saint's accouterments restored, the clergy could once again perform proper service and the appearance of the site again proclaimed its holiness through fitting ornament.

Curiously, the same profusion of precious metals and gems that proclaimed the sanctity of a reliquary or shrine very often obscured the identity of its saintly contents.[117]

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[115] *Vita S. Eligius*, ed. Levison, MGH SS Mer. 4, 669-742, translation and notes by Jo Ann McNamara. [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/eligius.asp], Book 1, §30.

[116] Ibid.

[117] The shrouding of a relic's identity and frequent obfuscation of a reliquaries contents is a major theme of Cynthia Hahn's studies of reliquaries. The following ideas are heavily indebted to Hahn's work on the subject. For example, see Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, esp. 6–7; Cynthia Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?," *Numen* 57, no. 3 (June 01, 2010): 284–316.

Only rarely did a reliquary's decoration serve to establish its specific contents.[118] This fact was hardly coincidental. Church officials walked a fine line between letting the worship of saints overtake the worship of Christ, which would have resulted in a bastardized version of Christianity more closely resembling pagan spirituality. The Paris *Libellus* of 825, for example, acknowledges the use of relics, but is careful to warn against the worship of saints. The creator, it declares, and not the created, should be worshipped and saints, like the angels, are indifferent to praise, only being pleased when praise is offered to him whom they love—Christ.[119] Though official doctrine maintained that Christ was the cornerstone of Christianity, with the saints acting as "mere channels through which God's grace was distributed," actual beliefs and popular practices often differed.[120] In order to curtail the exceptionally hagiocentric religion of the Frankish laity, the Church and its craftsmen endeavored to construct a particular image of holiness that prioritized celestial hierarchy and the saints' place within it. However, to deflect devotion away from the saints, their identity itself was obscured.

A striking example of veiling a relic's identity can be found in the kaleidoscopic burse reliquary of St. Stephen [figure 3]. Based on stylistic evidence, this reliquary is dated to the first half of the ninth century and "almost certainly into the reign of Louis the Pious."[121] Tradition holds that this object contained dirt soaked in the blood of the proto-martyr, Stephen, but there is nothing on the exterior that would indicate what it contains

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[118] Examples that come to mind are the nail reliquary at Trier and the staff reliquary of St. Peter at Domschatz und Diozesanmuseum Limburg an der Lahn, although these particular examples post-date the reliquaries here by at least a century. Cynthia Hahn has demonstrated that body part reliquaries did not contain the relic of the body part which form the reliquary took.

[119] Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 272. See also Romans 1:25, "They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen." Revelations 22:8-9, "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, 'Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!"

[120] Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 30–31. Geary also states that, "[Christ's] centrality was not fully appreciated by the masses of incompletely Christianized laity and ecclesiastical 'proletariat.' It appears that the religion of the majority of the semibarbarian inheritors of the empire in the West was hagiocentric."

[121] Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800-1200*, 33.

or that it ought to be associated with Stephen.[122] The front of the reliquary is swathed in ovoid and rectangular gems. Aside from what could be read as a *very* abstract cross, the reliquary greets the viewer with only dazzling light. The back and sides only add to the mystery and potential meaning of the reliquary. Figures of an archer, a fisherman, and a rider appear numerous times. Accompanying these in another repeated image, that of an angel with the inscription *MALIS VINDICTA*.[123] But what of Stephen? The object itself is concerned with entirely different messages that require nothing of the specific saint's relics it contains. These messages will be dealt with below, however, that this reliquary and many like it lack identifying features signals an intentionality to subsume the identity of the individual saint to the heavenly court. This veiling of the saints' identity was one tactic for the presentation of sanctity that could be conveyed through the formal qualities of art. This same message and comparable methods can be found in Carolingian architecture as well.

The church complex at St. Riquier is a greatly enlarged instance of the Carolingian ecclesiastical establishment's desire to promote the heavenly court rather than a particular saint. In the last decade of the eighth century, the newly appointed abbot, Angilbert (ca. 760–d. 814), demolished the existing seventh-century church in order to make way for a complex of three new churches.[124] The three principal altars located at the east end of the main basilica were dedicated to the Holy Savior, Saint Richarius, and Mary, Mother of God. Each was surmounted by a stone ciborium and had a crypt below that contained the

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[122] Brigitte Buettner, "From Bones to Stones - Reflections on Jeweled Reliquaries," in *Reliquiare Im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), 46.

[123] Lasko, 33; Hahn, SB, 108. See also Meyer Schapiro, Selected Papers, 185. Schapiro finds a potential link to medieval magical prayers that serve as protection against evil. He writes, "these incantations suggests that the repeated images on the bursa in Vienna…represent the three elements or fields in which evil is to be averted: air, water, and earth, symbolized by the archer, the fisherman, and the rider," though he stresses that this is conjecture. His comments appear in an essay that discusses the motif of the archer found throughout medieval art.

[124] Susan A. Rabe, "The Mind's Eye: Theological Controversy and Religious Architecture in the Reign of Charlemagne," in *Medieval Liturgy: A Book of Essays*, ed. Lizetter Larson-Mille (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 245. This Angilbert was a prominent figure in the courts of Pepin and Charlemagne. He is not to be confused with Angilbert(us) II of Milan, addressed in the following chapter.

relics of Saint Richarius, as was to be expected, but also those of two lesser saints.[125] Angilbert's tour-de-force, however, was a freestanding chapel again dedicated to Mary. This structure was a centrally planned dodecagon, approximately sixty feet in diameter, which featured a western entrance and an interior ambulatory.[126] It is known through an early seventeenth-century view of the compound [figure 4]. Clearly marked at the foreground (*S.MARIA*), a three-tiered lantern topped the two-storied circular structure. At the center of the space, beneath a stone ciborium, was an altar containing Marian relics and those of nine virgin martyrs.[127] On each of the twelve walls that surrounded the main altar was an altar dedicated to one of the twelve Apostles. Along with each Apostle, the relics of two additional saints were placed in each of these altars.[128] To enter this chapel was to enter into the presence of Mary, the apostles, and an assembly of saints and martyrs—here was the heavenly court itself. In vast objects like chapels as in smaller objects like the burse of St. Stephen, then, one notes the Church's desire to favor the forest over the trees.

Returning again to small-scale art—the main focus of this chapter—it is essential to observe that a reliquary's form had the potential to carry metaphorical meaning. Among the most prevalent forms during the early medieval era is the burse (or purse) reliquary, such as that of St. Stephen already introduced.[129] Previously discussed was the manner in which these forms disguised the identity of their contents in order to promote the heavenly court. This did not necessarily rely on the form of the reliquary, as we saw that the same idea could be conveyed through the arrangement of a church space, such as that of St. Riquier. The peculiar form of the burse reliquary, however, invites us to question the reasons for its selection. What was this form able to communicate? What

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., 249–250.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Although Hahn uses the term "purse," I adhere to the convention found in Lasko's *Ars Sacra* where "burse" is used.

were the metaphors that this specific form could convey? This form utilizes the metaphor of treasure by inverting it. When the second century bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, was martyred, his followers are said to have "[taken] up his bones which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold."[130] Later, Isidore of Seville likened the saints to precious gems. They, like gems, were rare and scattered across the earth.[131] The saints were gleaming points of splendor among the profane matter of the world. The relics of saints were often little more than fragments of bone or a pile of ash, things that would normally not elicit responses. Because of their status as saints, however, their corporeal remains were transmuted into treasures of heaven. The gold and jewels that adorned the outside of a burse reliquary, while simultaneously proclaiming holiness and status, in a sense, became worthless compared to the treasures within. The form of a burse was best suited to this inversion of the concept of wealth.

The Enger reliquary [figure 5] is marvelous example of an early ninth-century burse reliquary.[132] The front is ornamented with a geometrically arranged pattern of precious stones set against a background of cloisonné knots and abstract animal motifs. Just above and to either side of the central stone, two fish appear, and at the top and bottom, figures recognizable as birds occupy the spaces between the weaving bands. Elsewhere, the serpentine forms of snakes coil among the multicolored glass.[133] Ancient cameos that bear miniature engravings of Oedipus and the Sphinx (top right, inverted) and what is perhaps a satyr (top left) have been included in the design. At the center, a loop of pearls rings the central stone. The reverse of the reliquary is occupied by the

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[130] From *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, ed. J.B. Lightfoot, in *The Apostolic Fathers II*,3 (London, 2nd ed, 1889; repr. Hildesheim, 1973; 2nd ed., ed. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1992). Quoted here from Holger A. Klein, "Sacred Things and Holy Bodies: Collecting Relics From Late Antiquity to the Early Renaissance," in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. Martina Bagnoli et al. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 55.

[131] Buettner, "From Bones to Stones - Reflections on Jeweled Reliquaries," 46.

[132] Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800-1200*, 6.

[133] These motifs may resonate with those found on the St. Stephen reliquary. The fish and bird appear, but the archer is gone, and the rider is replaced with a snake. Compare with the hypothesis proposed by Schapiro in note 40.

depiction of a two-story arcade divided into three bays. Formed in repoussé, the top tier shows Christ in the central bay flanked by two angels. In the bottom tier, Mary and the infant Christ are accompanied by Peter, left, and Paul, right. At the top, the "clasp" of the purse is decorated by two crouching lions. This clasp, however, does not open. Confirming the metaphorical meanings of the form, the burse reliquary is not a functioning purse. These items were formed by a wooden core with a small cavity in which the relic was placed. Once inside, the metallic covering sealed the opening, denying access to the treasure within. As suggested by Hahn, the theme of a purse and the wealth hidden within appears multiple times throughout the New Testament as well as in Augustine's commentary on Luke.[134] From this container, where the treasure of heaven is deposited, grace and wisdom are dispensed.[135]

Treasure and wealth were not the only metaphors employed in relation to relics. Another common form of reliquary is the "lantern," typified by the reliquary of St. Vincent [figure 6].[136] The tall square base is adorned with repoussé medallions. Rising from this base is a cylindrical compartment. The base of the drum bears six busts of Christ, haloed and giving the sign of blessing. Above the figures of Christ, glass plates allow visual access to the relics within. A conical "roof" with tile patterning caps the reliquary. Its size (barely sixteen inches tall), its form, and the presence of glass apertures account for its association with a lantern. The reliquary's design, however, is primarily informed by Roman funerary monuments, such as that at Saint Remy [figure 7]. Monuments such as this dotted the Carolingian landscape, offering an appropriate model

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[134] Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 105.

[135] Ibid., 107.

[136] The dating of this reliquary is a matter of debate. The inscription mentions an Abbot Bégon, but between the ninth and twelfth centuries, three abbots by that name are recorded. Considering that the body of St. Vincent was raised in 855, Peter Lasko favors a late ninth-century date, as this event would have provided a perfect opportunity to acquire a relic and serve as an occasion to commission a reliquary. Particular features, such as the medallion of Samson and the Lion, are later twelfth centuries additions. Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800-1200*, 48. Furthermore, according to Cynthia Hahn, "Arnold Angenendt has pointed to the light-producing quality of relics themselves. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that numerous reliquaries take a 'lantern' or tower shape (as in the eleventh-century example from Conques [the St. Vincent reliquary]." Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 26. Hahn not only dates this reliquary to the eleventh century, but also asserts that this is a common form. Thus far, I have been unable to find comparable ninth-century examples, so I take Hahn at her word that there are "numerous examples" from this period and later.

that also imparted a sense of prestige that came with such antique vestiges of the Roman past. Such quoting of the Roman past also brings to mind Einhard's reliquary base that took the form of a triumphal arch [figure 8]. In their quest to identify as the inheritors of the Roman tradition, the Carolingians consciously appropriated such forms, just as they adopted Roman architectural formats of their churches.

The craftsmen of the reliquary of St. Vincent utilized two apparently distinct ideas to generate meaning. Their appropriation of funerary architecture is straightforward, for the relics of the saint required a suitable repository. To this end, the kinship with Roman mausolea not only acknowledges death, but also connotes the respect due to the saint given his position in the celestial hierarchy. The inclusion of glass apertures offers a second, more spiritually profound meaning. As noted with burse reliquaries, seeing the contents was unnecessary. More often than not at this time, relics were sealed and hidden from view. In this context, the nature of a lantern—and of lantern reliquaries—is to allow light to shine *out,* rather then to allow the gaze to see *in.*

Likewise, in period accounts, saintly relics are described as capable of exuding light. A dramatic Frankish example again comes from the Life of Eligius. After a long and tumultuous (even fatal!) search for the remains of a martyr named Quentin, Eligius began digging in a corner of a church that seemed to his companions a most unlikely spot. When Eligius finally found the saint's resting place, a spectacular sight left no doubt as to his success.

> Then filled with great joy, he opened the tomb with the hoe he held in his hand and a fragrant odor with a great light spread from it so that Eligius could barely sustain his strength in the power of that odor and that light. A globe of splendor proceeded from the tomb at the striking blow. It shed the strength of its brightness so much that it blinded the eyes of those who were standing around and changed night to day in the greater part of the region…For this happened in the middle of night and the night was dark and stormy but the spreading radiance was like the light of day and it shone for some time before it grew dim.[137]

For the Carolingians, relics themselves were sources of radiance, both literally and figuratively. Just as the burse reliquary pours forth its treasures of grace and wisdom, the

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[137] *Vita S. Eligius*, ed. Levison, MGH SS Mer. 4, 669-742, translation and notes by Jo Ann McNamara. [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/eligius.asp] Book 2, §6.

lantern reliquary illuminates those in its presence. The directionality of reliquaries is outward, into the world to foster faith and devotion.

### *Transient Holy Places*

Relics, while often enclosed in a shrine or locked in a treasury, were not necessarily static or tied to a single location—as they moved so did the *locus sanctum*. In fact, reliquaries were often designed for easy transportation. Burse reliquaries, for example, took their form from an item specifically designed to be carried. Many of these reliquaries even posses small rings on their sides, allowing them to be suspended or worn.[138] Even the reliquary of St. Vincent, while perhaps taking cues from funerary architecture, resembled such portable objects as lanterns. The popularity of a class of objects purpose-built to be mobile might be an affront to the importance of a fixed, consecrated, and physical holy site, presented at the beginning of the chapter. This seeming incongruence is eliminated if one recalls the integral role played by relics in the designation of a holy space.  The deposit of a relic in the altar of a church was one of—if not *the*—vital component of the ritual of consecration. A small altar containing a relic, or even a reliquary, was often enough to serve as the locus from which a temporary holy space could be generated.

During Einhard's translation account, there are several instances where relics are venerated or services are held outdoors. At one point, the crowd that had amassed around the traveling relics had grown so large that Einhard and his company were so densely surrounded that they could not make their way through the town to the church. "And so in a field near by, on rising ground, [Einhard and his men] set up an altar under the open sky. After setting the bier down beside the altar, [they] celebrated the solemn offices of the Mass."[139] This is clear evidence of the use of some form of portable altar, perhaps one resembling the Adelhausen altar [figure 9] or Arnulf's ciborium [figure 1]. The Adelhausen altar, dated to the late eighth century, consists of a central porphyry slab set

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[138] Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 107.

[139] Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 208–209. (Einhard's *Translation*, Book 1, §14)

into a wooden frame. To either side of the porphyry slab are silver plaques bearing enameled crosses and abstract ornament. A motif of circles within crosses is executed in blue and red champlevé enamel across the long edges of the altar.[140] Given the length of Einhard's trip (although he himself did not travel all the way to Rome), it seems likely that someone (probably a priest) within his entourage would have included such an object in their luggage so as to perform mass regardless of where they found themselves. Unable to reach a proper *ecclesia*, the liturgy could take place centered on an altar such as this, creating a transient holy space under the open sky. Later in Einhard's account, we get a glimpse of how a reliquary, probably a burse reliquary, was used to generate its own holy space. Einhard had agreed to give a relic to George of St. Salvius who sent a deacon to transport the gift. During his return trip, the deacon stopped to rest his animals in a field. "Then the deacon, who was carrying the relics of the martyrs and who was making ready to hang them on the top of a pole which he had set up for that purpose in the same place…"[141] A hunchbacked and angry farmer who was suffering from an affliction of his teeth rushed out to question the deacon. The confrontation ended when the man threw himself down in front of the relics and was cured. The small reliquary, suspended on a pole in the middle of a field, generated a new and temporary holy site in its presence.[142] Episodes like this reinforce the concept that it was the relic that formed the core of the *locus sanctum*, and that, in certain instances, temporary holy sites could be created through the use of portable liturgical objects.

### Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the defense and regulation of the visual experience of sanctity as it was orchestrated by the Carolingian episcopate—and occasionally by other religious officials such as abbots. In opposition to a spirituality that favored purely

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[140] See Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800-1200*, 4.

[141] Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 234–235. (Einhard's *Translation*, Book 4, §8)

[142] For further evidence of this type of display of burse reliquaries, see the ivory book cover by Tuotilo which depicts a small burse reliquary hung from a cross standard which was used to found the site of St. Gall. See Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 103.

contemplative piety, during the ninth century figures like Jonas of Orléans and Dungal of Pavia articulated the importance of the visual experience of sanctity. These men accepted the human reliance on the senses and used it as a basis for a justification of holy places and the spectacle that could be experienced there. The *locus sanctum*, constructed around the presence of relics, was brought under strict control by Church figures intent on localizing holiness and limiting its diffusion. Shrines themselves were upheld as sites where sanctity resided and where miracles occurred. Likewise, the forms given to reliquaries carried metaphorical meanings. In sum, the entire experience of the holy relied on the mediation of holiness by the visual experience. The implementation of this type of mediation ultimately fell to the craftsman whose hands physically made the elements that worked together to generate the complete visual experience. The following chapter will take a close look at the figure of the craftsman, specifically the smith, to better understand their role in the creation of religious art.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE MAKERS OF SACRED ART

*Introduction*

The altar of St. Ambrose in Milan [figure 10] certainly stands out as an exceptional example of Carolingian sacred art. It boasts a wonderful program of narrative scenes executed in gold and silver repoussé, trimmed in bands of colorful enamel and gems. On the rear of the altar are the *fenestella* doors [figure 11] that give access to the remains of the saints that rest within. It is on these doors that the most peculiar feature of this altar can be found. On the right-hand door, beneath the archangel Gabriel, a figure bows and receives a crown from St. Ambrose [figure 12]. The accompanying inscription identifies this figure as Wolvinius, the master artisan of the altar.[143] But why is Wolvinius there at all? The predominant view of the medieval craftsman has been that he was a trivial figure with little or no agency of his own—a simple manual laborer who toiled in the background while the credit for a work of art went to the patron. The hand of the maker, it would seem, was obscured by his marginal position in society. Thus, the appearance of a name, let alone a self-portrait, of an artist tends to automatically categorize such a work of art as an anomaly of sorts. As if Wolvinius's mere presence were not remarkable enough, his appearance in such a prominent position—adjacent to and equal in size to the patron archbishop, Angilbert—and the fact that he receives a crown from St. Ambrose, as does Angilbert, distinguish this aspect of the altar's decoration as exceptional.[144] Judging by the composition, it is self-evident that Wolvinius's representation operates as something well beyond that of a signature. As it stands, Wolvinius is more visible than some of the basilica's major saints who also appear

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[143] The inscription reads, "VVOLVINI(US) MAGIST(ER) PHABER."

[144] The altar at Sant'Ambrogio has garnered significant attention, not only because of its splendid decoration, but also because of the unique decoration of these roundels. For instance, both Angilbert and Wolvinius are being crowned, not by Christ, but by St. Ambrose, a peculiarity that Cynthia Hahn describes as "unprecedented and quite startling." Cynthia Hahn, "Narrative on the Golden Altar of Sant' Ambrogio in Milan: Presentation and Reception," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999): 181–182.

on the altar.[145] What could explain the inclusion of a craftsman in such a conspicuous place?

This chapter explores the archetype of the craftsman, specifically the smith, in the context of Carolingian sacred art. I attempt to demonstrate that the figure of the smith furnished a potent metaphor for the spiritual perfection of the soul that was intrinsic—yet invisible—in their product. In Herbert Kessler's masterful *Seeing Medieval Art*, he remarked that, "the making of sacred art during the Middle Ages was, then, largely a part of the devotional structure; and any understanding of its producers must take that into account."[146] It is the position of this chapter that, far from being nominal figures laboring in obscurity, the medieval smith was a respected craftsman whose product, as well as their multifaceted aura, were perceived as having important spiritual implications. This argument, it may seem, is at an immediate disadvantage considering the rarity of comparable extant examples to images such as that on the St. Ambrose altar. A key point of the argument, however, is that specific iconography need not be present to catalyze the understanding of the metaphors of the smith. I am not advancing a position that relies on a lost iconography, but rather one that fits into an existing understanding of medieval art where the carriers of meaning were often not figural, but instead the material and techniques themselves. Just like materiality and technique, the maker played a role that may not be immediately apparent to the uninitiated viewer, but would have existed beneath the surface to a medieval audience. While scholars over the last several decades have attempted to reevaluate the medieval artist, their focus has been on the issue of originality. To this end, scribes and book painters have attracted the bulk of scholarly attention.[147] This chapter is not interested in Vasarian biographies of medieval artist-

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[145] For example, the saints Gervasius and Protasius, whom Ambrose himself had brought to the cathedral, are barely acknowledged on the altar, appearing only as small figures on one of the altar. Ibid., 171.

[146] Herbert L. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art* (New York and Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 64.

[147] For example, see Lawrence Nees, "The Originality of Early Medieval Artists," in *Literacy, Politics, and Artistic Innovation in the Early Medieval West: Papers Delievered at "A Symposium on Early Medieval Culture" Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA*, ed. Celia M. Chazelle (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, Inc., 1992), 77–109. Also Jaques Guilmain, "The Forgotten Early Medieval Artist," *Art Journal* 25, no. 1 (1965): 33–42.

heroes. Novelty, intentionality, and originality are beside the point. Rather, the multivalent connotations of the archetype of the maker, I contend, present often overlooked insights into early medieval perception of religious art.

To proceed, I first take into account the representation of the smith as an extraordinary individual as found in non-Christian myth. The figure of Weyland, who appears throughout art and literature of the eighth and ninth centuries, demonstrates that there was a tradition within popular secular culture of a prestigious smith. Far from being a marginal figure, the talents of the smith characterized him as a magical, nearly super-human figure that could assume legendary status. The figure of Eligius, a seventh-century Merovingian saint, demonstrates a conversion (pun intended) of pagan myth into a Christian guise. I do not argue that there is a direct lineage between Weyland and Eligius. However, it is commonly understood that through syncretic mechanisms, Christianity absorbed many aspects of pagan culture. In this case, the figure of the legendary smith—whose existence in the medieval mythos is evidenced by Weyland—is transmuted into the Christian saint whose own legend is defined by his abilities as a smith and his desire to ornament the Church. Eligius also introduces essential metaphoric tropes for viewing the smith in a medieval Christian setting. These same tropes can be found throughout biblical exegesis in relationship to metals and those who work them. Figures such as the Old Testament's Bezaleel through Joseph, Christ's own father, fall into the category of smiths. The figure of Wolvinius on the altar of Milan, I argue, fits squarely into the accumulation of these myths. Cumulatively, I hope to show that the archetype of the smith could be capable of communicating powerful metaphors for the purification and reformation of one's soul.

The argument presented in this chapter is founded on existing understandings of medieval art that privilege materiality and technique as carriers of meaning. For example, Cynthia Hahn simply and unambiguously stated her position that, "the materiality of reliquaries cannot be overstated."[148] Gold, ivory, precious stones—just to name a few of the materials found in medieval art—carried multiple metaphorical meanings. For

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[148] Cynthia Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?," *Numen* 57, no. 3 (2010): 309.

example, the use of jasper would likely have brought to mind associations with the heavenly Jerusalem based on certain biblical passages.[149] Particularly interesting to the present study are the many possible meanings that gold carried with it, such as its purity and resistance to fire. However, the aim of this study is to expand, or even refocus, attention to the one who manipulates these materials. The idea of techniques as carriers of meaning brings this study closer to the figure of the smith. In his essay, "The New Testament and the Visual Arts in the Carolingian Era," William Diebold explored the exegesis of the New Testament as it relates to the figure of the wise architect, or *sapiens architectus*.[150] Near the end of this essay, Diebold wrote, "If the influence of biblical metaphors and the commentaries about them on Carolingian perception ran so deep that not only art's subjects but also its techniques were meaningful, then there is still much to be done in explaining Carolingian art." I use this as a point of departure to explore the potential meanings that the archetype of the smith, in the company of the architect, may have carried. The smith may have never been called "wise," but his persistent presence in popular and religious culture signals that he has something to offer the understanding of Carolingian religious art.

### Carolingian Craftsmen and Secular Myth

The Carolingian craftsman, to be sure, was in no shortage of work. Stonemasons, scribes, builders, painters, carpenters and metal smiths were all called upon to contribute to the ventures integral to the goals of the *renovatio*. This period saw a staggering

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[149] For example, Revelation 21, verse 11 "[The Holy City] shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal," and verses 18-21, "the wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass. See Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 38–44.

[150] William J. Diebold, "The New Testament and the Visual Arts in the Carolingian Era, with Special Reference to the *Sapiens Architectus* (I Cor. 3.10)," in *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Burton Van Name Edwards (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers n.v., 2003), 141–153. See also William J. Diebold, "Medium as Message in Carolingian Writing About Art," *Word & Image* 22, no. 3 (July 2006): 196–201.

abundance of artistic production. Between the years 768 (the begin of Charlemagne's reign) and 855 (the death of Lothair I) twenty-seven cathedrals and 417 monasteries were erected in the Frankish kingdom.[151] Each necessitated, in turn, to be outfitted with objects. Many existing structures were expanded and refurbished, especially in the early half of the ninth century, which saw the introduction of the new style of crypt featuring an enlarged *confessio*.[152] While little remains of the ornament of these spaces, textual accounts indicate that they would have featured splendid decoration of all types.[153] Even the most meager of these institutions would have required an altar as well basic liturgical vessels and books. Wealthier foundations would have been replete with multiple altars, shrines, and reliquaries, not to mention chalices, candlesticks, books with extravagant covers and all manner of treasures.

The profusion of metal work alone would have made an interior of a holy space gleam in the candlelight with the warm glow of gold, the moonlike shimmer of silver, and the variegated hues of gemstones. It is easy to imagine that the work of the Carolingian metal smith may have easily been the most conspicuous work of the era. Not only were these objects luxurious and resplendent, but they were often integral to the liturgical celebration, frequently serving as the focus of ritual. Beyond their pure visibility, the metal smith's work was, as we saw in the second chapter, perceived as belonging to a class of objects that were intrinsically superior to such works as the paintings that would have decorated interior walls. These items, such as reliquaries, altars, and liturgical vessels were *ars sacra*, nearly uniformly recognized as holy. Given these circumstances, the early medieval metal smith stands out as an artisan of exceptional distinction.

The elemental yet transformative work of metal smiths has, almost universally, characterized them "as masters of an extremely esoteric and supernaturally potent

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[151] Dana M. Polanichka, "Transforming Space, (Per)forming Community: Church Consecration in Carolingian Europe," *Viator* 43, no. 1 (2012): 80.

[152] John Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West C.300–1200* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 135.

[153] For the profusion of and importance of painting in Carolingian churches, see C.R. Dodwell, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800-1200*, ed. Nikolaus Pevsner (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 45.

craft."[154] During the early Middle Ages, native traditions and mythology began to blend with Christian ideas and practices. An early but nonetheless exceptional example is the Wittislingen Brooch [figure 13]. This exquisite specimen of a bow-fibula dates from the late sixth or early seventh century and was found in the grave of a wealthy woman in what is today southwest Germany.[155] The reverse of the fibula exhibits what appears to be the head and neck of a serpent along with an inscription executed in Latin script, which reads in part, "May Uffila live happily in god…Wigerig made this." Objects like this, bearing such inscriptions, easily lend themselves to categorization as amulets or talismans. Noting the rare example of a signature, Lawrence Nees also comments on the magical properties of such pairings of object and text:

> [Wigerig's signature] occurs in conjunction with an apotropaic invocation on behalf of the patron. Apparently Wigerig sought some association with the supernatural potency of an object that he had himself brought into existence, and thus links himself with the ancient tradition of the smith as a powerful conjurer, which may be found as a theme in both the art and literature of the early Middle Ages.[156]

Perhaps the most prominent non-Christian smith of western European tradition during this time is the figure of Weyland.[157] As is the case with most myths, the origin and antiquity of the story of Weyland are unclear, but artwork dated from at the eighth or ninth centuries, as well as literary evidence, attest that his story was widely known among the Germanic and Norse populations, and it would not be unreasonable to assume that it, or a similar myth, was known among the Franks.[158] The myths of Weyland not only provide a more vivid cultural backdrop for Wigerig's inscription and Nees's assertion, but

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[154] Mary W. Helms, "Joseph the Smith and the Salvational Transformation of Matter in Early Medieval Europe," *Anthropos* no. 2006 (2006): 459.

[155] See Lawrence Nees, *Early Medieval Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 105-106 and figure 62.

[156] Nees, "The Originality of Early Medieval Artists," 27.

[157] The name Weyland appears in many forms, such as Völund, Velent, Weland, among others, all in reference to the same mythological figure.

[158] The figure of Weyland has been singled out here, but the legendary smith has a deep tradition in several European medieval cultures. See for example Goibniu (Celtic), Volundr (Germanic), and Ilmarinen (Scandinavian). Helms, "Joseph the Smith," 461.

also demonstrate how widespread such myths were in medieval culture, substantiating my claim that references to the smith as an extraordinary figure would have been accessible to the population at large.

Weyland is a figured portrayed throughout legend as more than human, with powers that border on the magical. The character of Weyland and versions of his legend appear throughout the literature of northern Europe and it is probable that these myths existed in oral tradition long before they were ever recorded. The *Völundarkvitha*, Weyland's episode in the epic *Poetic Edda*, is but one example. In *Beowolf*, Weyland's prowess and legendary status make him the fitting originator of the heroic warrior's own battle armor.[159] The Franks Casket [figure 14], comfortably dated to the eighth century, possesses what is perhaps the most famous image of Weyland.[160] The casket is made from whalebone and boasts runic inscriptions and a still-enigmatic program of scenes. The left portion of the front panel [figure 15] depicts the skillful Weyland in the midst of freeing himself from captivity and exacting his revenge.[161]

Indeed, Weyland, a smith of unmatched skill, has been kidnaped, hamstrung, and imprisoned on an island by a greedy king. His revenge begins when he kills the king's two sons as they come to gawk at his treasures. He fashions drinking vessels from their skulls for the king, gems of their eyes for the queen, and a brooch of their teeth for the princess. He then drugs and rapes the princess and escapes by means of a device made from the feathers of birds (as if he were a European Daedalus). On the Franks Casket, we see the

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[159] "Send on to [Beowulf's uncle] Hygelac, if battle should take me, the best battledress, which my breast wears, finest of garments; it is Hrethel's heirloom, the work of Weland." Anders Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia: Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 64-65. Chapter 5 of this recent book is dedicated to the craftsmen and artistry of Scandinavia during the early medieval period. At the point in time that concerns this thesis, the Carolingians were embroiled with the Saxons, Danes, and a number of other Germanic and Norse groups.

[160] Dates have been proposed ranging from the sixth to the twelfth centuries, but it is usually placed somewhere between the late seventh and early ninth centuries. As for the collection of scenes, it appears to have biblical scenes (the Adoration of the Magi), along with historical scenes (the sack of Jerusalem), as well as mythological scenes (Romulus and Remus), and still unidentified scenes. For an in-depth survey, see Amy L. Vandersall, "The Date and Provenance of the Franks Casket," *Gesta* 11, no. 2 (1972): 9–26.

[161] For a comprehensive discussion of the possible textual basis for the elements found on the Franks Casket, see Philip Webster Souers, "The Wayland Scene on the Franks Casket," *Speculum* 18, no. 1 (January 1943): 104–111.

decapitated body of the king's son lying at Weyland's feet. In one hand, Weyland holds tongs in which he seems to be fashioning the drinking vessel from the boy's skull, and in the other, holds the cup of drugged beer as the princess reaches for it. (The other woman has been interpreted as either the girl's maid or another instance the princess.) To the right, a man (variously identified as Weyland, his brother Egil, or another of the king's sons) kills birds whose feathers Weyland will use to escape. A strikingly similar scene appears on the Ardre image stone VIII from Gotland, Sweden [figure 16], also dated to the eighth or ninth century. Just below the image of the ship, Weyland's smithy is indicated by the pairs of tongs and hammers. Behind the smithy are the headless bodies of the king's sons, while to the left, Weyland, in the form of an eagle, makes his escape.[162] The legend of Weyland is evidence of a culture that was willing to ascribe extraordinary attributes to the character of the smith. This legend, however, is non-Christian, evincing no overt connotations of spirituality. Given the preexistence of this mythology and the nature of syncretism, it seems almost inevitable that the Frankish church would have given rise to a comparable Christian figure capable of embodying religious virtues, but cast as a familiar type of figure.

### Eligius — The Christian Smith

Indeed, the seventh-century Saint Eligius (ca. 590–660)—the Merovingian bishop of Noyon—was known among Carolingians as a saint renowned for his skills as a goldsmith.[163] As a saintly figure, Eligius embodies the perfection of virtue becoming of a bishop. His *Vita*, as Hahn points out, "is an incomparable source for investigating the interrelationship of craftsmanship and the holy."[164] Eligius seems to have been responsible for a number of splendid shrines for Frankish saints, most notably those of St.

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[162] The unusual shape taken by Weyland coincides almost exactly with the figure of Odin in his guise of an eagle found on the Stora Hammars III stone, also found near Gotland.

[163] Eligius's name also appears as Eloy or Eloi.

[164] Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 32. Hahn asks, "What materials are appropriate? What is the source for these materials, and how are they handled? Given the holiness of the relics themselves, who is worthy of touching them and placing them in their new repositories? How is the cult of saints to be honored?"

Martin of Tours, St. Geneviève of Paris, and an especially remarkable series of structures for St. Denis.[165]

> [Eligius built] a mausoleum for the holy martyr Denis…with a wonderful ciborium over it of marble wonderfully decorated with gold and gems. He composed a crest with a magnificent frontal and surrounded the throne of the altar with golden staves in a circle where he placed golden *poma*, rounded and jeweled. He made a pulpit and a silver gate and a roof for the throne of the altar on silver posts…and fabricated an outside altar at the feet of the holy martyr…It is the greatest of all wonders to this very day.[166]

Thus, Dado (609–686), bishop of Rouen and the author of Eligius's *vita*, describes the saint's handiwork. Lest we are tempted to consider Eligius a patron rather than a craftsman, Dado's *vita* includes multiple references to Eligius's personal talents, although he rarely lingers on them. At a young age, we are told, Eligius was apprenticed to a goldsmith and moneyer due to his innate talents.[167] These same talents later bring him to the attention of King Clothar II who had so far been unable to find a craftsman who could realize his vision of a throne. Eligius proceeds to make not one, but two thrones from the gold he had been given, miraculously expanding his materials in a trope reminiscent of an apocryphal story of Christ in his father's workshop.[168] Unfortunately, very little of Eligius's work has survived intact. The painting of *The Mass of St. Gilles* contains an image of a large jeweled cross that Eligius made for the church of St. Denis [figure 17], only fragments of which still survive.[169] An extent jeweled cross, the Imperial Cross [figure 18] now in Vienna, is a later example but is similar in many respects and helps provide a more full impression as to what Eligius's cross may have looked like. Another

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[165] George Henderson, "Emulation and Invention in Carolingian Art," in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 248–249.

[166] Hahn, *Strange Beauty,* 35. For an description of Eligius's shrine for St. Quentin, see John Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West C.300–1200*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 72-73.

[167] Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 33.

[168] Joseph has accidently cut a beam too short, but Christ miraculously expanded it to the proper length. See Ibid.

[169] Nees, *Early Medieval Art*, 106 and figure 63. Hahn, *Strange Beauty,* 35. Caecilia Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art 300-1150* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 69-70.

piece that is sometimes attributed to Eligius is a gold and garnet disk that was reused and is now attached to one of the short ends of the reliquary-altar of St. Andrew from Trier [figure 19].[170] Regardless of whether this work is actually by the saint's hand, it nonetheless is an example of the exquisite craftsmanship that would have been the standard of a prestigious smith who produced items for the royal house.

In the end, Eligius's fame does not come from his talent as a smith, but from his exemplary life. His occupation as a metal smith does not necessarily define him, but furnishes the language of potent metaphors of purification and for the refashioning of the soul. One of the most prevalent of his virtues is his purity of soul, made evident by his acts of charity and his reverence towards holy objects. In one episode, the king has a number of relics brought before Eligius so that he might swear an oath. Signaling his supreme fidelity and piety, Eligius breaks down in tears before the king and refuses to lay his hands upon the relics.[171] This is a lesson about proper etiquette towards holy art, exemplified by one who would have been most directly involved in the fabrication of holy objects. It is critical to remember that although relics and reliquaries were popular and often quite visible objects, decorum did not allow ordinary people to touch them except under rare circumstances. If merely touching such holy objects was a controlled event, who could make them, and under what conditions could these artifacts be made? Eligius's reluctance to touch holy material upholds a Christian tradition that reaches far back to the Old Testament, but it also resonates with the mystical characteristics of smithing in general.[172] Mary Helms notes that,

> Since the esoteric and generally secret knowledge that allowed the smith to assist
> nature by transforming stone with the power of fire was thought to be derived
> from and to involve the supernatural, the actual processes of smithing were

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[170] Henderson, "Emulation and Invention in Carolingian Art," 248-249.

[171] Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 33.

[172] The danger of even touching holy things without permission is conveyed by the punishment of Uzzah who is struck dead after he touched the Ark. "When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God." See 2 Samuel 6 (the same story is recounted in 1 Chronicles 13.)

typically accompanied by rituals and protective charms and the smith himself could maintain a state of ritual piety while the work period was in effect.[173]

It is clear from both popular and Christian tradition that the work of the smith, especially if fashioning items for use in ritual, was to be carried out by individuals who were set apart or marked in some manner as special. Bezaleel, best known for building the Ark of the Covenant, was specifically chosen by God and was imbued with the requisite wisdom and skills to produce this holiest of objects.[174] Likewise, Eligius's birth was prefaced by his mother's vision of an eagle crying out three times as well as the corroboration of a priest who foresaw that Eligius would become a holy man.[175] The saint's strict adherence to the proper etiquette in the presence of holy items substantiates his character as one worthy to fashion and use them.

### *Ornaments of the Church*

What emerges from the stories of Eligius is the sense that for a craftsman, achieving purity and splendor in one's soul was paramount to achieving them in the object. Time and again, Eligius is referred to as a vessel or an ornament himself. Eligius's masterwork is not his ornament at St. Denis, the king's thrones, or any other worldly item, but instead is his own soul, which he has purified and remade to serve God. For example, Dado recounts that, "when [Eligius] reached the age of virility, *desiring to show himself a vessel sanctified to God* and fearing that some sin might stain his breast, he confessed his adolescent deeds to the priest"[italics my own].[176] Eligius then imposed on himself strict penance so that he might purify himself. Later in his *Vita*, Eligius is twice

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[173] Helms, "Joseph the Smith, " 459.

[174] See Exodus 31:1-5. Often overlooked is God's selection of and gifts of ability to Oholiab (or Aholiab) and "all the skilled workers" (Exodus 31:6). Bezaleel is also responsible for the creation of a bronze altar (see 2 Chronicles 1) and all of the liturgical vessels, utensils, and vestments, extending even to perfumes. See Exodus 37 for a detailed description of the Ark, the table, and the lampstand. (References to Bezaleel can be found in Exodus 31, 35, 36, 37, 38, 1 Chronicles 2, 2 Chronicles 1, and Ezra 10.)

[175] Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 33.

[176] From *Vita S. Eligius,* ed. Levison, MGH SS Mer. 4, 669-742, Translation and Notes by Jo Ann McNamara [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/eligius.asp], Book 1, §7.

called an ornament to the church. For instance, when relating the sadness of his monks when Eligius foretells his death, Dado writes,

> And at these words they shrank away and turned to sorrow, and began sighing together: "May it not happen, lord, that your servants see what you have said but may the lord permit your blessed presidency to flourish here for many more years as an ornament to his church and the poor."[177]

The language of ornaments and vessels is not used by chance, nor is it particular to Eligius. Writing in the middle of the ninth century, Hrabanus Maurus, using Isidore of Seville's definitions, writes in *De universo* that, "Carved or engraved vessels signify the saints, marked and decorated by the signs of various virtues. Those vessels called gilded signify those whom the gift of perfect charity adorns…"[178] The saints, along with Christ, stood as exemplars of virtue and righteousness. The work of the metal smith offered abundant and fitting metaphors ranging from the removal of impurities to the refashioning of base materials into a gift befitting God.

The saints are considered ornaments to the Church precisely because of their perfection of spirit and exemplary nature. Man's soul became, through metaphor, the raw material that was in need of purification and reformation. The ethical theory of images, discussed in the second chapter, promotes the concept that the faithful should strive through virtuous deeds to conform their souls to the *imago Dei*. Man's soul had been fashioned at creation in the likeness of God, but through sin, that image had become disfigured.[179] The saints, and ultimately Christ, provided the ideal models of humility, charity, and piety. Evidence for the concern over the re-formation of one's soul during

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[177] Ibid., Book 2, §34.

[178] Taken from Diebold, "Medium as Message in Carolingian Writing About Art, " 197. The particular quote is from Hrabanus Maurus's *De universo* 22, 3.

[179] The predominant strain of thought during the Carolingian era was that it was mans' rational soul that bore the image-likeness relation to God. This interpretation of Genesis 1:26 was based primarily on the works of Origen. Origen's work was so influential that it was used by later theologians, most notably, Augustine. Carolingian theologians such as Theodulf of Orleans, Paulinus of Aquileia, and Benedict of Aniane also adhered to this strain of thought. Only Paschasius Radbertus seems to have located the *imago dei* in both man's body and soul. See David F. Appleby, "'Beautiful on the Cross, Beautiful in His Torments': The Place of the Body in the Thought of Paschasius Radbertus," *Traditio* 60 (2005): especially page 13.

the Carolingian period can be found, for example, in the *Vita Adalhardi*, written by Paschasius Radbertus of Corbie (785–865) shortly after the abbot Adalhard's death in 826. David Appleby, noting the use of the classical story of the famed painter Zeuxius, summarizes Paschasius's description of Adalhard's life:

> Adalhard too was an artist who sought to realize a work that somehow went beyond nature, but in this case the objective was a reformation of the image of God in himself. To achieve this, Adalhard too used models, in this case the lives and deeds of the saints, whose examples of virtue he discerned with the mind's eye and assimilated in an effort to resemble the transcendent archetype.[180]

Obviously, here the metaphor is painting rather than smithing, but as the *Vita Adalhardi* makes clear, the respected abbot strove to emulate Christ and the saints in an attempt to remake his soul into a more perfect resemblance of the ideal. The only worthy gift for God could be a life more perfectly lived. Centuries before Paschasius, Paulinus of Nola (354–431) eloquently combined the metaphors of metal smithing with the concepts of gift giving and perfection:

> But as we build we must consider what we can erect from our frail and earthly material to be worthy of the divine foundation…Let us fuse together the gold of our thoughts and the silver of our speech in Christ, so that once we are cleansed in the furnace of this world, He who approves the souls that please Him may transform us into gold tried by the fire, worthy of the stamp of His image, and we by reason of our enlightened works may offer ourselves as precious stones to Him.[181]

Paulinus echoes the longstanding Christian notion that the mundane, material realm is "frail" and that nothing made from it is comparable to virtue and righteousness. The material world, although created by God, is still bounded by its corporality.[182] Any craftsman who attempted to fashion a worthy gift for God out of physical matter would fail. Paulinus uses an extended metaphor of the metal smith, beginning with the concept that the soul is the thing to be purified and tested in fire. Once it has been deemed

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[180] Ibid., 1-2.

[181] Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, 44.

[182] Origen maintained that the biblical account of creation began only at the beginning of the creation of corporeal reality. The angelic, spiritual plane was a reality that had been created prior. Appleby, "'Beautiful on the Cross, Beautiful in His Torments': The Place of the Body in the Thought of Paschasius Radbertus," 13.

acceptable material, it can become, through "enlightened works," a worthy gift as it has come to bear the image of God. The archetype of the smith, given these examples, comes into focus as a powerfully apt exemplar for the task of endeavoring to transform the individual soul into a worthy gift to God.

Returning to the image of Wolvinius on the altar at Milan, there is one particularity that deserves attention, especially following on the heels of this last point. At first glance, Wolvinius appears to come before Ambrose empty-handed. He bears no gift and has no attribute at all, and without his name and the title of "*phaber*" beneath him, there is nothing to identify him. In the adjacent roundel, Bishop Angilbert offers the altar he commissioned (recognizable by the large cross depicted on its front) as he receives his crown from Ambrose. The altar is simultaneously Angilbert's gift and his attribute. It is offered as a fitting gift to beautify the resting place of saintly remains, but it is also the locus where Angilbert and his successors will repeatedly offer gifts of praise and seek intercession. In the case of both Angilbert and Wolvinius, the physical item is, in a sense, secondary, as it is their virtuous deeds that make themselves worthy gifts. The absence of evidence of Wolvinius's own work in his own hands could easily be read as a result of the typical Carolingian prejudice against works made by the hand of man. Such a bias is expressed in the *Opus Caroli Regis*. Ann Freeman observed that according to the *Opus*, "art has no intrinsic piety, and the artist, in common with the practitioners of all other worldly crafts, may attain piety in his person, but not in the products of his art."[183] I suggest that a possible explanation for Wolvinius's apparent lack of a gift is that he is himself, in fact, the gift. He cannot, as suggested by Freeman, achieve piety in his fabrication. Instead, his piety is evidenced in the implementations of his talents in service of the church. Within a worldview which perceived physical reality as corrupt or lacking, and which considered manual labor to be inferior to contemplation, the patristic fathers, as well as Carolingian scholars, were presented with a particularly tricky problem:

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[183] Ann Freeman, "Theodulf of Orléans and the Libri Carolini," in *Theodulf of Orléans: Charlemagne's Spokesman Against the Second Council of Nicaea* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 696.

according to Gospel accounts, Christ's father, Joseph, was a craftsman. By extension, this made Christ himself a manual laborer.[184]

### *Joseph the Smith*

The popular vision of Joseph and Christ as carpenters was not the predominant view during the early middle ages—an important factor in conceiving of the figure of the smith and their products. The Greek word given for Joseph's occupation, *tekton*, as well as its Latin (near) equivalent, *faber* used in medieval Latin translations, are both relatively general terms. In common usage, however, they often take on presumed meanings. These meanings may vary depending on region and time, though.[185] There is ample evidence that during the early medieval era in Western Europe, the term *faber* most often referred to a smith. Helms notes that the identification of the *faber* with a worker of metals is especially pronounced in ecclesiastical writings.[186] A number of notable Christian exegetes authored influential commentaries on the passages in Matthew and Mark that identify Joseph and Christ as *faber*. For example, Bede (ca. 673–d. 735) links Matthew 13:55 with a passage in the Old Testament book of Malachi (3:3) that reads, "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness…"[187] For Bede, the relationship to the work of the smith was obvious.[188] Here as well we see that the purity of the person, not their gift, is at issue. Furthermore, the works of Leander (d. 600) and his brother, Isidore (d. 636) of Seville explicitly refer to Joseph as a smith. Copies of the particular volumes in which these references occur appear in ninth-century library

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[184] Matthew 13:55 reads in part, "nonne hic est fabri filius . . ." ("is not this the *smith's* son?") and its parallel Mark 6:3 reads "nonne iste est faber filius Mariae . . ." ("is this not the *smith*, the son of Mary?") See Helms, "Joseph the Smith," 455.

[185] See Ibid. for a fully detailed discussion of the usage of these terms.

[186] Ibid., 455.

[187] Ibid., 456.

[188] Ibid., 457. Bede was certainly not alone. In a gloss of the Lindisfarne Gospels, *faber* is given two possible English equivalents, "smyth" or "wright."

inventories at both St. Riquier and Fulda.[189] Finally, Hrabanus Maurus (who was familiar with the library at Fulda) and Pascahsius Radbertus, both produced noteworthy commentaries on Matthew, including an exposition of the meaning of Joseph's profession.[190]

The figure of Joseph has always been approached as a tertiary character in biblical accounts. Although he is a part of the holy family, his role is traditionally a small one. His relationship to Christ, as his earthy father, as well as his identification as a *faber* were, however, circumstances that could not easily be ignored. Standing out among early exegesis regarding Joseph's identity is the work of St. Ambrose. His writing on this matter was perhaps the most influential in the early Middle Ages.[191] It is worthwhile at this point to quote Ambrose's comments in full:

> In the same way you find: "Isn't he the son of Joseph the artisan?" [Matthew 13:55] We have said above, why by a virgin, we have said also why by a married woman, and why at the time of the Census our Lord and Savior was born; it does not seems out of place to explain why he had an artisan for a father. By this figure in effect, he showed that he had the Artisan of all things for a father, he who created the earth, and thus it was written, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' [Genesis 1:1] Because if the human is not comparable to the divine, nonetheless the symbol is perfect, since the Father of Christ works by the fire and the spirit [Matthew 3:11] and like a good artisan of the soul trims off our vices all around, takes the axe to the unfruitful trees, cuts off that which is worthless, saving the well-shaped shoots, and softening the rigidity of souls in the fire of the spirit, and fashioning humankind by different sorts of ministries for various uses.[192]

Ambrose provides a typological association between God—the Heavenly Father—and Joseph—the earthly father—acknowledging that while they are not comparable, the metaphor is apt. It seems as though Ambrose slips into mixing his metaphors, introducing the idea of God as a gardener, but he begins and ends with things associated

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[189] Ibid., 457.

[190] Cynthia Hahn, "Joseph as Ambrose's 'Artisan of the Soul' in the Holy Family in Egypt by Albrecht Dürer," *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 4 (1984): 517, esp. note 10.

[191] Helms, "Joseph the Smith, " 455+456.

[192] Hahn, "Joseph as Ambrose's 'Artisan of the Soul' in the Holy Family in Egypt by Albrecht Dürer, " 457.

most closely with the work of the smith.[193] God the Father—and by means of the typological link, Joseph—are artisans that work with fire, using it to soften their base material and fashion it into useful things. Ambrose's commentary was heavily influenced by the work of Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 300–ca. 368). Helms, in noting the similarities in language, writes that,

> Hilary says that Jesus was the son of an artisan who conquers iron with fire (*ferrum igne vincentis*), melts away (*decoquentis*; as in melting away metals) all worldly (sinful) ways, and forms the mass (*massam*; a lump of something, especially of metal) into things useful for humans.[194]

Throughout, the purifying capabilities of fire, as well as its ability to make material malleable and easily reconfigured are used as soteriological metaphors. The parallels between the work of the smith, who literally transforms rock and ore into beautifully gleaming objects and the Christians' quest to perfect their own humanity and spirituality were easily recognized. What is more, this metaphor lent a positive valuation to the work of the craftsman.[195]


### *Conclusion*

Given the influential nature of Ambrose's commentary, it begins to seem much more natural that it is on the altar surrounding his relics that we find a blatant acknowledgement of the *faber* as metal smith. We can presume that Angilbert would have been familiar with Ambrose's work, as well as his sources.[196] It does not seem entirely out

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[193] Also, who but the smith would have fashioned the axe that is used to do the trimming?

[194] Helms, "Joseph the Smith, " 456.

[195] Ibid., 461.

[196] Ambrose was well-known and frequently used throughout Carolingian writing. The most specific connection I can find confirms that Ambrose's commentary on Luke was known from a sixth-century manuscript at Bobbio, copied in the eighth century at Boulogne, Freising and Lorsch, and in the ninth century at St. Gall. David Ganz, "Book Production and the Spread of Caroline Minuscule," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, vol. II (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 803. Admittedly, I have not been able to connect his commentary specifically to Milan in the ninth century, although the frequent use of Ambrose by figures similar to Angilbert provides a basis for what I believe is a reasonable assumption. For the use of Ambrose along with Jerome and Augustine in the *Opus Caroli Regis*, see Thomas F.X. Noble, "Tradition and Learning in Search of Ideology: The Libri Carolini," in *"The Gentle Voices of Teachers": Aspects of Learning in the Carolingian Age*, ed. Richard E. Sullivan (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1995), 240. For Dungal's use of Ambrose, see

of order that having commissioned such a monumental work of silver and gold, Angilbert could have been influenced by the writings of the church's titular saint on the subject. I propose that consideration be given to the idea that the presence of his image ought to be read as being far more than a mere signature. Instead, the figure of Wolvinius alongside Angilbert's is an explicit acknowledgement of Ambrose's comments that men's souls are fashioned for different purposes, but each must work to perfect his own through virtuous deeds.[197] Wolvinius, by virtue of his title, is placed in the company of biblical makers such as Joseph, the father of Christ and the typological representation of God as creator. Wolvinius also shares company with the Frankish patron saint of goldsmiths, Eligius, who through a pious life fashioned himself into an ornament of the church. Finally, in an era that conceived of their smiths as figures who possessed, if not a pseudo-magical ability, esoteric knowledge that distinguished their craft as unique, Wolvinius would have brought associations easily recognized by Christians who were not that far removed from their traditional myths such as Weyland.[198] Contemporary scholarly discussions of materials and processes often focus on the gold, silver, and precious stones to the exclusion of the figure fabricating the object despite the fact they were at the core of an object's meaning. An increasingly anthropocentric view of art in the Carolingian period, wherein art's purpose was to be didactic and affective, serving as a catalyst for the viewer to embody in their own lives the virtues of Christ and the saints, thereby recasting

David F. Appleby, "Holy Relic and Holy Image: Saints' Relics in the Western Controversy over Images in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries," *Word & Image* 8, no. 4 (October 1992): 337. For Hincmar of Reims use of Ambrose, see Ganz, "Theology and the Organization of Thought," 762. For Paschasius's use, see Celia Chazelle, "Figure, Character, and the Glorified Body in the Carolingian Eucharistic Controversy," *Traditio* 47 (1992): throughout, esp. 20.

[197] I cannot help but notice that Wolvinius is positioned below Gabriel, the archangel who announced to Mary that she would bear the Christ. This is a moment of great theological importance as it is an acknowledgement that God will take on a material form. Gabriel's juxtaposition with Wolvinius, a man whose occupation was centered on the material world, is perhaps something also worth exploring.

[198] For further discussion of this, see Helms, "Joseph the Smith," 463. "…conceiving of Joseph *magus* would have been entirely consonant with a milieu in which Catholic missionary monks and clergy accepted such non-Christian magic as well as deemed helpful in strengthening Christianity's acceptance within still largely pagan cultures. Presenting Jesus not only as the divine son of the original cosmic creator but also as incarnated into the family of a skilled *magus* would be readily understood by a populace whose Christianity was strongly informed by earlier non-Christian personages, rites, and beliefs and who accepted the presence of the marvelous on an everyday basis."

themselves as a more perfect likenesses of Christ harmonizes well with the work of the smith. The smith, whether or not he was a saint, could serve as an exemplar for the Carolingian viewer. Like Wolvinius, they need not bear any gift except a soul made more perfect by faith and by a righteous life.

# CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined Carolingian art and its place within devotional practice by probing three closely related aspects of the subject. The Carolingians, who were in no way averse to art in other contexts, did give a great deal of attention to the matter of art's place in religious practice. The Carolingians, I argue, were compelled to sort out the use of images in devotional contexts because of their ongoing relationship with non-Christian, or pagan, practices. Dubious beliefs and practices not only existed at their borders, but also within the heart of the empire. In the wake of an often hasty conversion process, the Church was left to educate populations who were frequently Christian in name only. As this process continued and time progressed, it became abundantly clear that the Carolingian Church—and Empire—was home to an undeniably heterogeneous collection of beliefs and practices. This diversity, which extended into almost all areas of Carolingian life, is often cited as the impetus for the Carolingian *renovatio* and must also be taken into account when considering the development of Carolingian image practice. This interaction between native practices and the permeation of Christianity is an area of study that I believe may yet yield interesting results. While a study of the relationship between missionary techniques and the artistic output of the era must be undertaken elsewhere, it appears likely that there may be striking concordances between changing missionary theories and growing trends in the production of art.

The diversity of thought regarding religious art during the Carolingian period makes it an interesting epoch to study. This diversity, however, also prevents a simple and all-encompassing statement to be made that is both precise and applicable to an entire population. The Carolingian view of sacred art, and images in general, was neither monolithic nor stagnant. Instead, multiple currents of thought coexisted. It should be kept in mind, though, that these differences were most often found in nuances rather than in central tenets of belief. Far from being an unorganized or confused discourse, the Carolingian thinking about images and art evinces a unique character and in some cases quite careful and original thinking. One goal of this thesis has been to demonstrate that

the Carolingian discourse on images was dynamic and, that within a matter of a few short decades, a number of texts appeared that were distinctly varied. By examining these sources—such as the *Opus Caroli Regis*, the Paris *Libellus*, and Jonas's *On the Cult of Images*, among others—and comparing the areas of specific concern and the method in which they are addressed, it is possible to discern unique strains of thought. When these ideas are compared to other prominent texts within a chronology and juxtaposed with works of art, certain trends do become apparent. Foremost among these trends is the Carolingian view that images—here meaning figural likenesses—were as a rule, never holy. Contemporary accounts indicate that churches were filled with figures painted on the walls of churches. However, such images, even in the most liberal of circumstances, were never considered to be worthy of the same honor due to God, the saints, or the cross. Educated Carolingians, by and large, distrusted images, seeing them as empty and a deficient means of conveying ideas. Although images could never be holy and should not be worshiped, the early ninth century, I believe, can be seen as a time when there is a renewed interest in elaborating on the potential uses for images. Learned churchmen, such as Jonas of Orléans and Dungal of Pavia, were on the forefront of this growing trend. Rather than fight a loosing battle against long-entrenched practices, these men turned their attention to the needs of their audiences. Although not all images and art could be holy, they could be put to greater spiritual use. The increasingly emotive art and affective piety that is typical of later centuries, I suggest, in fact has its roots in growing trends that gather momentum during the ninth century, trends that are evidenced by the writing of figure such as Jonas and Dungal.

In discovering just how art fit into the devotional structure of the Carolingian church, this thesis gave a good deal of attention to how the visual experience of sacred spaces was orchestrated. The primary objects of interest, examined in the third chapter, were the remains of saints found at shrines and in reliquaries and altars. Relics of saints were (nearly) literally the cornerstone of European Christianity, as every altar was required to contain the remains of at least one saint. As discussed in Chapter III, the visual experience of sanctity was localized at holy sites that had at their metaphoric, if not physical center, a relic. A particularly contentious aspect of discussing sacred art and

relics is the distinction between the container and the contained. Relics were indeed holy, but was the reliquary, altar, or church which held it also holy? The answer to this question cannot be fully answered here, but contemporary practice and a simple metaphor may suffice for our present purposes. First, as already noted, in the early ninth century, all altars were required to contain a relic. Without a relic, they were considered unauthentic and ineffective. Likewise, a bare relic, perhaps a shard of bone or a handful of dust, was equally inert—it carried no signs of identity or power. We only have look so far as Carolingian reliquaries. Often, the relic itself was removed from touch and sight. Instead, the sight of the reliquary, or the rare chance to touch it, was enough to affect a miracle. Container and contained became fused into a powerful union greater than the sum of its parts. For a loose metaphor, consider a bullet. Gunpowder—in this case our relic—on its own is of no danger and might only fizzle and spark if ignited. Likewise, a projectile—our reliquary— is of no threat, merely a lump of metal. However, once combined, the gunpowder and projectile are fused into an object that has a potential power far greater than either has alone. Relics were the vital component that in turn made the altar, the church, and the reliquary itself, into holy objects and spaces. As Cynthia Hahn has show, however, it was the reliquary or shrine that in turn authenticated and empowered the relic.

Among the most interesting features of the ninth-century discourse on the utility of sight, in my opinion, is the observation by Jonas of Orléans that it was the entirety of the visual experience that had potential to be spiritually meaningful. Jonas reminded his peers that beyond the physical works of art, the sight of the liturgy and especially of miracles, should be considered important components of a votary's experience. Jonas argued that "things seen" could have a profound effect on a viewer, therefore the visual experience had to be recognized as a powerful spiritual tool in the hand's of the clergy. As an art historian, I find Jonas a particularly intriguing figure whose thought adds a new and intriguing dimension to our understanding of the Carolingian perception of art and its utility within the devotional structure.

My most original contribution to the study of Carolingian Art History is found in the fourth chapter of this thesis. In recent years, materiality has been a subject of great

interest among medieval art historians, and rightly so. However, materials, and the processes by which materials are manipulated, if we continue that direction, lead us to the artists themselves. Taking into account the Carolingian (and Byzantine) view that a true likeness exists not in appearances but in virtuous actions performed in imitation of someone, I began to direct my attention away from images and materials towards characters. This conceptualization was bolstered by William Diebold's investigation of the "wise architect" found within the New Testament and Carolingian exegesis. His research supported the idea that beyond materials, certain figures could be, and were, recognized by Carolingian audiences as meaningful. My contribution has been to extend this concept to the figure of the craftsman, specifically the metal smith. This fourth chapter has demonstrated that Carolingian art was layered with meaning that existed far beyond the surface. Materials and processes, while certainly meaningful, acquire a far greater meaning when then are coupled with the figures who manipulated them.

Within the subject of Carolingian art, two distinct vectors stand out as interesting paths for further study. The first is the continued investigation of those things that are both representative of holiness and are themselves holy, such as relics, the cross, and liturgical vessels. What is most interesting about this approach is that it highlights the materiality and physicality of the object. Sanctity was not, in these cases, something that existed beyond a picture plane. The purpose was not to remind one of holiness, but was to put that holiness in front of the viewer, making it visible, tangible, and present. The second vector for study is an exploration of the development of theories regarding the utility of images. For centuries, images were relegated to ornamentation and the recording of histories. The early ninth-century—here I am thinking of figures like Jonas and Dungal—witnessed a renewed interest in what images had the capability to do, regardless of their holiness. These thinkers reintroduced a concern for the viewer and their responses. This utility rested on both the artist's and the viewer's expectations of what art had the capability to do. An understanding of these types of expectations is valuable as one attempts to contextualize art, regardless of whether it is considered ordinary or extra-ordinary, mundane or holy.

FIGURE 1: Portable Altar of Arnulf of Carinthia, late 9th century. Gold, gems, pearls, and enamels. Munich Residenz Treasury.
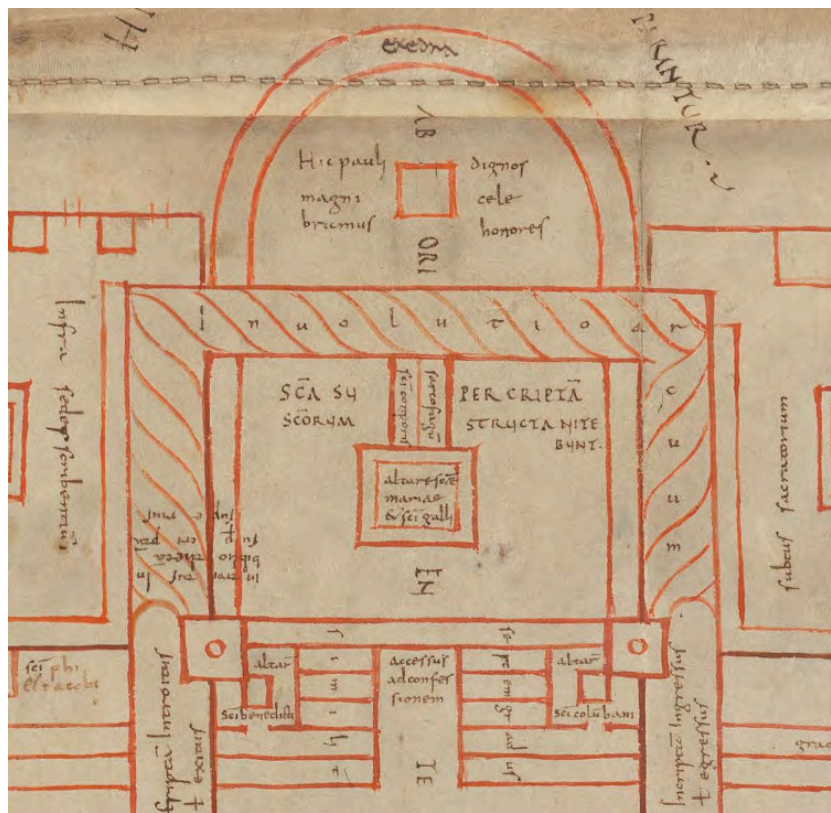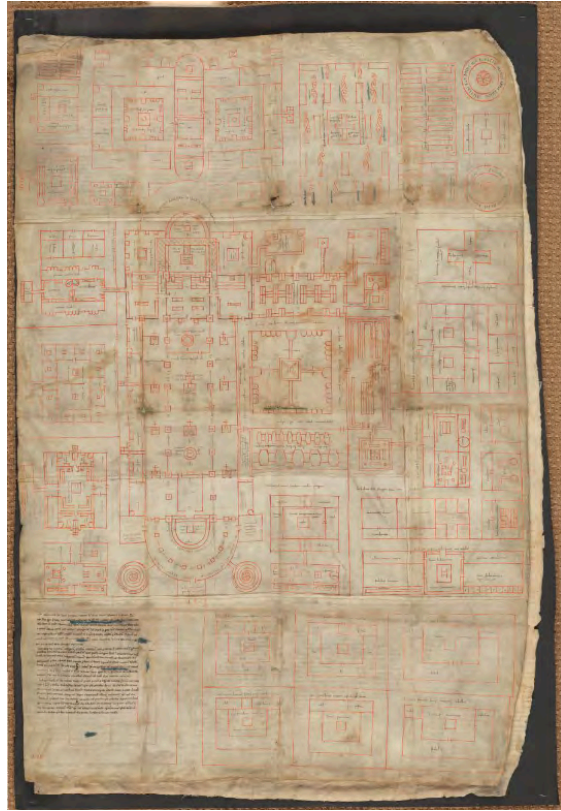
FIGURE 2: Plan of Saint Gall (and detail). Designed for Gozbert, abbot of St. Gall (r. 816–837)

FIGURE 3: Burse reliquary of St. Stephen (Stephansbursa), ca. 830, gold and precious stones over a wooden core. Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.
Right: Detail of side.

FIGURE 4: Engraving of Abbey Church of St. Riquier, Centula

FIGURE 5: Enger reliquary. Early ninth century. Gold gems, inlay, enamels, pearls, silver gilt. Berlin, Staatliche Museen.

FIGURE 6 [left ]: "Lantern" reliquary of St. Vincent. Probably late ninth century with later additions. Silver, partial gilt. Conques Abbey, Treasury.

FIGURE 7 [above right]: Tomb of Caius and Lucius at Saint Rémy (Glanum).

FIGURE 8 [below right]: Drawing of Einhard's reliquary stand. Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale.

FIGURE 9: Adelhausen portable altar. Late eighth century.
Porphyry, wood, silver, enamels, with niello and gilding.
Freiburg, Augustinermuseum.



FIGURE 10: Golden Altar of Milan. Late ninth century. Sant' Ambrogio, Milan.

FIGURE 11 [above]: Detail of the *fenestella* doors.

FIGURE 12 [below]: Detail of Wolvinius.

FIGURE 13 [above]: Wittislingen brooch, front and back. Late sixth or early seventh century. Silver, gold filigree, cloisonné, niello.

FIGURE 14 [below]: The Franks Casket. Late eighth century (?). Whalebone. British Museum.

FIGURE 15 [above]: Front left panel of the Franks Casket with Weyland in his smithy.

FIGURE 16 [below]: Ardre image stone (VIII) and detail. Late eighth, early ninth century.
Near Gotland, Sweden.

FIGURE 17 [above]: Detail of the Mass of St. Gilles, by the Master of St. Gilles, fifteenth century.

FIGURE 18 [below]: Imperial Cross (Reichskreuz). Early eleventh century.
Kuntshistoriches Museum, Vienna.

FIGURE 19: Detail of the garnet disc on the reliquary of St. Andrew in Trier.
Altar is late tenth century. Trier Cathedral Treasury.

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