The Medieval Theologians

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BLACKWELL
Publishers

First published 2001

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Blackwell Publishers Ltd
108 Cowley Road
Oxford OX4 1JF
UK

Blackwell Publishers Inc.
350 Main Street
Malden, Massachusetts 02148
USA

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The medieval theologians / edited by G. R. Evans.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-631-21202-7 (alk. paper) — ISBN 0-631-21203-5 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Theology—History—Middle Ages, 600-1500. 2. Theologians. I. Evans, G. R. (Gillian Rosemary)

BR253 .M38 2001
230'.09'02—dc21
00-060793

Typeset in 10 on 12.5 pt Galliard
by Graphicraft Limited, Hong Kong
Printed in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

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Preface

This is a companion volume to *The Modern Theologians*, edited by David Ford, first published in 1989, which entered a much-revised second edition in 1997. Yet in a sense it cannot be a companion, for its subject-matter makes its premisses radically different. David Ford can write of "the global scope of Christian theology, its diversity amounting often to fragmentation."[1] He can write of "theologies." The authors discussed in this volume would not have understood what he meant. They would have recoiled from the very idea of "diversity"; it was difficult enough for them to come to terms with the idea that some matters might be "indifferent," *adiaphora*. They would not have approved of fragmentation at all, because it would have betokened schism and the loss of the one faith. Paradoxically, although it was as true for the Middle Ages as for the period since the nineteenth century, that Christian theology has engaged "immense intellectual energy," the thrust of the labor has changed. The authors in this volume wanted to protect, to preserve, to clarify, certainly, but not to change the heritage handed on to them. Their efforts are directed at *holding off* challenge; if they are seen to *make* it, that is largely by accident, and the dissident is frequently to be heard protesting that he said, or intended to say, nothing new, nothing different, that he has been misunderstood.

It is a pity that the "missing volume" or volumes, on Reformation and post-Reformation theologians, are not yet to hand. An immense gulf of expectation and assumption separates the end of the Middle Ages from the nineteenth century and it would be impossible to attempt to bridge it here, except to point to the accompanying shift in the intellectual aspirations and social patterns. A writer cannot but be of his time, especially when the times require him to be up to date and saying something new if he is to be taken seriously. Perhaps the single most important alteration which took place from the nineteenth century was the move from disapproving of innovation to valuing originality.

Unity and continuity are of the essence of the faith and no greater strain has

and Jarrow," in *The Age of Bede*, ed. D. H. Farmer (Harmondsworth, 1965), ch. 15, p. 201 (hereafter LA).

6 *Codex Amiatinus*, MS, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Florence. Cf. E. A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, 111, p. 299. Also R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Art of the Codex Amiatinus*, Jarrow Lecture, 1967.

7 Bede, *On the Temple*, trans. Sean Connolly (Liverpool, 1995), ch. 17, 2, p. 68.

8 LA, ch. 15, p. 201.

9 *Life of Ceolfrid, Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, trans. D. S. Boutflower (London, 1912), ch. 20, p. 69.

10 Ibid.

11 Bruce-Mitford, *The Art of the Codex Amiatinus*, pp. 5–6.

12 The other two pandects have almost entirely disappeared: "A leaf of one of the other two pandects was discovered by Canon Greenwell, of Durham, in a Newcastle bookshop in 1909; and this with two or three similar leaves, known as the Middleton leaves, are in the British Museum," ibid., p. 1.

13 Bede, *In Primam Partem Samuhelis Libri III*, ed. D. Hurst, *CCSL* 119 (Turnhout, 1969), p. 212.

14 Augustine, *de Doctrina Christiana*, II, viii.

15 For Bede and the rules of Tyconius cf. Bede, *On Revelation*, *Patrologia Latina*, 93, col. 131.

16 Cf. Cyril L. Smetana, "Paul the Deacon's Patristic Anthology" in *The Old English Homily and its Patristic Background*, eds. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard F. Huppe (Albany, 1978).

17 *The Letters of St. Boniface*, trans. Emerton (Princeton, 1940), Letter LXXV (91), p. 168.

18 EHEP, Preface, p. 7.

19 Bede, "Letter to Egbert," in *The Ecclesiatical History of the English People*, trans. J. McClure and R. Collins (Oxford, 1994), p. 346.

20 Ibid., p. 347.

21 Bede, *On Revelation*.

22 EHEP Bk. V, ch. xii, pp. 489–99.

23 Ibid. Bk. IV, ch. xxiv, pp. 415–21.

24 Ibid. Bk. IV, ch. iii, pp. 339–41.

25 Bede, *On Proverbs*, in *Proverbia Salomonis*, ed. D. Hurst, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, 119B, xxii, 9.

26 Bede, "Life of St. Cuthbert," in *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert*, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), p. 183. The codex mentioned here was once thought to be the Stoneyhurst Gospel of John, now in the British Museum, but this is unlikely since it has eleven not seven gatherings.

27 EHEP, Bk. V, ch. 24, p. 571.

chapter 5

Carolingian Theology

Willemien Otten

Introduction

In his well-known collection of essays on history and tradition published in 1993, Eric Hobsbawm introduced a new historiographical concept which he called *the invention of tradition*.[1] His claim was that, when social and cultural movements trace back their roots to ancient tradition, they need not always be taken at their word. For what they call tradition may in fact be a product of recent invention. Hobsbawm's interest seems to have been captured by the fact that movements such as nineteenth-century nationalism gained much faster acceptance when claiming to be in continuity with a distinguished past. Thus his book highlights the important role of tradition precisely as a way to influence the present.

To go from nineteenth-century Europe back to the eighth and ninth centuries is quite a historical leap. More than a leap into a distant past, however, it is a leap into an era in which there was a different conception of the past and of history altogether. As a crucial era in the history of Western Christianity the Carolingian period may well have distinguished itself by first conceptualizing this need to depend on a past. When Alcuin fought the adoptionist Christology of eighth-century Spain, he did so with the full confidence that he represented traditional orthodoxy over ancient heresy. It is tempting to apply Hobsbawm's phrase here and speak about the invention of tradition. Yet whereas this label aptly describes various nineteenth-century developments, it does not cover adequately what happened in the Carolingian age. When Hobsbawm's nineteenth-century nationalists construed the idealized past to which they wanted to return, they had enough historical awareness to do so, including an adequate sense of distance. For they knew that this ideal past had never existed. When the Carolingians looked back, however, they were confronted with an enormous void. This was the dramatic result of the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, which separated them forever from the glory of ancient Rome and the distinguished age of the Fathers.

unwilling to stare into this void, as this would lead them on an Orphic quest that was doomed to fail. Instead they projected their vision on the future, a future which would make them share retroactively in the glorious past that was never theirs. Karl Morrison has called this the strategy of *mimesis*.[2] He explained how the Middle Ages generally resisted innovation, unless it could be presented as a reform, i.e., a repeating or following (*mimesis*) of traditional Christian principles and values. This is exactly what most Carolingian theologians did. Ancient tradition became in their hands a useful tool with which to craft a future.

Employing this dual strategy of invented tradition alongside mimetic reform, the Carolingians built a cultural home for themselves which would subsequently be considered Europe's shared Christian heritage. What makes their theological achievement so difficult to assess, however, is that they removed the traces of their own interference so scrupulously that twelfth-century authors could lean on this tradition as if it had always been there. Thus their contribution has long remained unnoticed. The very fact that the Carolingians remained virtually invisible throughout such a crucial process of cultural transmission may well be the greatest testimony to their achievement.

But it is also the reason that they did not always receive appropriate credit. When not played down altogether, Carolingian theology is often seen as a theology marked, if not marred, by controversy. In the following we shall follow the Carolingian controversies more or less in chronological order. We shall begin with the adoptionist controversy. Next we shall deal with the iconoclasm controversy, after which we continue with the eucharistic controversy. We end with the predestination controversy. It is important not to narrow the importance of Carolingian theology to the sum of its controversies. The emergence of different, even divergent, opinions marking the theological landscape can itself be seen as a clear sign of the Carolingians' growing self-awareness. This self-awareness was at the basis of a kind of intellectual confidence by which they were able not just to defend their own positions as in conformity with the Fathers but, on a deeper level, to harmonize the Fathers' different voices in such a way as to create a coherent sense of tradition.

Alcuin (730–804) and the Adoptionist Controversy: The Meaning of Divine Sonship

Of all the Carolingian controversies, the one on adoptionism is probably the most misunderstood. This is a direct result of Alcuin's formidable success in labeling the adoptionist position a heresy. He did so, moreover, in the stigmatizing vocabulary derived from the early Christological debates. Since the weight of the patristic tradition as codified by the Carolingians has only increased since the days of Alcuin, his judgment became progressively harder to resist. Thus his views proved instrumental in confirming and spreading the orthodoxy of Chalcedonian Christology. But was Alcuin right in condemning adoptionism?

Impressed by the original insights of the adoptionists, John Cavadini has recently rehabilitated this Spanish Christology, calling it "the last Christology of the West."[3] Apparently in Spain an (under)current of western Christological ideas existed which was not influenced by the orthodox position until it became confronted by Alcuin. Cavadini saw this current as a legitimate offshoot of the North African theological tradition, which included Augustine. Why then did it lead to controversy?

The adoptionist controversy started when Elipandus, archbishop of Toledo since 754 CE and Primate of all Spain, spread the view that Jesus was the "adoptive" Son of God. Elipandus' first adoptionist statements seem to have been brought on by a trinitarian dispute with a certain Migetius in the 780s which involved Migetius' view of a relation between the divine *personae* in the Trinity and the historical persons David, Jesus, and Paul. According to Elipandus Migetius held that the corporeal persons David, Jesus, and Paul existed in the Trinity (*tres personas corporeas in divinitate*). This would seem to indicate that all persons of the Trinity had become assumed there through an extension of the Christological paradigm. Following Augustine, Elipandus responded that the second person of the Trinity was not the "person assumed from the virgin" in Jesus, but the one "born from the Father without beginning." Remaining loyal to a one-person Christology, he also avoided the pitfall of Nestorianism, by which Christ was seen as only a human being and thus there would have to be two persons in Christ, one by nature and one by adoption.

When Elipandus was criticized by Beatus of Liebana, the abbot of an Asturian monastery under Moorish control, he began to formulate his adoptionist position in clearer terms. The central difficulty with it lies in the understanding of the term *adoptivus*. For Elipandus, Christ's "adoptive" Sonship meant neither that he had been adopted by God the Father, which would amount to Arianism, nor that he had adopted a human body, as a stronger variant of Christ's assuming flesh. What Elipandus had wanted to say was that, by assuming flesh or body, the Word or Son of God became the first-born in adoption and grace. His reference to adoption functioned as a kind of exegetical elaboration of the self-emptying of Christ in Philippians 2:7, according to which the Son of God took the form of a slave and was made in the likeness of men.

In its Spanish version, then, the debate centered on Christ's human being who was assumed, specifically on the question whether or not he was *adoptivus*. Although Beatus opposed Elipandus, it seems the Christological position of these two Spanish thinkers was part of an integral Western theological development. Its origin may well be the *homo assumptus* Christology found in Augustine's *Encheiridion*, where he uses Philippians 2 to describe the Incarnation in paradoxical terms.

By the late eighth century, however, the debate moved to Urgel in the non-Muslim north, as Elipandus sought help from its bishop Felix to suppress the heresy of Beatus. Felix may have been interested in this Toledan Christology as a way to resist Carolingian control of the Spanish March and maintain at least some ecclesiastical independence. But he soon fell victim to the fierce anti-adoptionist campaign orchestrated by Rome and the Carolingians. While Pope Hadrian I was the first to equate Felix's teaching with Nestorianism, his major charge against

Elipandus' adoptionism was that it alienated the Son from the Father. By stressing the self-emptying of the Word, as Elipandus did, this alienating effect was only increased. When Alcuin became involved, he followed directly in Hadrian's footsteps, as they both judged Elipandus and Felix from an Eastern Christological perspective. Alcuin went even further than Hadrian by suggesting that, as a human being, Christ was a servant who was adopted into Sonship. It thus appears as if the conflict between Hadrian and Alcuin on the one hand and Elipandus and Felix on the other was a conflict between two different theological settings: the paradoxical Christology of the God-Man in the West and the (theo)logical analyses of Christ's two natures in the Eastern Christological debates between Cyrillus and Nestorius. When attacking Felix, Alcuin contented himself with faulting him for his inconsistency, in the same way as Nestorius had once been attacked.

After a first condemnation at the council of Regensburg in 792, Felix and Elipandus were condemned at the synod of Frankfurt in 794. Felix, who was merely guilty by association, was not even deposed until 799, when he took up adoptionism again. Summoned to Aix, he held a lengthy dispute with Alcuin, after which both kept rethinking their views. In accordance with what would soon be standard Carolingian method, Alcuin collected a dossier of patristic references in order to persuade Felix to give up adoptionism. He extensively used a Latin version of the *Acta* of the council of Ephesus (431) for this, which he had found in his home library of St. Martin's monastery in Tours.

For purposes of this chapter it is especially interesting to see how this controversy was both shaped by and shaped Alcuin's own theological views. Born around 730 in England, Alcuin had been persuaded by Charlemagne at a meeting in Padua in 781 to join his court circle of scholars in Aix. He quickly became one of the court's leading figures. His strength was the teaching of the liberal arts, which he saw as foundational for any sound teaching of the orthodox faith. When first faced with adoptionism at the council of Frankfurt in 794, Alcuin simply accepted Hadrian's rejection of it. Even when analyzing the flaws in Elipandus' position at a later time, he still seemed to be fighting Hadrian's view of Elipandus rather than Elipandus himself. For Alcuin the adoptionists considered Christ a man, yet one who was elevated into adoption or grace; hence the charge of Nestorianism. It is only after the face-to-face debate with Felix in Aix in 799 that he elaborated his position by writing seven books against his opponent. His arguments throughout unfold as a simple case of logic, as for him Felix's teaching can only lead to the logical disjunction that Christ's one person is both God and not God at the same time.

For one reading Alcuin from the perspective of the Spanish, his views amount to a simple misreading, as he neglected Felix's interpretation of Philippians 2:6–11. Alcuin could not see Christ as assuming the *forma servi*. While the Spanish focus had been on the unique continuity of substance between the *forma Dei* and the *forma servi*, Alcuin interpreted Christ's self-emptying as a kind of elevation of a man into sonship. Regarding the nature of the union of Christ's two natures as ultimately mysterious, he stressed that it should be recognized to be ineffable.

For one interested in the perspective of the Carolingians, Alcuin's misreading serves as a first example of the creative ways in which Carolingian theologians were to develop their own positions. While Alcuin's objections to adoptionism come out poorly in his books against Felix, they are much clearer in his three books *On the Faith in the Holy and Undivided Trinity*, his final dogmatic work written for Charlemagne in 802. Methodologically this work consists in unacknowledged citations from the Church Fathers, to a degree far exceeding modern plagiarism. Yet at the same time, it lays down a constructive theology of the Trinity, in which the Incarnation holds a central place. Although Alcuin uses Augustine's *On the Trinity*, his focus is not on its famous psychological analogies. Rather than being speculative, this work is meant to instruct teachers and preachers on how to expound orthodox faith. To facilitate their teaching, Alcuin expounds trinitarian doctrine largely in the form of a commentary on the Creed. In this way the doctrine of the Incarnation becomes embedded in the whole of the Catholic faith, of which it is the centerpiece. When expounded correctly, the orthodox faith will bring about a reign of Catholic peace across the Empire, remedying heresy by simply preventing it. Alcuin's view of the Incarnation is that it is a *mirabilis coniunctio* of two natures. While the logic of Christ who became man remains ineffable, its continuous effect is the working of miracles in the world. In Christ God's grace is given out to man so that man, through this same grace, will be forgiven his sins. This conviction lies at the heart of Alcuin's Catholic faith and from it the moral and practical reforms of the Carolingian church seem to follow only naturally.

For the Spanish, the teaching of adoptionism had much to do with proclaiming a continuity of substance between Christ the Son of God and Jesus the Man, its Christology representing a line of development that was Western rather than Chalcedonian. In contrast, Alcuin's theological interest in this matter was not speculative. Accepting Pope Hadrian's criticism of adoptionism, he endorsed this papal view with his own arguments, most of which he borrowed from the Fathers or the *Acta* of the council of Ephesus. Looking to his major work on the Trinity at the end of his life, we find that it looks like a tapestry of patristic citations. Yet its narrative pattern gives us a deeper insight into Alcuin's own Christology. While firmly anchored in Chalcedonian faith, it amounts to a fresh rephrasing of it in a new and more accessible theological language. The result is an exposition of doctrine which runs parallel to the structure of the Creed, as the devotional/theological and the moral/pastoral blend into one. At the heart of Alcuin's faith is the Incarnation as a mystery to be worshiped, reflecting the gift of God's grace to the world.

Thus Alcuin's position gives us a first indication of what Carolingian theology looks like: based on patristic authority, even if at times far-fetched, its doctrinal expositions aim at the sound teaching of the faith. The truth of this faith was reinforced by the Carolingians' claim that only a universal Church could guarantee the *pax catholica*. The tendency to see theological analysis as closely related to the exposition of the faith, a faith which was expressed in the correct worship of the Church, means that the Carolingian discussions were ultimately more about truth as a value by which to live than a proposition to which to assent

Theodulf (750/60–821) and the Iconoclast Controversy: From Divine Son to Human Saints

Of all the Carolingian controversies, the one on images is the most convoluted. This goes back in part to the complex composition history of the *Opus Caroli* (formerly called the *Libri Carolini*) as the document which came to contain the official Carolingian viewpoint on images. Traditionally attributed to Alcuin, this work has been written instead by Theodulf. Born around 750/60, Theodulf had left Spain to join the Carolingian court, where he quickly became one of Charlemagne's favorite advisers. He became abbot of Fleury and bishop of Orléans in 798.

While the controversy can be simply stated – whether or not to worship images – it appears the theological issues that were at stake involved much more than images alone. Concerning the right interpretation of the Fathers, for example, Theodulf seemed to aim at emancipation not just from the Greeks, but also from the Pope. To avoid controversy with the Roman curia, however, he had to exercise extreme care in presenting his position as flowing naturally from the tradition.

The motive behind the Carolingian focus on the tradition was that Charlemagne's iconoclast position differed from both the Byzantine East and the Pope and that only when presented as "traditional" could there have been any hope for its broad acceptance. As the *Opus Caroli* state clearly in IV 28, this synod (Nicaea II) should have called itself universal only "if it had lacked newness of words and had contented itself with the doctrines of the ancient Fathers." From this implicit accusation, it can be deduced that Theodulf himself claimed to do just that.

The controversy itself unfolded as follows. At the second Nicene Council in 787 the Byzantine East had adopted an iconophile position after having been iconoclast before. The Nicene Council was presided over by Empress Irene on behalf of her young son Constantine VI. Although Pope Hadrian I himself was not present, he had sent a letter to the council and was represented by two legates. After the council, the proceedings reached the court of Charlemagne in a poor Latin translation. Outraged at what they read, the king and his court theologians drew up a quick reply against the Greeks, the so-called *Capitulare adversus synodum*, which was brought to Rome in 792 CE. Meanwhile Theodulf had set out to expand on the *Capitulare*, in an endeavor to bolster the Carolingian position with further evidence from the Church Fathers. Being associated with the Council, however, the Pope was unwilling to condemn its outcome. When he informed the Carolingians, Theodulf carefully re-edited the expanded document, removing references to Hadrian's letter to Nicaea. As they could not present the *Opus Caroli* to the Pope, the Carolingians stored the manuscript in the royal archives.

Leaving the political and cultural ramifications of this controversy aside, it is especially impressive to see how Theodulf succeeded in proving the intellectual validity of the Carolingian position, since he had to use all his (philo)logical skills to counter the Byzantine arguments. We have seen how Alcuin drew on the Latin *Acta* of the council of Ephesus to attack Felix. A similar pattern is found in the *Opus Caroli*, whereby it should be noted that Theodulf's own position was even more interwoven with the Fathers than Alcuin's. As his Byzantine opponents had used extensive patristic arguments to defend their iconophile position, Theodulf was not free to select his own sources in defense of his view. He also used the Fathers, many of whom had also been drawn on by the Eastern party, as he contested the Greek interpretation. Only in this oblique way could he put forth the "right," that is, Carolingian view. Thus this controversy was ultimately about much more than images. It was ultimately about the authoritative view of the Fathers, as the Carolingians strove to replace the Byzantine church as the natural heirs of the orthodox faith.

Underneath this confident use of the tradition for purposes of validation, the *Opus Caroli* points to the Franks' remarkable ecclesiological self-awareness and sensitivity, which was based on a set of strong biblical and Christological convictions. Their main objection to the Greek position was that it turned believers away from the Trinitarian God, as the only object worthy of adoration. Moreover, the Greeks wished to substitute lifeless material icons for the saints' real powers. For Theodulf, images were much less worthy than relics, inasmuch as the latter at least were tied to the saints' real bodies. Hence, the adoration of images would lead people into superstition rather than true worship. To underscore this, Theodulf argued that this had always been the position of the universal Church. As it has a living faith, it can resort to the active memory of a living tradition. For Theodulf it was so true that the Church alone can mediate between humanity and God that his ecclesiology borders on the mystical, as he portrayed the Church not just as body of Christ, but as his Bride.

Yet this mystical vision of the Church was not devoid of political motives. If the Church is truly the Bride of Christ, there can be no formal boundaries to her sense of duty. While Theodulf proclaimed the unity of the Western Church as symbolized in the papal see, it is significant that the pope with whom he felt most affinity was not Hadrian, but a past pope of impeccable standing, Gregory I. It is almost as if Theodulf launched on the reputation of Gregory to bypass the authority of Hadrian. While Gregory had tolerated the presence of images in the Church, he had not allowed for their worship, which made his position relatively close to Theodulf's own. Quoting from Gregory's letter, therefore, helped him to neutralize Hadrian's position.

Since a crucial part of the iconoclast controversy concerned the use of the Fathers, it is important to realize that Theodulf became a recognized expert in this strategy. From a letter written by Charlemagne in 798, it appears the king also approached him for patristic evidence in the adoptionist controversy. One of the ways in which Theodulf got the Fathers on his side was by making a careful distinction between the so-called *res Christianorum*, by which he indicated the correct Carolingian middle position on images, with the *ordo testimoniorum*, i.e., a correct line-up of authorities. It remains unclear which came first for Theodulf: the Carolingian position on images or the view that the different Fathers should form one authoritative chain. Deftly molding his evidence, Theodulf was able to

craft a case from the Bible and the Fathers in such a way that their combined authority underscored the position of the Carolingians themselves.

Theodulf frequently claimed support from the entire universal tradition of the Church, even though the evidence of Scripture for this erudite biblical scholar still outweighed the patristic tradition. At the same time, the patristic tradition hardly represented a single viewpoint. To use his sources responsibly, Theodulf employed a multilayered strategy. He sometimes called on the entire tradition of the Fathers as a well-rounded whole, preceded by Scripture and continued by the various councils, whereas at other times he contested the authenticity of certain patristic writings used by the Greeks. For this he called again on the authority of a past pope, in this case Gelasius, the presumed author of a list of authorized patristic writings, the so-called *De libris recipiendis et non recipiendis*. When necessary, Theodulf dispensed with the *ordo testimoniorum* altogether. When the Pope faulted Charlemagne for his failure to adhere to chronological order, as he had claimed that the entire apostolic tradition supported Gregory's testimony, the *Opus Caroli* simply left out all patristic support. After all, the *res Christianorum* was also embodied in the Carolingian church who, in her capacity as Bride, was headed not by any reigning pope but by Christ himself.

The point of convergence for the different strands of the iconoclast controversy, such as the notion of the tradition as a preconceived whole, or a universal Carolingian Church seen as the Bride of Christ, is again Christology. The question on images broadens ultimately into one about the power of representation. Whereas the Greeks saw no harm in the presence of icons in the church, as a way for the saint to communicate his power to all those present, Theodulf found this unacceptable. While the first of his objections may well seem the most mundane, it went right to the Christological heart of the controversy. In Theodulf's view, if one failed to make a difference between image and original, i.e., a true saint and his icon, churches would engage in material competition. Would one not try make the images as costly as possible so as to increase the salvific power of the saint in question? Yet his gravest concern was not the costliness, but the morally disruptive and divisive effect of this competition on the unity of the church.

Theodulf claimed that only humanity was created in the image of God, and that further representations were unnecessary. Since humanity's role as "live" representation of the divine was compromised through Adam's Fall, it had to be renewed through the Incarnation of the Word. In Jesus Christ, the Son of God restored humanity's role of *imago Dei*. Since in Christ God had bridged the gap between himself and humanity through love, it is through Christ that God should be worshiped. Material symbols, then, ought not to mislead us through their false semblance, as they detract from Christ's role. This explains the significance of the Cross for the Carolingians, as it represents Christ's power without compromising the inimitable efficacy of his death and resurrection (cf. II.28).

Theodulf rejected the equation of icons with the body and blood of Christ at the Eucharist. Both Christ's body and his blood received in the sacrament, and the believers' faith and confession in the heart, are more true than icons, because they are filled with the truth of Christ himself. Just as the event of the Incarnation collapsed the Old into the New Testament, so it also united the historical tradition of the Fathers with the present situation of the Carolingian Church, who is Christ's Bride. As for this tradition, to underscore its venerability and reliability alike, it had been stored in books and not in images. Just as Moses wrote down the law and did not paint it, so Jesus wrote rather than drew with his finger in the sand.

Theodulf's Christology naturally implied a view of the Trinity as well. In Book III.3 en III.8 as in his *On the Procession of the Spirit* Theodulf advocated the so-called *filioque*, which the Greeks considered a nontraditional Western innovation to the Creed. While Greek authors like Basil of Ancyra and Constantine of Cyprus were able to integrate their adoration of the Trinity with their adoration of images, Theodulf argued that in doing so they overstepped the boundaries separating creatures from their creator. Christ alone is able to bridge this gap, which is symbolized in the *Opus Caroli*'s joint embrace of the *Filioque* and the cross. Recognizing how acceptance of these two is crucial for the unity of a true and universal Church, Theodulf seems to have written his *Opus Caroli* in fact as a long methodological preamble to a Carolingian ecclesiology which has its basis in a reconstructed anthropology. For him, sound faith does not just restore humans to their original role as image of God, but it unites them through Christ in the universal Church. Elevated through grace, this Church which is constituted of sinful humans can yet mystically serve as Bride of Christ.

The Eucharistic Controversy: Radbertus and Ratramnus on the Meaning of Sacrament

It is again the interrelation between Christology and ecclesiology which constitutes the general framework of the debate on the eucharist. Within this framework the different interpretations of Radbertus and Ratramnus each have their rightful place. We shall start again with a short historical survey.

Paschasius Radbertus, who was head of the monastic school at Corbie, was asked by his student Warin, abbot of Corbie's daughter monastery of Corvey in Saxony, to send instructions for his monks on the eucharist. He composed his book *On the Lord's Body and Blood* in 831–3. In early 843, King Charles the Bald came to Corbie for prayer and found himself impressed by the monk Ratramnus. As Radbertus had not supported Charles for the throne, he may have avoided his company. Charles asked Ratramnus a specific question, namely "whether the body and blood of Christ, which the faithful at church receive in their mouth, are present there in mystery or in truth." Ratramnus answered by writing his own *De corpore et sanguine Domini*.

Shortly after Radbertus became abbot of Corbie, he decided to send a revised copy of his book to Charles in an effort to placate him. Meanwhile, Ratramnus had succeeded him as head of the monastic school. As suggested by Ratramnus' modern biographer Jean-Paul Bouhot, the eucharistic "controversy" may well have its roots in the succession of these masters, as their students started comparing teaching styles.

Yet a real controversy never erupted. Although it can be deduced from later correspondence between Radbertus and his former pupil Fredugard that the master had a rather flexible way of arranging his patristic sources, his orthodoxy was never questioned. Only in the tenth century did Heriger of Lobbes observe a discrepancy between their positions which he connected with their following of different authorities. Hence Radbertus came to be seen as Ambrosian and Ratramnus as Augustinian. But it was not until the Reformation, when protestants opposed the Roman Catholic dogma of transubstantiation, that Ratramnus' position was taken up as representing the true Augustinian, i.e., "spiritual" position on the eucharist. Naturally they rejected Radbertus' position. Only during the Reformation, then, did this early medieval debate become a real controversy. But by then religious debate had become interchangable with confessional polemics.

When we return to the Carolingian context, however, all we know is that these two monks had different ways of interpreting the Eucharist. In addition to stressing the importance of this sacrament, the divergence of their positions typically reflects the outburst of creative study in the so-called Carolingian renaissance. Of course, ecclesiastical conflicts did arise under Charles the Bald as well, as is clear from the predestination controversy, but that was not quite the case here.

While the different ways in which Radbertus and Ratramnus used the Fathers may reflect the standard method of Carolingian controversy, it points to a deeper difference in theological hermeneutics as well. We shall use their different approaches to the tradition as a way to assess the deeper Christological and ecclesiological aspects of their sacramental views.

It appears the celebration of the Mass became ever more central to the theology of the early Middle Ages, which itself was typically developed in monastic circles. Rather than separating Christians from the outside world, as baptism did, the Eucharist aimed at centering the Christian community. Even though monks initially were lay persons, due to the various Carolingian reforms the monasteries had rapidly gained prestige as the Christian communities *par excellence*. Hence it may not have been surprising that Ratramnus was asked by the king for advice on such an important matter as the Eucharist.

When we compare the methods of these two theologians, Radbertus' way of integrating patristic arguments into his work represents an older and less scholarly way of monastic reflection, which was both more meditative and more spontaneous. Underlying and preceding their methodological difference, however, was a very different view of the Eucharistic sacrament as *mysterium*. For Radbertus, its most important aspect was the creation of new life, as it inaugurates a kind of incarnation for the church. Through the losing of his own life, Christ gave birth to the church. By reenacting this, the priestly actions at the altar signify a mystery of such profundity that this sacrament encompasses truth and figure at the same time. The density of images and ideas that became jumbled together in Radbertus' "centering" interpretation of the Eucharist had a parallel in the impressionistic way in which he used the Fathers. He felt free to arrange them poetically, as if to match the tide of his reasoning. Rejecting any particular hierarchy, he seemed oblivious to the accusation that his sources might not be authentic and hence, his use of them inaccurate. Could he not always find another source?

Of his predominantly Latin sources, Ambrose had pride of place. Radbertus clearly felt comfortable with Ambrose's imagery, which was incarnational and eschatological alike. From Ambrose's *De mysteriis* he derived the notion of the Eucharist as a miracle defying the order of nature. Yet where Ambrose saw the Eucharist as a follow-up to baptism, Radbertus saw the host as a *viaticum* for him and his monks, a divinely made provision for their lifelong pilgrimage. As the connection with baptism faded into the background, the monks' life-journey came to foreshadow the impending passage from this life to the next, a *transitus* which would bring salvation not just to monks but to all believers.

In contrast, Ratramnus had a much crisper method in wishing to separate out his biblical and patristic evidence from his own interpretation. He thereby showed himself to be dependent on his sources as well, basing his own position explicitly on evidence culled from both. His specific aim was to trace the so-called *vestigia sanctorum patrum*. Through the words of the Fathers he could ultimately trace the source of their inspiration back to the Bible, especially the gospel. When Ratramnus settled on Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* III.16.55 as his central authority in chapter 33, he appears to have done so mainly because Augustine had based his interpretation on a quotation from Christ in John 6:53. Augustine saw Christ's commanding words about the eating of the flesh and the drinking of the blood as *figurata locutio*, so as to avoid the charge of Capharnaism for partakers of the sacrament. When Ratramnus adopted Augustine's position, however, the effect was that he underscored the difference between the *verba Christi* on the one hand, to which one might add the Fathers, and the *veritas rei* on the other, i.e., Christ's sacrifice itself.

Being much less invested in the Eucharist as a living sacrament, Ratramnus wanted to validate the sacrament through the correct use of patristic and biblical authority. He differed from his predecessor not so much on the centrality of the sacrament as on the need to articulate its meaning based on a linear arrangement of the Fathers' written testimony. In consequence, his way of teaching was much more formal and scripted. More than the spiritual nature of Augustine's interpretation (*figurata locutio*), it was Augustine's choice to prioritize Christ's *words* in the gospel in articulating the meaning of his sacrifice that appealed to Ratramnus. Only in this way could the difference between the sacrament as *figura* and the *veritas rei* of the sacrament be properly maintained.

Although Radbertus considered the sacrament a mystery because it encompassed both figure and truth, he ultimately came to see it as a miracle uniting both. In his revised treatise he added numerous miracles from the *Vitae Patrum*, as they underscored the efficacious power of the sacrament. If the words of institution as well as the priestly actions at the altar were done according to Church rite, the believer consumed alongside the host also its healing power. Word, deed, and effect cannot be separated in what thus constitutes a mystery of a deeply performative quality. For Radbertus, the new life given by the sacrament adds to the quality of the Church as the body of Christ, as the believers literally

become *concorporated* with Christ. Remarkably enough, however, in chapter 4 he also seems to point ahead to the later *extra-Calvinisticum*, by which Christ is physically present in heaven while spiritually present at the altar. Apparently, Radbertus regarded the power of the Eucharist as so all-pervasive that even after Christ had ascended to open the gates of heaven, he could still be present at the altar. Just as truth and figure contract to the mystery of the Eucharist, so Christology and ecclesiology contract to the symbolic but powerful community of the monks, the *locus* of holiness in the Carolingian world.

In the end, two different ecclesiological pictures emerge. For Radbertus the Eucharist was a self-enclosed sacrament, comparable to the closed monastic community in which he lived. While believers would share in its salvific power, for monastic theologians as believers *par excellence* the challenge was to try and "unpack" it, so as to savor all the different shades of meaning it could adopt. This explains the meditative and intimate way in which he used the Fathers. He selected the authors of his choice and cited them in the way he preferred, yet he considered his choices to be neither exhaustive nor exclusive. Given the centripetal effect of the Eucharist as uniting the community, he did not worry about a fracturing of the tradition. Christ himself guaranteed the unity of the Christian community as well as of its tradition, being the pulsating heart of both.

For Ratramnus, an essential difference separated the *veritas rei* of Christ's sacrifice from its reenactment at the altar. As a result the role of faith became increasingly important, as the community should approach the sacrament with due reverence. This sense of revering distance also characterized his use of the Fathers. From permanent peers, they became elevated authorities whose opinions should be carefully weighed and selected. Thus we notice a first crack in the serenity of the monastic sphere. For when monastic meditation becomes misunderstood, there arises the need for a procedure of extrinsic validation whose rules are no longer co-extensive with those regulating monastic life itself. Although it would still be a long time until the Reformation, one begins to see why Ratramnus' approach could gain appeal over time, while Radbertus' devotional approach faded away with the demise of monastic spirituality itself.

Eriugena (810–77) and the Predestination Controversy: The Balance between Grace and Free Will

The final controversy in the context of this chapter is somehow also the most erratic. Among numerous others, it involved two of the most original minds of the entire Carolingian era, namely Gottschalk of Orbais and Johannes Scottus Eriugena. For the latter, however, the controversy in which he became involved was not one which he had sought himself. As we know very little of Eriugena's early life, other than that he was born in Ireland as suggested by his name, and taught at the palace school of Charles the Bald, the importance of this controversy is that it marked his first public appearance. Archbishop Hincmar of Reims had requested that Eriugena be invited to give his opinion on the issue of predestination. As it turned out, it was to be both his first and his last try at theological combat.

This was long after Gottschalk, a monk at Orbais, had not only spread the notion of a so-called double predestination (*gemina praedestinatio*) but, adding insult to injury, had also claimed that this view represented the true Augustinian position. The way in which the controversy was played out between Gottschalk and Eriugena reflects the wider predestination debate only indirectly. In this wider debate one finds all the ingredients of a typical Carolingian controversy, as a substantial theological question became coupled with an argument about the meaning of tradition. The theological question at hand, i.e. predestination, touched again on the nature of the church, yet in this case ecclesiology did not become linked to Christology, but rather to soteriology and anthropology. In the final analysis, this was a debate about the meaning and scope of the divine will; it focused especially on whether God dispenses grace and salvation to all or just a part of humanity.

Instead of following the debate in some detail, as we did before, our focus here is on the interference of Eriugena, as he was no doubt the most brilliant philosophical and theological mind of the Carolingian era. Yet because of the erratic, even artificial nature of the controversy between him and Gottschalk, some historical background is necessary, as they were not the debate's natural opponents. Gottschalk was a monk who had been given to the monastery of Fulda as an oblate. After reaching the age of maturity, he wished to leave the monastery, as he considered monasticism a human institution. Yet Abbot Hrabanus Maurus, who may not have liked to see his astute young pupil leave, tried to dissuade him through unfair means by accusing him of heresy. When the synod of Mainz allowed Gottschalk to leave, he went on to Orbais and Corbie. In 845–6 he could be found at the court of Count Eberhard of Friuli. After returning to the north, his teaching was condemned at the synod of Mainz in 848. Hrabanus, by now archbishop, sent Gottschalk back to Hincmar of Reims with a letter detailing the charge of double predestination, by which it was implied that God had selected not just those he wanted to save, which was the Church's position, but also those he wished to condemn. In the latter case, abstaining from sin and obeying the Church could not alter one's fate. Charles the Bald condemned Gottschalk in 849 at Quierzy and his writings were burnt, while he himself was imprisoned at Hautvillers. Far from being isolated, Gottschalk kept up correspondence and was supported both at Orbais and Corbie.

Although one can see the theological danger implied by Gottschalk's view of a double predestination, his aim was not to undermine the church, but rather to underscore its need for an active missionary policy. This explains Gottschalk's own missionary journeys and his preaching of baptism to peoples at the edge of Carolingian society. At the heart of the ecclesiastical conflict that ensued, therefore, there may well have been a difference between the interest in ecclesiastical power and politics of some, notably Hincmar of Reims and Hrabanus Maurus, and the evangelizing activities of the more outward-looking Gottschalk.

After his initial treatise *Ad reclusos et simplices*, in which he warned against Gottschalk's views, Hincmar of Rheims was to restate his own position on

predestination twice. Various other parties became involved as well, among whom were Florus of Lyons and Prudentius of Troyes. Ratramnus of Corbie was asked by Charles the Bald to procure a dossier of patristic references, in which he supported Gottschalk. The debate had gone on for almost a decade until Eriugena published his *On Divine Predestination* in 851. His intervention was rather unusual, as it touched on the actual subject-matter of the debate only obliquely. Eriugena simply used the occasion to kill two birds with one stone: by unfolding his own views, he condemned Gottschalk's position. Although Hincmar and his allies dismissed Eriugena's intervention as inaccurate, one wonders whether it was much different from the way Theodulf had judged the Greeks on the matter of iconoclasm. It may well signal the end of the Carolingian renaissance that this intervention could form a serious threat to Eriugena's career, as in the end his treatise literally pleased nobody. It was only through the protection of Charles the Bald that he could he pursue his teaching and research activities, culminating in his massive dialogue, the *Periphyseon*.

While Gottschalk was truly interested in exploring the issue of double predestination which he considered Augustinian, and Hincmar and his allies were truly interested in proving the adequacy of single predestination, it seemed the agenda of neither party held much attraction for Eriugena. In this sense, the predestination conflict, while comparable to previous ones, is yet more complicated, as for Eriugena the topic provided the occasion rather than the subject of the debate.

Hincmar had asked Eriugena to refute Gottschalk's thesis that God's predestination is double (*gemina est praedestinatio*), namely of the elect to eternal rest and of the reprobate to death. His underlying request to Eriugena was thus to disprove Gottschalk's claim that this was in accordance with Augustine's views. When asked this question before, both Ratramnus of Corbie and Prudentius of Troyes had answered in the affirmative. To them Gottschalk indeed seemed to tread on solid Augustinian ground.

Perhaps for this reason, or maybe simply because he was of a different stature from most of his peers, Eriugena did not proceed in the usual Carolingian way, setting off one quotation or interpretation of Augustine against another. Instead, his approach was to elevate the discussion to a higher theoretical plane. In fact, he raised it to the highest plane of all, i.e., God. According to Eriugena, predestination and prescience did not make a difference, as far as God's nature was concerned. It is from the perspective of God's nature, then, that Eriugena wanted to perceive and analyze all things, as this would give a "substantial" rather than a "relative" view. Seen in this way, predestination could not be double, because God's nature itself is one. In the same way, it is true that the double command for humans to love, which implies love of God as well as love of neighbor, can yet have its root in God's undivided Love.

By elevating the entire discussion on grace and free will to the level of God's nature, Eriugena seemed to endorse the idea of a single predestination. Yet he did so in quite a different way from the way Hincmar might have wished when he first asked him to refute Gottschalk. For Eriugena was to regard predestination not as single, in the sense of "opposed to double," but rather as one and simul-

thereby transcending Gottschalk's view of an *opus bipertitum* altogether. While Eriugena recognized a difference within God's predestination, this was not the same as a division. For God chooses actively to give beatitude to some, while he merely permits others to attain damnation on account of their own sinful pride.

More important than the content of Eriugena's refutation of Gottschalk, however, was his method, or rather, the way in which he managed to unite content and method in his treatise. By wishing to transcend any doubleness in God, it seemed Eriugena ultimately desired to unify all methods by which one can try to know God. This explains his famous teaching in chapter 1 that true philosophy is true religion and vice versa. For him, there is no real difference between the divine authority of codified revelation found in the biblical text and/or the Church Fathers, and the reasoning process through which this revelation is scrutinized by the human mind. It should thus not come as a surprise that Eriugena did not distinguish between God's existence, his necessity, his being, and his will, as they are ultimately all the same, namely God. Eriugena vehemently rejected any and all idea of necessity seen as an extrinsic principle by which God could in any way be compelled. For him, God's being simply is (identical with) his will and his necessity.

This principle of a continuous divine identity underlies all Eriugena's thinking about predestination. In this way God's prescience could thus seamlessly transmute into his predestination for Eriugena. After all, God's nature is undivided and substantive. When in the Preface to *On Divine Predestination* Eriugena emphasized how the things that are not, cannot be known or foreknown by God, he did so not because he saw God's prescience as somehow deficient, but because he recognized that God is substantive. Since every substance must be in something, it simply cannot be in nothing.

Having considered divine predestination extensively from the perspective of God's one and undivided substance, Eriugena also explored it from the aspect of humanity, as he analyzed human free will. His view of humanity's substance mirrors his view of the divine substance, of which it is after all the image. In humanity, therefore, to will, to be, and to know are also essentially one. Quoting extensively from Augustine's *On Free Will*, Eriugena maintained that humans have a free choice of the will (*liberum arbitrium voluntatis*) even after Adam's sin but that, as is the case with every good thing, they can choose to make bad use of it.

Finally, what was perhaps most novel and important in Eriugena's way of reasoning was his introduction and intensive use of rhetorical strategies. Thus he demonstrated how the terms predestination and prescience could be applied to God only by transference from the level of creation to the level of the creator. This transference may be carried out on the basis of a likeness with God, as when we say that humans are made in the image of God who rules his creation through grace, or by contrariety to God, as when we say that God predestines some to evil. Through *enthymema* this merely indicates how their human wills can do evil. It is the rhetorical strategy of *enthymema* which Eriugena used to great effect in his attempt to counter Gottschalk's interpretations of Augustine. For Eriugena, where Augustine speaks about a negative predestination, Gottschalk simply fails

literal a reading of Augustine which amounts in fact to a misreading. Even when some people seem predestined to evil, Eriugena holds that one can legitimately conclude only that God has foreknown their evils, but not that he has actively predestined them.

Towards the end of his treatise it appears Eriugena foreshadowed Anselm's reasoning in *Why God Became Man* by arguing on the basis of a preconceived order of nature with an inherent law of justice which encompasses both the human and the divine. Inside this order God has put clear boundaries to all creatures, including the malice of the impious which is not allowed to stretch into infinity. In order to teach humanity to abide by those same boundaries but also to curb this malice, God ultimately sent his Son to liberate humanity. It is here in chapter 18 that the issue of Christology comes in for Eriugena.

As we said above, however, Hincmar was not pleased with Eriugena's treatise and neither was anybody else. While this may reflect the more combative atmosphere of ninth-century polemics, of which Gottschalk was an even more serious victim, it also reflects the idiosyncrasy of Eriugena's own unique reasoning talent which transcended the genre of controversy altogether. Although he can be faulted for not giving a fair share to Gottschalk's views, he opened up an entirely new genre of theological reasoning, which through the use of dialectic was to strive for internal coherence more than polemical success. After Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, which remained largely unread during his own lifetime, we will have to wait until Anselm before a similarly independent and self-sufficient brilliance is found. With the writings and reasoning of Eriugena, therefore, the Carolingian era appears to have reached both its climax and its end.

Conclusion: Consensus Through Controversy

At the end of this chapter it is useful, if challenging, to ask what common themes we can find in the various controversies that justify our subsuming them under the heading of "Carolingian theology." While it was not our intention here to unfold what might be called "true Carolingian doctrine," there is enough commonality in the way the various controversies are framed in this period for it to be possible to observe a theological consensus at least on some points.

First of all, what all the participants in the four controversies which we discussed had in common was their *method*. The method they universally adopted was to proceed through citations from the Fathers. They did so often in ways which would have to be judged unacceptable by modern standards, quoting the words from the Fathers as if they were their own. Yet for Carolingian authors, this was a tribute to the Fathers rather than an illegal appropriation of texts that were not theirs. It is precisely because they reasoned from an assumed continuity with the patristic tradition that they were able to proceed in this informal and intimate way. At the same time, we also see the innocent use of the Fathers being questioned and a more formal attribution of sources beginning to replace it, as in the eucharistic controversy between Radbertus and Ratramnus.

In terms of *theological content*, it is rather more difficult to find what the various controversies precisely have in common. One way of putting it is to say that all of them involved the *relation between Christology and ecclesiology*.

The adoptionist controversy was most outspoken on this point, as the problem of divine Sonship defined the debate throughout. For Alcuin, belief in the incarnation as the mysterious connection between human and divine enabled humans to share in Christ's grace, uniting them as sinners in the church that is his body. Alcuin's ecclesiological view was as practical as his Christology was mystical, as it is precisely respect for the incarnation as a mystery that allows for worship.

The nature of this worship is what was at the heart of Theodulf's concerns in his *Opus Caroli*. Worship belongs to God and not to the images of saints. Humans themselves are *imagines dei* and hence worthier than any icons. Whereas through sin this image-character of humanity became polluted, it is cleansed through Christ's sacrifice, as he is the *imago dei* par excellence. Worship should therefore use only the symbol of the cross, to acknowledge the dependence of all Christians on their Savior. The awareness of this dependence leads to an intimacy by which the Church is not just seen as the body of Christ, but as his Bride. Because of its bridal character, in the eyes of the Carolingian research team that worked on the *Opus Caroli* the Western Church was much closer to Christ than the Byzantine East.

Christ's sacrifice was the subject-matter of the eucharistic debate between Radbertus and Ratramnus. The centrality of the sacrament being undisputed, the difference between them was more on the level of ecclesiology than of Christology. The question that arose for them is to what extent one can still recapture this sacrifice and how to assess its ultimate meaning for the church during the interval between Christ's ascension and his eschatological *parousia*. While for Radbertus the salvific effect of Christ's sacrifice, which gave life to the Church once, remains tangible in the mystery on the altar, renewing this life with every breaking of the bread, Ratramnus seemed more hesitant in linking the gospel words about Christ's sacrifice directly to the sacrament. Following Augustine, he favored a figurative interpretation of the sacramental mystery. Thus he allowed the Eucharistic sacrament to protect its life-giving and recreating power.

Finally, the life-giving element of divine grace was at the heart of the conflict on predestination between Gottschalk and Eriugena. Here the connection between Christology and ecclesiology contracts to soteriology, as the central question here dealt with the freedom of the human will. While Gottschalk, who like Ratramnus faithfully but literally followed Augustine, held to a double predestination, i.e., of those who God wanted to give life and of those he condemned to eternal damnation, for Eriugena this was not acceptable. The reason is not that he held to a single predestination, as Hincmar did, but that predestination can only be one and simple, as it coincides with God's being, his knowing, and his willing. While Eriugena did not elaborate on his ecclesiological position, it may be assumed that he accepted the authority of the church. Even so, for him this authority paled before the divine justice with which God saves some, but permits others to squander their birthright of *imago dei*. Just as God, humans are free to choose, even despite sin, and not even God forbids them to forgo their salvation.

Notes

1 See E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1–14 ("Introduction: Inventing Traditions").

2 See K. Morrison, *The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

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Part 3

A Medieval "Renaissance"?