

JOCUND RULE, FECUND NATURE

THIS CHAPTER TURNS to the ways Carolingian authors framed Adamic kingship not only as a matter of correct conduct or theological rectitude, but as a visible and experiential condition, legible in the prosperity of the land and the joy of its people. Through prayers, poems, and letters, advisers like Alcuin and Theodulf articulated a vision of rule in which the flourishing of creation—fertile fields, balanced seasons, and well-ordered churches—served as signs of divine favour, while famine, decay, or neglect betrayed royal failure. The chapter traces the consolidation of this discourse around the language of *felicitas*, or happiness, which provided the Carolingians with a flexible vocabulary to link emotion, environment, and authority. Courtier-theologians like Alcuin, Theodulf, and others were stakeholders in the “Carolingian division of responsibilities,” encouraged to give and solicit advice in “an almost continuous debate...between the court and the ruler, and between centre and periphery.” The ways such thinkers consciously fit themselves into the “matrix formed by the intersecting concepts of... Church and empire” shaped their debates on how to better the lives of all the realm’s inhabitants, including their sovereign’s.¹ By following Alcuin and his contemporaries, we see how the “happy kingdoms” of the Carolingian imagination were constructed as both promise and warning: a grammar of kingship that defined the sovereign’s role as steward of an imperial garden whose health reflected his justice and whose ruin exposed his sins.

When Carolingian kings attained their office, clergy conducted an accession liturgy in their honour, seeking the blessing of God on the new ruler and the whole realm. The early ninth-century Sacramentaries of Angoulême and of Tours both include a specific prayer invoked as a blessing formula to accompany the anointing of the king, a practice which began with Charlemagne’s father Pepin and recalled the Old Testament example of Samuel anointing the king David.² The prayer takes its name from the first word in the text, *Prospice* (Look down):

1 Kramer, *Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire*, 43–44, 216.

2 Bouman, *Sacring and Crowning*, 91; Nelson, “Kingship and Empire in the Carolingian World,” 54–55.

Look down, Omnipotent God, with serene eyes on this most glorious king. As Thou didst bless Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so deign to irrigate and bathe him by Thy potency with abundant blessings of spiritual grace with all its fullness. Grant him from the dew of heaven and the fatness of earth abundance of corn, wine and oil and a wealth of all fruits from the generous store of divine gifts, through long years; so that, while he is reigning, there may be healthiness of bodies in the fatherland, and peace may be unbroken in the realm, and the glorious dignity of the royal palace may shine before the eyes of all with the greatest splendour of royal power and be seen to be glittering and bright as if filled with the utmost splendour by the greatest light. Grant him Omnipotent God, to be a most mighty protector of the fatherland, and a comforter of churches and holy monasteries with the greatest piety of royal munificence, and to be the mightiest of kings, triumphing over his enemies so as to crush rebels and heal nations; and may he be very terrible to his enemies with the utmost strength of royal potency. Also may he be generous and loveable and pious to the magnates and the outstanding leaders and the faithful men of his realm, that he may be feared and loved by all. Also may kings come forth from his loins through successions of future times to rule this whole realm. And after glorious and happy times (*tempora...felicia*) in this present life, may he be worthy to have eternal joys in perpetual blessedness.³

Prospice charged the king to actively practise good rule and, in many ways, articulates an inversion of pseudo-Cyprian's *rex iniquus*. That text had warned the king against bad conduct because of the consequences: discord, disruptions in familial succession, illness and famine among the

3 "Prospice omnipotens Deus serenis obtutibus hunc gloriosum regem illum, sicut benedixisti Abraham Isaac et Iacob; quibus illum largis benedictionibus spiritualis gratiae cum omni plenitudine tua potentia inrigare atque perfundere digneris. Ut tribuas ei de rore caeli et de pinguedine terrae habundantiam frumenti vini et olei et omnium frugum opulentiam ex largitate divini muneris longa per tempora. Ut illo regnante sit sanitas corporum in patria et pax inviolata in regno. Et dignitas gloriosa regalis palatii maximo splendore regiae potestatis oculis omnium luce clarissima coruscare atque splendore quasi splendidissima fulgora maximo perfusa lumina videantur. Tribue ei, omnipotens Deus, ut sit fortissimus protector patriae et consolatur ecclesiarum atque cenobiorum sanctorum maxima cum peitate regalis munificentiae. Atque ut sit fortissimus regum, triumphator hostium ad opprimendos rebelles et paganas nationes. Sitque suis inimicis satis terribilis proxima fortitudine regalis potentiae; obtinuit quoque atque procelsis proceribusque ac fidelibus sui regni sit munificus et amabilis et pius, ut ab omnibus timeatur atque diligatur. Reges quoque de lumbis eius per successiones temporum futurorum egrediantur regnum regere Francorum. Et post gloriosa tempora atque felicia praesentis vitae gaudia sempiterna in perpetua beatitudine habere mereatur. Quod." *Prospice*, Sacramentary of Angoulême, fol. 130, published in Bouman, *Sacring and Crowning*, 91. Translation by Nelson, "Kingship and Empire in the Carolingian World," 58.

people, unproductive land and inclement weather, in addition to sorrows and unhappiness. *Prospice* offered positive encouragement and tangible environmental benefits: a list of dos instead of don'ts.

It is significant that the exhortation concludes by forecasting “happy times” for the king who follows these guidelines, for, by the time the sacramentaries were assembled, the notion of happy rule or happy kingdoms (*felicia regna*) had become constituent in the construction of Carolingian kingship, and therefore stood as a pillar of Carolingian ecological sovereignty. The conjunction of *felicitas* and good rule, however, first coalesced in the later eighth century when the Frankish king's doings became linked with the ecology of the realm. This chapter again follows Alcuin—a principal transmitter of these ideas—as the eighth century became the ninth. But other voices also enter the discussion and are, as we will see, crucial for unravelling the meaning of *felicia regna* and to uncovering some of the ways in which Carolingian kings were instructed in its merits.

Happy Kingdoms

The idea of using Alcuin's letters to trace a phrase or single idea as representative of broader discourses of Charlemagne's era is traditional. Already in the 1950s Luitpold Wallach, the historian and diplomaticist, identified the concept of *stabilitas regni*, which he defined as the “realization of the ruler's moral responsibility toward his subjects, regardless of origin or nationality,” in Alcuin's letters to both English and Frankish kings. Wallach located this phrase among the royal summons issued by Charlemagne, but cautioned against a conflation of the idea between media: a political meaning of “stability of the kingdom” versus a religious idea of *stabilitas* as the “enduring solidity of faith” practised by those who took vows in religious orders.⁴ Nowadays, we recognize that there was no clear dividing line between secular and sacred in Carolingian politics, though there were thorny questions of jurisdiction, and underlying all a shared sense of responsibility for the spiritual safety of the realm. Nevertheless, we should retain the premise undergirding Wallach's basic point that paying attention to the ways that language structures discourse yields an understanding of how the king and those at the royal court imagined the ruler's responsibilities.

Alcuin's letters offer a striking vision of Carolingian rulership as a sacred political order that collapses the boundary between earthly empire

4 Wallach, *Alcuin and Charlemagne*, 62–64.

and divine providence. Sophia Moesch notes that by casting Charlemagne as “new” versions of biblical rulers, Alcuin constructs a typological genealogy that roots his authority in salvation history. He draws heavily on Augustinian language, particularly the concepts of peace and justice but reworks them to suggest that these ideals are not deferred to the eschaton but realized, however imperfectly, in the present Carolingian order. Charlemagne’s reign becomes a city of perpetual peace whose walls are built of virtue and justice, where the *populus Christianus* finds safety under the shadow of divine favour. For Alcuin, the Carolingian state is not merely legitimate but is blessed, chosen, even exceptional.⁵ His letters make clear that the empire’s authority depends not just on martial success or dynastic continuity but on fidelity to Catholic orthodoxy, which alone ensures that its ruler governs as *rector* (leader) and *vindex* (avenger) in accordance with God’s will.

Many historians consider events from the year 799 as a prelude to Charlemagne’s imperial coronation in 800. That event, which Einhard presented as an unanticipated shock, has more recently been reevaluated, and it is suggested that the Frankish king had been “thinking imperially” in the 790s.⁶ The campaign season of 799 saw the complete conquest of Brittany, and in September an exultant Charlemagne hosted Pope Leo III, who had fled Rome after having been attacked and maimed at the instigation of Roman aristocrats, at Paderborn in Saxony. Holding the audience at this locale was a “dramatic symbol” of Frankish power in a region Charlemagne had been trying to subdue his whole life.⁷ As de Jong notes, the Frankish king’s rescue of the pope stabilized that base of religious legitimacy on which a good portion of the Carolingian dynastic claim rested—the assent of the papacy.⁸ And yet the pope’s escape northward, described by Alcuin as the flight of an “eagle” who, lately deserting the heights of the Roman citadel,” came “to drink the springs of the Saxon countryside and to see the lion, dominating over all living things and beasts.”⁹ Alcuin’s vivid description more than hints that Charlemagne (or at least those in his entourage) saw this event as a reorientation of their relationship: from this time onward he, not the pontiff (who was

5 Moesch, *Augustine and the Art of Ruling in the Carolingian Imperial Period*, 86–92.

6 Collins, “Charlemagne’s Imperial Coronation,” 66–68; Davis, *Charlemagne’s Practice of Empire*, 25, 39, 345.

7 Collins, “Charlemagne’s Imperial Coronation,” 64–65; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 51.

8 de Jong, “Charlemagne’s Church,” 117.

9 “Cui crederem, si quid dixisset de aquila? qui, nuper Romanae arcis deserens cacumina, ut biberet Saxonici ruris fontes et videret leonem, cunctis dominantem animantibus et feris.” Alcuin, *Ep. 181*, ed. Dümmler, p. 299, lines 7–9.

actually named Leo, Latin for “lion”), was the metaphorical apex predator and principal partner in their political relationship.

In the later 790s, at the same time as Charlemagne widened his imperial ambitions, Alcuin’s correspondence began to incorporate more consistently the Frankish sovereign into his vision of happy rule. After March 799, Alcuin wrote to Charlemagne in response to philosophical and natural questions, likening Aachen to a “new Athens” which “may perhaps be created in Francia, indeed, a far finer one” than its ancient namesake.¹⁰ This reference to the seat of ancient knowledge and wisdom may reflect, as Bullough has suggested, his dissatisfaction with the direction that court scholarship had taken during his absence from it (beginning in 796) while abbot at Tours. In any case, it is clear that in the last years of the eighth century, Alcuin had resumed his duties as author of much of Charlemagne’s diplomatic correspondence, responsible also for instructing the king himself.¹¹ In that same letter, Alcuin heralded the arrival of “joyful times (*felicia...tempora*) for the Christian people in the exaltation of [Charlemagne’s] happiness (*felicetatis*).”¹² In this statement, Alcuin does not warn or exhort, he acclaims Charlemagne as the embodiment of the *rex aequus* (just king), whose actions have produced happiness and therefore prosperity, presumably including the environmental benefits the Yorkish cleric had written about previously.

Recall here the late eighth-century transmission of these ideas to the Continent. Insular scholar Cathwulf had warned Charlemagne about the benefits of good and the consequences of bad rule:

And then there shall be calm in the air and weather, fruitfulness of earth and sea with all that grows in them, and you shall rule many nations happily (*feliciter*), and your enemies shall fall before your face, and so on. But on the contrary, as St. Patrick said: “Because of a king’s injustice, there shall be unhappiness (*infelicitas*) for himself, strife with his wife and sons, famine among the people, pestilence, infertility of the land, and the fruits of the earth shall be struck by various storms of the sea, and he shall be overcome by his enemies and driven out of his kingdom.”¹³

¹⁰ “forsan Athenae nova perficeretur in Francia, immo multo excellentior.” Alcuin, *Ep. 181*, ed. Dümmler, p. 279, line 22. Text and translation from Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 39.

¹¹ Bullough, *Alcuin*, 436.

¹² “felicia christiano populo tempora in vestrae felicitatis exaltatione.” Alcuin, *Ep. 170*, ed. Dümmler, p. 279, lines 7–8.

¹³ “Et tunc erit aeris et tempestatum tranquillitas, terre maris cum omnibus in eis nascentibus fecunditas, et dominaberis etiam multis feliciter gentibus et inimici tui ante faciem tuam cadunt et reliqua. E contra, sicut dixit sanctus Patricius: ‘Pro regis

Other than the misattribution of pseudo-Cyprian's text to St. Patrick, only the sequence and level of detail changes between Cathwulf and pseudo-Cyprian, with one notable exception. The original ninth abuse does not mention either the unhappiness of the bad king or the good king's happy domination of peoples and enemies. *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* does mention the "joy of humans" (*gaudium hominum*) who live under good rule, but there is no obvious connection to *felicitas/infelicitas*, which Cathwulf's screed so clearly articulates. Moreover, pseudo-Cyprian's warning impugned the inheritance and authority of the bad king's descendants, drawing on the biblical examples of David and Solomon, whereas Cathwulf introduced a new element, levelling that threat to the sitting king: he will suffer both defeat and banishment from his kingdom, but the fate of his progeny is not specified. Rather, Cathwulf levelled his condemnation at Charlemagne's defeated enemies.

Alcuin, too, had previously used this framework, writing about the brothers King Eadberht and Archbishop Egbert who ruled Northumbria from 737–758, presiding over "happy times" (*tempora...felicia*).¹⁴ As king and bishop together they ruled the Northumbrian people: "the one ruling the church's law, the other the business of the realm."¹⁵ This framework—king and bishop working together—stands out as the most excellent arrangement in Alcuin's poem, prefiguring his later formulation of Carolingian happy kingdoms (*felicia regna*), as the brothers helped each other achieve their goals of enlarging and securing temporal rule and expanding the reach and influence of the church.

Closing a letter to King Æthelred I and his court, Alcuin prayed that "God make you happy (*felices*) even in this earthly kingdom."¹⁶ This sentence marks Alcuin's earliest extant association in prose of the good king, the idyllic environment, and the language of felicity. In another letter to Æthelred I from 793, Alcuin makes these connotations even more explicit. Alcuin argues:

iniustitia sui ipsius infelicitas erit, uxoris filiorum quoque dissensio, populorum fames, pestilentia, infecunditas terre, maris quoque tempestatibus fructus terrarum diversis percussis, et ab inimicis suis superatus et expulsus de regno." Cathwulf, *Ep. var.* 7, ed. Dümmler, p. 503, lines 38–44.

14 "Tempora tunc huius fuerant felicia gentis, / quam rex et praesul concordii iure regebant." Alcuin, *The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*, 100. Translation mine.

15 "hic iura ecclesiae, rex ille negotia regni." Alcuin, *The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*, ed. and trans. Godman, 100–101. Translation mine.

16 "Deus vos et in hoc terreno regno felices efficiat." Alcuin, *Ep.* 16, ed. Dümmler, p. 44, line 35.

We also read that the goodness of a king is the prosperity of the whole people: the victory of the army, the mildness of the air, the abundance of the earth, the blessing of children, the health of the people...And he who governs well the people subject to him has a good reward from God—namely, the heavenly kingdom. Very happily (*feliciter*) does he reign on earth who from an earthly kingdom will earn a heavenly one.¹⁷

This statement is an even more direct evocation of *De duodecim abusivis saeculi*, including the environmental and agricultural benefits of good rule, along with the promise of successful heirs. The most significant addition is hinted at in Alcuin's previous letter—happy rule on earth. In Cathwulf's letter, the king could rule happily, and he would invite unhappiness onto himself through un-kingly conduct, but Alcuin's is the first connection among Charlemagne's courtier-theologians of happy kingship to a happy people.

Another letter to Æthelred, likely from 793, warns the king that it is unfitting for one seated on the throne of a kingdom to live with such bad manners, and sets out alternatives as paired opposites: reason rather than anger, mercy rather than cruelty, truth rather than falsehood, chastity, continence, and sobriety rather than their contraries. He then closes with a prohibition that Alcuin did not invent: "Do not, do not seize what belongs to others, lest you lose your own." What Cathwulf had quoted as St. Patrick's account of kings who unjustly seized what was not theirs and justly lost what was, Alcuin presses on Æthelred as an imperative, the repeated "do not, do not" (*noli, noli*) emphasizing the weight he wanted it to carry. The letter ends by entreating that "Almighty God make you bloom with the happiness (*felicitate*) of the kingdom, the dignity of good character, and long-lasting prosperity."¹⁸ For Alcuin, it seems, Charlemagne had achieved the

17 "Legimus quoque, quod regis bonitas totius est gentis prosperitas, victoria exercitus, aeris temperies, terrae habundantia, filiorum benedictio, sanitas plebis... et qui bene regit subiectum sibi populum, bonam habet a Deo retributionem: regnum scilicet caeleste. Valde feliciter regnat in terra, qui de terreno regno merebitur caeleste." Alcuin, *Ep. 18*, ed. Dümmler, p. 51, lines 29–33. Emphasis added.

18 "Non decet te in solio sedentem regni rusticis vivere moribus. Ira tibi non dominetur, sed ratio. Misericordia te amabilem faciat, non crudelitas odibilem. Veritas audiatur ex ore tuo, non falsitas. Castitatis tibi conscius esto, non libidinis; continentiae, non luxoriae; sobrietatis, non ebrietatis. Noli notabilis esse in aliquo peccato, sed laudabilis in omni opere bono. Largus est in dando, non avarus in rapiendo. Iustitia omnes tuos exornet actus. Esto forma honestatis omnibus te videntibus. Noli, noli rapere aliena, ne et propria perdas." And also: "Deus omnipotens regni felicitate, morum dignitate, longaeva prosperitate te florere faciat." Alcuin, *Ep. 30*, ed. Dümmler, pp. 71–72, lines 25–30 and 1–9. For the date see Bullough, *Alcuin*, 90–91n222.

former and driven out fear of the latter's effects, his reign marked not by warnings of disorder but by the visible signs of *felicitas*—peace in the skies, abundance in the fields, harmony in the household, and the submission of enemies—so that the king himself could be praised as the guarantor of both cosmic balance and earthly prosperity.

In another letter, dated by Dümmler to after March 799, Alcuin praised Charlemagne for surpassing his peers not only in political and military prowess, but even more in his pursuit of wisdom and enthusiasm for religious devotion:

And as much as you have been set above others in the power of your rule, so much do you excel all in the beauty of wisdom and the ardour of holy religion. Happy the people (*Felix populus*) who rejoice in such a prince, on whose prosperity the welfare of all depends, and in whose good cheer (*hilaritate*) the hearts of all will rejoice.¹⁹

Note the move from passive to active: *praelatus* (have been set above) in the power of his rule, *praececellis* (you excel) in wisdom and holy religion. Alcuin makes clear that what Charlemagne held by conferral was one thing, and what he attained through his rule was another. For Alcuin, these outcomes were predictable, for he knew not only of the logic of pseudo-Cyprian, but also that of the Bible, when he followed with a quotation: "As it is said: 'In the cheerfulness (*hilaritate*) of the king is life'; whose throne scatters iniquity, and reverence for whose countenance preserves them even unto equity."²⁰ In 797, Alcuin wrote to Coenwulf (r. 796–821), the new king of Mercia, urging him in very pseudo-Cyprianic language that the English *gens* had been

wearied by many tribulations on account of its sins. It must be raised to the height of its ancient honour by the goodness of kings, the preaching of Christ's priests, and the piety of the people, so that the blessed offspring of our fathers may merit to possess everlasting happiness (*felicitatem*), and the stability of the present kingdom, and strength against its enemies.²¹

19 "Et quantum regni potentia praelatus, tantum sapientiae decore et sanctae reigionis fervore omnibus praececellis. Felix populus, qui tali principe gaudet, in cuius prosperitate salus cunctorum consistit, in cuius hilaritate omnium animus gaudebit." Alcuin, *Ep. 171*, ed. Dümmler, p. 281, lines 26–28.

20 "ut dictum est: 'In hilaritate regis, vita'; cuius solium dissipat iniquitatem, cuius vultus reverentia conservat usque ad aequitatem." Alcuin, *Ep. 171*, ed. Dümmler, p. 281, lines 28–30.

21 "Gens enim Anglorum multis propter peccata fatigatur tribulationibus. Quae regum bonitate et sacerdotum Christi praedicatione et populi religione erigenda est ad antiqui culmen honoris; quatenus benedicta patrum nostrorum progenies

The statement blends the ideas of the warnings against an unjust king with the addition of happy rule, seeking both the everlasting happiness of the world to come alongside happiness in this present earthly kingdom. Like Adam's (until the Fall), a just king's obedience to God's command went together with a happy existence, and his disobedience or negligence invited disaster and even exile.

These quotes hint that Alcuin is doing more in these letters than simply noting a correlation between the good king and tranquil environments. The good Frankish king follows the example of good Old Testament kings and is therefore also *happy*, and a prosperous people shares in that emotion. Alcuin's letter, in fact, suggests that the king performed royal happiness with a purpose. The first quote on the cheerfulness of kings derives from Proverbs 16:15: "In the cheerfulness of the king's countenance [is] life: and his clemency [is] like the latter rain."²² The simile of mercy like rain resonates well with Alcuin's view of the king whose just actions dissolve injustice. But it is the Proverbs verse before this one that gives the sentence its full context: "The wrath of a king [is like] the messengers of death, and the wise man will placate it."²³

In this contrast, the happiness of the king is juxtaposed with his anger, an emotion that Gerd Althoff has shown early medieval kings deployed as part of a "rulership practice" in which the expected angry reaction of a king governed the actions and uncertainties of those under his authority.²⁴ There was, Althoff argues, a shift during the Carolingian era away from the constantly angry king, who invited the wrath of his magnates and soldiers, into a royal figure who deployed anger modified by "accompanying emotions" like clemency and mercy, mildness and piety, which gave the ruler the best of both worlds: the ability to coerce and project expectations for aristocratic behaviour but also retain the advantage of "sacral legitimacy."²⁵ Of course, this development meant that the king would also have to display more Christian behaviour than that of the Merovingians, but this was in

perpetuum mereatur possidere felicitatem, et praesentis regni stabilitatem et contra inimicos fortitudinem." Alcuin, *Ep. 123*, ed. Dümmler, p. 181, lines 13–17.

22 "In hilaritate vultus regis vita, et clementia ejus quasi imber serotinus." Proverbs 16:15.

23 "Indignatio regis nuntii mortis, et vir sapiens placabit eam." Proverbs 16:14.

24 Gerd Althoff, "*Ira Regis*," 59–61.

25 Althoff, "*Ira Regis*," 62–65.

keeping with the new partnership with Rome, the overarching premise that upheld the Carolingian usurpers' claim to the Frankish throne.²⁶

Alcuin extolled Charlemagne in terms that fit neatly alongside those already familiar in Carolingian political discourse. For example, in a letter from August 799, Alcuin closed with a standard entreaty to Christ that he safeguard and bless Charlemagne, but in so doing he tapped into this novel language of happy rule:

May Christ grant you happy times (*Tempora...felicia*)
of this kingdom and the eternal, beloved David.²⁷

In these and earlier statements Alcuin laid out an emotional standard for the Frankish king: the just king, who followed the prescriptions of biblical examples and of *Prospice*, and who heeded the warnings of pseudo-Cyprian, demonstrated his goodness not only through right action but through his manifest happiness: that, for Alcuin, was a sure sign that all was right in the realm.

The cues to happiness in Alcuin's lauds and exhortations might be characterized as what William Reddy labels "emotives": words and gestures that reflect not the internal sentiment of the one doing the talking or gesturing but, rather like a performance, they signal and "translate into words" desired outcomes and behaviours.²⁸ In this way, Charlemagne was a positive mirror image of Althoff's wrathful (Merovingian) king, who did not so much feel angry, but who performed anger to discipline and correct wayward aristocrats and to uphold the norms of the court. There may also have been an element of physiognomics—the ancient practice of studying a person's outward appearance, especially their face, to discern their inner characteristics and personality—which had regained popularity among authors in late antique and early medieval Italy.²⁹ Perhaps Alcuin's (and other Carolingian

26 Althoff, "Ira Regis," 65.

27 "Tempora concedat Christus felicia regni / Huius et aeterni, David amate, tibi." Alcuin, *Ep. 178*, ed. Dümmler, p. 296, lines 11–12.

28 Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 105.

29 Physiognomy was known and practised in Late Antiquity, but was less discussed as a technical science in early medieval Europe, perhaps because so many of the treatises that discussed it were available only in the less-known Greek language. Despite the apparent lack of early medieval physiognomic treatises, Paolo Squatriti has shown that physiognomic elements—in particular authors' descriptions of smiling faces—shaped the writers' and revisers' portrayals of prelates in the *Liber pontificalis*—a late antique biography of the popes of Rome—and physical descriptions in other early medieval texts. Squatriti, "Personal Appearance and Physiognomics in Early Medieval Italy," 193–97.

authors') calls for Charlemagne to put on a "happy face" and rule cheerfully show that such physiognomic notions had spread to Francia by the end of the eighth century. Alcuin's pleadings for and reminders of the king's cheerfulness, so intimately connected to the happiness of the realm, translated all the diffuse warnings and recommendations surveyed up to this point for the king and those at court.

Felicia regna elegantly clarified that concept into a simple formula: happy king, happy people, happy kingdoms. The king's conduct *and* emotional performance were inseparable from this framework. Barbara Rosenwein's concept of "emotional communities" is useful here, as a description of "groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression," and as "a group in which people have a common stake, interests, values, and goals."³⁰ If the irate king inspired obedience and the dolorous king moved people to mercy, then the happy king ensured *and proved* the prosperity of his people and realm. An emotional community and its shared vocabulary function to control and discipline behaviour and cultivate "internalized norms" that structure the very ways in which its members "think and act." Even the emotives that signal expectations shape the community "by their very existence."³¹ When members of the court encountered the happy king they would then, if they were discerning enough, know to expect the concomitant manifestations of their happy kingdoms, and how to comport themselves as members of the happy people.

As shown above Insular, biblical, and Roman sources blended to create this concept of realm-wide bliss and so it was accessible to other Continental eighth-century writers. That *felicia regna* could have occurred both earlier and contemporaneously (and meant something else) should not be too surprising, as Rosenwein shows, "More than one emotional community may exist—indeed normally does exist—contemporaneously, and these communities may change over time."³² Certainly one of Alcuin's letters from 801, addressed to Charlemagne in his role as *magister philosophiae*, encourages this interpretation: "Happy the people (*Felix populus*) which is governed by a wise and pious prince, as one reads in that Platonic proverb, which says that kingdoms would be happy (*felicia...regna*) if philosophers, that is, lovers of wisdom, were to reign, or if kings were to devote themselves to the study of philosophy."³³

30 Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 2, 24.

31 Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 25.

32 Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 2.

33 "Felix populus, qui sapiente et pio regitur principe; sicut in illo Platonico legitur

Alcuin's mention of Platonic verses seemingly refers to the famous "philosopher king" of the *Republic*, but it is in fact a recycled quotation from Boethius's *De consolazione philosophiae*: "It was you [Philosophy] who established through the words of Plato the principle that those states would be happy where philosophers were kings or their governors were philosophers."³⁴ Alcuin, however, turns that famous dictum into one which works for the emotional community signalled by *felicia regna* in Carolingian circumstances: loving philosophy helps make the good king, but he is the one whose performed cheerfulness shapes and proves the happy people and realm. Boethius's work influenced the early medieval political language of *felicitas* through its reminder that "What does the clamor of tragedies lament, if not fortune overturning happy kingdoms with an indiscriminate blow"³⁵ Carolingian happy kingdoms, of course, depended not on the whims of *fortuna* but, rather, on the conduct and attitude of their sovereign.

Happy kingdoms also called to mind Augustine of Hippo's warnings from *The City of God* that men are not "happy who live always amid the disasters of war."³⁶ On the contrary, the blissful society imagined by Augustine was one that had surpassed need for warfare, whether internal civil war or against external enemies. Eschewing even such divisive language as peoples, kingdoms, or provinces, Augustine invited the reader to instead contemplate these polities as if they were individuals.³⁷ When reduced to that more manageable perspective, Augustine argues, the greedy man and the modest

proverbio dicente felicia esse regna, si philosophi, id est amatores sapientiae, regnarent, vel reges philosophiae studerent." Alcuin, *Ep.* 229, ed. Dümmler, p. 373, lines 2–4.

34 "Atqui tu hanc sententiam Platonis ore sanxisti: beatas fore res publicas, si eas vel studiosi sapientiae regerent vel earum rectores studere sapientiae contigisset." Text and translation from Boethius, *Theological Tractates*, trans. Stewart, Rand, and Tester, 146–47.

35 "Quid tragoediarum clamor aliud deflet nisi indiscreto ictu fortunam felicia regna vertentem?" Boethius, *Theological Tractates*, trans. Stewart, Rand, and Tester, 182–83.

36 "cum hominum felicitatem non possis ostendere, semper in bellicis cladibus." Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 4.3. Text and translation from Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Green, 2:12–13.

37 "Hoc ut facilius diiudicetur, non vanescamus inani ventositate iactati atque obtundamus intentionis aciem altisonis vocabulis rerum, cum audimus populos regna provincias; sed duos constituamus homines (nam singulus quisque homo, ut in sermone una littera, ita quasi elementum est civitatis et regni, quantalibet terrarum occupatione latissimi)." Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 4.3. Text and translation from Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Green, 2:12–13.

man distinguish themselves by their behaviour: restlessly seeking new additions to his estate on the one hand versus self-sufficient coexistence with his family and friends in a spirit of kind piety on the other.³⁸ For the bishop of Hippo, the choice was obvious: we should prefer to dwell where there is “happiness” (*felicitas*).³⁹

Sophia Moesch dissects Augustine’s carefully modulated usage of *felix/felicitas* and *beatus/beatitudo* to delineate the boundaries between worldly and eternal forms of happiness. While the term *felicitas* appears in Augustine’s *City of God*, Moesch shows that Augustine restricts its application to temporal or civic well-being, even when applied to so-called “Christian emperors.” By contrast, *beatitudo* is reserved for the eternal joy of the heavenly city, often qualified with terms like *aeterna*, *vera*, or *in regno caelorum*. Moesch argues that Augustine’s refusal to equate political success with divine favour, his refusing to conflate the “*felix imperator*” with eternal blessings functions as a theological critique of imperial triumphalism. This interpretive precision underscores a broader dispensational framework in which worldly order unfolds as part of an eschatological process yet remains distinct from the ultimate fulfilment of beatitude in Christ.⁴⁰

It is therefore especially noteworthy when Alcuin makes such an interpretive leap *beyond* Augustine. In a realm characterized by such qualities of “religion and good conduct,” these would be sufficient to “ensure true happiness, whereby this life may be well spent, and eternal life attained hereafter.”⁴¹ The language of *felicitas* therefore also rooted nascent Carolingian ecological sovereignty in one of the most influential texts of early medieval Western Christianity.

Augustine’s vision became a model for Charlemagne and the theologians and aristocrats at the royal court. Augustinian thought permeated Frankish capitularies and other texts of Charlemagne’s era. It instructed a Carolingian audience in the logic that correct religion and good conduct

38 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 4.3. Text and translation from Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Green, 2:12–15.

39 “qua vigilanter adhibita si nostra intentio corrigatur, facillime videbimus ubi habitet vanitas et ubi felicitas.” Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 4.3. Text and translation from Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Green, 2:14–15.

40 Moesch, *Augustine and the Art of Ruling*, 53–54.

41 “Nam quantum ad ipsos pertinet, pietas et probitas eorum, quae magna Dei dona sunt, sufficit eis ad veram felicitatem, qua et ista vita bene agatur et postea percipiatur aeterna.” Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 4.3. Text and translation from Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Green, 2:14–15.

would inaugurate Christian rule on earth.⁴² At the same time, Charlemagne's performed happiness instructed the mistrustful and perhaps even angry courtiers who were competing for his favour and *honores* by his cheerful example. If Charlemagne were to reject Augustine's advice, he could expect his own soul to be destroyed along with his people and realm.⁴³ This distinction is the only thing that separates emperors from brigands, as Augustine famously asked:

if justice is left out, what are kingdoms except great robber bands? For what are robber bands except little kingdoms...this plague grows to a point where it holds territory and establishes a fixed seat, seizes cities and subdues peoples, then it more conspicuously assumes the name of kingdom, and this name is now openly granted to it.⁴⁴

The irony here is that Charlemagne's "happy kingdoms" were forged by conquest and secured through the elimination—by happenstance or purposefully—of his familial political rivals.

Felicitous Rivals

It may be that the non-Franks in Charlemagne's entourage like Peter of Pisa and Paul the Deacon, along with those who, like Alcuin or Theodulf of Orléans, had departed their homelands to join the Carolingian court, especially wished the king to achieve this state. They employed the language of *felicitas* to both constrain and persuade Charlemagne to become a *rex felix*. Even some manuscripts of the *Divisio regnorum* of 806, Charlemagne's attempt to settle the inheritance of his children and the rule of the Franks after his death, reflected this image of the ruler and signalled the *felicitas* code, heralding him as "Emperor Caesar Charles, most unconquered King of the Franks and governor of the Roman Empire, pious, happy (*felix*), victor, and triumphant, ever august."⁴⁵

⁴² Fried, *Karl der Grosse*, 70–71.

⁴³ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 4.3. Translation Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Green, 2:14–15.

⁴⁴ "Remota itaque iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia? Quia et latrocinia quid sunt nisi parva regna?...Hoc malum si in tantum perditorum hominum accessibus crescit ut et loca teneat, sedes constituat, civitates occupet, populos subiuguet, evidentius regni nomen adsumit, quod ei iam in manifesto confert." Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 4.3. Translation from Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Green, 2:16–17.

⁴⁵ "Imperator Caesar Karolus rex Francorum invictissimus et Romani rector imperii

There is evidence that the language of *felicia regna* was current among Alcuin's contemporaries, demonstrating that these norms had gained traction at the court. Angilram of Metz was closely associated with Charlemagne, who appointed the bishop his royal arch-chaplain following the death of Fulrad of Saint-Denis in 784.⁴⁶ The former episcopal see had become especially important to Carolingian legitimacy in the later eighth century. Around that time, Angilram asked Paul the Deacon (ca. 720–799), the Friulian author of the famous *History of the Lombards*, to write a history of his bishopric, which became the so-called *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium* (Deeds of the Bishops of Metz). This association between city and court went even further; not only did the *Gesta* add justification to the Carolingians' dynastic claim via their descent from Arnulf the early founder of Metz, but it also worked to bring Metz into warmer relations with the Carolingians.⁴⁷ It is noteworthy, then, that Angilram's own *Versus de episcopis Mettensis civitatis* (Poem on the Bishops of the City of Metz, ca. 774) deploys the *felicitas* motif as a reflection of *episcopal* authority. Angilram wrote about Felix II (r. 715–716), the bishop who served more than fifty years earlier, that "Felix (whose name literally means 'Happy') showed the people happy kingdoms (*felicia regna*)."⁴⁸ Angilram's poem then highlights the contributions of the next bishops (Sigibald and Chrodegang) before bringing the narrative up to the period of his own governance, concluding the poem with an exhortation to the Frankish king in the language of *felicitas*:

King Charles, graced in understanding, in form, and in spirit,
received the sceptre of Italy by Christ's gift.
Whom together, at blessed Stephen's asking,
may the right hand of him on high protect and rule,
happy (*felices*) through the age.⁴⁹

pius felix victor ac triumphator semper augustus." *Divisio regnorum*, ed. Boretius, pp. 126ff. Walter Schlesinger argues that this title derived from the "Donation of Constantine," the famous eighth-century forgery that granted the papacy lands in Italy supposedly on the authority of Constantine the Great. Schlesinger, "Kaisertum und Reichsteilung," 125–27. Johannes Fried suggests that it is equally likely that Charlemagne's *Divisio* shaped the language of the forgery rather than vice versa. Fried, "Donation of Constantine" and "Constitutum Constantini," 54–55. Either way, the image of a ruler as *felix victor* emerged during Charlemagne's reign.

46 Goffart, "Paul the Deacon's 'Gesta episcoporum Mettensium,'" 63.

47 Paul the Deacon, *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. and trans. Kempf, 11.

48 "Ostendit Felix populis felicia regna." *Versus de episcopis Mettensis civitatis sibi ex ordine successerunt*, ed. Dümmler, p. 61, line 53.

49 "Rex Carolus sensu, formaque, animoque decorus / Italiae accepit Christi de

This view of Charlemagne as the one ordained by God to take up the rule of Italy accords with Paul the Deacon's prose *Gesta*. Although he did not explicitly draw on the language of *felicitas*, Paul wove into the historical narrative of the bishopric the tale of Charlemagne's Lombard conquest, ending with a statement "all Italy was no less placed under a gentle lordship."⁵⁰

There were two roughly contemporary sources that both stitched Charlemagne's conquest of the Lombard kingdom into the history of the bishops of Metz. The editor of the *Gesta*'s modern critical edition points out that not only was the work intended to bolster Charlemagne's dynastic claim via descent from Arnulf (an earlier bishop of Metz whom the Carolingians claimed linked them to the Merovingians by blood), but it also laboured to bring Metz into warmer relations with the Carolingians.⁵¹ This means that the *Gesta* should be read as a commentary on Carolingian rule and episcopal authority, and (as the one who commissioned it) perhaps also on Angilram's own verse on the subject. It was, after all, Angilram who asked Paul to write the *Gesta*.

Another Italian, Peter of Pisa—Charlemagne's grammar instructor before Alcuin and another contemporary of Paul the Deacon and Angilram—also deployed the language of *felicitas*. Peter's biography is murky, but in his *vita* of Charlemagne Einhard called him an "old deacon" by the time he instructed the Frankish king alongside Alcuin in the latter part of the eighth century, and his tenure was thus coterminous with the others discussed here.⁵² Indeed, Alcuin himself noted that when he was a "young man" in the 760s he came across Peter in Pavia, so the two tutors of Charlemagne had known each other for some time.⁵³ Peter was an original member of Charlemagne's team of "old hands" in the 780s, who saw a newly arrived courtier-theologian like Paul the Deacon as a "trespasser on their territory"

munere sceptrum. / Quos simul excelsi, Stephano poscente beato, / Protegat atque regat felices dextra per aevum." *Versus de episcopis Mettensis civitatis sibi ex ordine successerunt*, ed. Dümmler, p. 61, lines 59–62.

50 "cunctaque nihilominus Italia dominatione miti positus est." Paul the Deacon, *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. and trans. Kempf, 76–77.

51 Paul the Deacon, *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. and trans. Kempf, 11.

52 "In discenda grammatica Petrum Pisarum diaconem senem audiuit." Einhard, *VK*, ed. Pertz and Waite, p. 30, lines 8–12. Gorman, "Peter of Pisa and the *Quaestiunculae* Copied for Charlemagne in Brussels II 2572," 238–39.

53 "Dum ego adolescens Romam perrexi et aliquantos dies in Papia regali civitate demorarer, quidam Iudaeus, Iulius nomine, cum Petro magistro habuit disputationem." Alcuin, *Ep.* 172, ed. Dümmler, p. 285, lines 3–7.

at court.⁵⁴ Peter authored numerous poems directed against Paul the Deacon in a sort of poet's battle of wits—often in the voice of the king—meaning that Peter “simultaneously flatters Charlemagne and seems to enlist his support for the poem sent in his intimidating name to the uncertain débutant at court.”⁵⁵ Peter Godman documents some of these interchanges, including a well-known poem commenting on Paul the Deacon's arrival at Charlemagne's court.⁵⁶ In a different poem from Peter addressed to Paul the Deacon, the Pisan poet playfully and vividly constructs a natural landscape illumined by sunlight, hidden by shadows, and populated by prey and hunters, before moving on to a description of figures at the royal court, which seems to have been the intended topic and audience of the verse.⁵⁷ In this poem Peter concludes by beseeching God's favour for the king in cosmic, ecological, and felicitous terms:

Almighty God, [preserve] Charles, who wields happy sceptres (*felicia sceptrā*),
He who created the starry heaven, the earth and the sea,
Who bounds the foaming shores of the deep with its waves.⁵⁸

These lines place Charlemagne and his demarcated authority inside the created order, under God, alongside other divinely ordained boundaries within terms strikingly like the happy kingdoms of Alcuin and Angilram discussed above.

That Peter of Pisa deployed this language in one extant example is worthy of notice in itself, but the fact that it was Alcuin who supplanted Peter as Charlemagne's primary tutor and “director of education” at the court, and also Alcuin who most clearly deployed the framework of *felicitas* in other venues, hints that the Yorkish cleric attuned himself to an emotional community that was already forming around Charlemagne, the happy king.⁵⁹

54 Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 51.

55 Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 52.

56 Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 51–54.

57 Peter of Pisa, “Pauli et Petri Diaconorum carmina,” ed. Dümmler, 52–54.

58 “Omnipotens Karolum felicia sceptrā regentem, / Qui caelum astriferum terram pontumque creavit, / Litora spumifera pelagi qui terminat undis...conservet.” Peter of Pisa, “Pauli et Petri Diaconorum carmina,” ed. Dümmler, 53–54, 38–40, 44. Full passage lines 38–45.

59 On Alcuin's supplanting of Peter of Pisa and others, see Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 56.

Prodigies and Unfortunate Sons

More proof of *felicia regna's* valence in the latter eighth century derives from Alcuin's chief courtly rival, Bishop Theodulf of Orléans, whom Thomas Noble labels with good reason "the finest poet of the Carolingian age."⁶⁰ Theodulf had arrived in Septimania (southern Francia) in the late 770s or early 780s as a refugee fleeing a violent crackdown by the ruler in Cordoba after a Saragossan uprising in the Iberian Ebro basin. Ann Freeman suggested that it was Theodulf's education in this area, rooted as it was in the classical traditions of Late Antiquity, that drew the admiration and jealousy of his peers.⁶¹ Theodulf's erudition and wit may help explain how, as Noble put it, he "appeared out of nowhere and immediately assumed a leading role at the Carolingian court," a factor that (as the arrival of Paul the Deacon had similarly made Peter of Pisa feel threatened) may have contributed to animus between him and Alcuin, who had finally been accepted as an equal at court.⁶²

In 796 while he was absent from the court, Theodulf wrote a "verse-epistle" which was addressed to Charlemagne's entourage. Peter Godman argues that Theodulf's poetic description of the court "transposes the narrower setting of his rivals onto a universal stage where the majesty of the triumphant war-lord, at a banquet to celebrate his victory over the Avars, outshines his court like the sun in zenith."⁶³ Alcuin, Theodulf's rival, appears as one of the chief objects of his scorn, depicted as having a "porridge-like"⁶⁴ mind and as a drunkard who "may order glasses of wine or of beer to be fetched, or chance to want both of them, to make his teaching all the better."⁶⁵ Godman argues that Theodulf's "malicious imitation" of Alcuin's work was meant to embarrass his foe as a reminder "that he had his superior in the

60 Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 163.

61 Freeman, "Theodulf of Orléans," 186, 188.

62 Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, 163. This animosity would only increase over time. For a detailed and fascinating study of a conflict that drew Charlemagne into a dispute over Alcuin's authority as the abbot of Tours and Theodulf's as bishop of Orléans, see Meens, "Sanctuary, Penance, and Dispute Settlement under Charlemagne.

63 Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 68.

64 Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 68.

65 "Aut si, Bacche, tui, aut Cerealis pocla liquoris / Porgere praecipiat, fors et utrumque volet, / Quo melius doceat." Theodulf, *Carm.*, ed. Dümmler, p. 488, lines 193–35. Translation from Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, 161.

intellectual as well as the political spheres.”⁶⁶ It is, therefore, all the more striking that in this poetic reimagining of Charlemagne’s court, cast in universal terms—“The entire world resounds in your praise, my king,” writes Theodulf, imagining the majesty of the king as measurable only insofar as the great rivers of the realm themselves could be bounded—he, too, invoked the language of felicity.⁶⁷

After several lines lauding Charlemagne for his piety and successful conquest of the Avars, a Eurasian group who had harried and plundered central Europe for decades, Theodulf heralded the arrival of the Frankish king’s hard-won peace and its corollary environmental effects:

Behold, the new spring comes, with it all happiness (felicia),
And they draw near to you and yours, O king, by God’s gift.
See, the year is renewed, rejoicing in eternal laws,
And now the earth, its mother, brings forth her shoots.
The woods grow green with leaf, the fields are decked with flowers,
And lo, the elements keep their several courses.⁶⁸

The positive environmental effects, like verdant and flowering vegetation and seasons turning as they should, respond to the virtuous king who has lived piously and conquered the enemies of kingdom and faith, reflecting those same norms that arose in pseudo-Cyprian, Cathwulf, Alcuin, and the rest.

Those same “natural” manifestations, even down to the *elementa* themselves, later occurred in Nithard’s accounting of Charlemagne, and show how the conduct of the Carolingian king correlated to the environment and the ways in which *felicitas* communicated these ideas to the sovereign and court. These similarities over time hint at the resilience of this model of kingship, first articulated in Charlemagne’s circle in the last decades of the eighth century, as it was contested, shaped, and reframed via the historical

66 Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, 69.

67 “Te totus laudesque tuas, rex, personat orbis, / Multaque cum dicat, dicere cuncta nequit. / Si Mosa, Rhenus, Arar, Rodanus, Tiberisque, Padusque / Metiri possunt, laus quoque mensa tua est.” Theodulf, *Carm.*, ed. Dümmler, p. 483, lines 1–4. Translation from Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, 151.

68 “Ver venit ecce novum, cum quo felicia cuncta / Teque, tuosque adeant, rex, tribuente deo. / En renovatur ovans aeternis legibus annus, / Et sua nunc mater germina promit humus. / Silvae fronde virent, ornantur floribus arva, Sique vices servant, en elementa suas.” Theodulf, *Carm.*, ed. Dümmler, p. 483, lines 51–56. Translation from Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, 153.

memory of the Frankish king during the later reigns of Louis the Pious and his descendants amid the political turmoil of the ninth century.

Despite the confident assertions of writers in the late eighth century, disasters shaped Charlemagne's final years. The sureness of the Frankish ruler and his courtiers in the standard of *felicitas* must have been shaken by the death of Charlemagne's son and heir, Charles the Younger, in 811. Unlike his siblings who, like Pepin in Italy and Louis in Aquitaine, had been assigned kingdoms of their own to govern, Charles the Younger remained at his father's side throughout his life. Charles was the only child of Charlemagne to have been anointed king by Pope Leo at Rome following the imperial coronation in 800, and the *Divisio regnorum* of 806 had assigned him the Frankish heartland to rule. Every indication hints that Charlemagne favoured Charles as his primary "heir" with a "positive future."⁶⁹ The previous year Charlemagne's son Pepin, the king of Italy, had also died.⁷⁰ Einhard, the emperor's most successful biographer, reported that the deaths of his children "deeply disturbed" Charlemagne, and "his affection [toward his children], which was just as strong [a part of his character], drove him to tears."⁷¹ The loss of his children doubtless grieved the emperor as a father, but, according to pseudo-Cyprian's logic, it also signalled that all was not well in the realm.

Similarly, in 805/6 a drastic food shortage and subsequent famine held Charlemagne's empire in its grip, another warning sign from pseudo-Cyprian's list. In response, Charlemagne tried to ameliorate the disaster through "economic" tools like price fixing, but he also ordered the entire realm to fast and pray for three days to appeal to divine mercy.⁷² An earlier capitulary from Thionville ordered that "if from this there should come famine, disaster, pestilence, unseasonable weather, or any other kind of tribulation whatsoever, our edict is not to be awaited, but God's mercy is to be implored at once."⁷³ There is an ominous and pessimistic air to these documents from Charlemagne's final years and a "sense of time running out," to borrow de

⁶⁹ McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 51–53.

⁷⁰ Costambeys et al., *The Carolingian World*, 195–96.

⁷¹ "Mortes filiorum ac filiae pro magnanimitate, qua excelebat, minus patienter tulit, pietate videlicet, qua non minus insignis erat, compulsus ad lacrimas." Einhard, *VK*, ed. Pertz and Waite, 24. Translation from Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, 29.

⁷² Verhulst, *The Carolingian Economy*, 25–26, 128–29; de Jong, "Charlemagne's Church," 128.

⁷³ "De hoc evenerit fames, clades, pestilentia, inaequalitas aeris vel alia qualiscumque tribulatio, ut non expectetur edictum nostrum, sed statim depraecetur

Jong's phrase— a feeling that the empire had not achieved the lofty goals enumerated in the *Admonitio generalis* of 789.⁷⁴

Disasters shaped the historical memory of Charlemagne from almost its very inception. Writing in the 820s after Charlemagne's death in 814, Einhard noted that "there were so many signs of his approaching death, that not only other people, but even he himself knew the end was near."⁷⁵ Einhard cited three straight years of lunar and solar eclipses, buildings that collapsed, a bridge that burned, and meteors plummeting from the night sky. Even the king's own horse threw down its mighty rider, the impact snapping off his sword and belt—the symbols of his secular power and authority as well as adult masculinity—and the earth shook the foundations of the imperial capital at Aachen, while the golden apple that adorned the palace chapel's roof was struck by lightning, falling onto the roof of the bishop's nearby house.⁷⁶

For Einhard and subsequent chroniclers, as the house of Charlemagne's spirit crumbled, his surrounding environment—all of creation itself—tied as it was to the king's health, happiness, and conduct, shuddered and

Dei misericordia." *Capitulare missorum in Theodonis Villa datum secundum, Generale*, ed. Boretius, 122–23.

74 de Jong, "Charlemagne's Church," 129.

75 "Adpropinquantis finis conplura fuere prodigia, ut non solum alii, sed etiam ipse hoc minitari sentiret." Einhard, *VK*, ed. Pertz and Waite, 25. Translation from Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, 25:36.

76 "Per tres continuos vitaeque termino proximos annos et solis et lunae creberrima defectio et in sole macula quaedam atri coloris septem dierum spatio visa. Porticus, quam inter basilicam et regiam operosa mole construxerat, die ascensionis Domini subita ruina usque ad fundamenta conlapsa. Item pons Rheni apud Mogontiacum, quem ipse per decem annos ingenti labore et opere mirabili de ligno ita construxit, ut perenniter durare posse videretur, ita tribus horis fortuita incendio conflagravit, ut, praeter quod aqua tegebatur, ne una quidem astula ex eo remaneret. Ipse quoque, cum ultimam in Saxoniam expeditionem contra Godofridum regem Danorum ageret, quadam die, cum ante exortum solis castris egressus iter agere coepisset, vidit repente delapsam caelitus cum ingenti lumine facem a dextra in sinistram per serenum aera transcurrere. Cunctisque hoc signum, quid portenderet, ammirantibus, subito equus, quem sedebat, capite deorsum merso decidit eumque tam graviter ad terram elisit, ut, fibula sagi rupta balteoque gladii dissipato, a festinantibus qui aderant ministris exarmatus et sine amiculo levaretur...Accessit ad hoc Aquensis palatii tremor et in domibus, ubi conversabatur, assiduus laqueariorum crepitus. Tacta etiam de caelo, in qua postea sepultus est, basilica, malumque aureum, quo tecti culmen erat ornatum, ictu fulminis dissipatum et supra domum pontificis, quae basilicae contigua erat, proiectum est." Einhard, *VK*, ed. Pertz and Waite, 36–37. See the translation of this entire passage in Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, 25:36–37.

convulsed in mutual commiseration, exactly as Alcuin and his contemporaries had feared it would. Probably during the same era, Theodulf wrote a poem that darkly mirrored his earlier buoyant praise of the exalted emperor who, while he was alive, had been gloried by a verdant, fruitful, and harmonious nature.⁷⁷ After Charlemagne's death, Theodulf's gloomy vision of a barren and disordered natural world proved through the disruption of its seasonal cycles, its infecundity, and changing climate that the end of all things was perhaps near:

One may see how the world moves on and marks its ruin,
and with voices silent sings the failing of itself...
That temper of winter no longer stands as once it was,
which might nourish the grasses, the woods, the crops.
The sun's abundance is lacking for summer's scorching labour,
nor are the spring seasons now glad in their proper office.
Autumns no longer overflow with sweet new wine,
nor do they flourish, laden with tree-fruit.
Now the earth bears nothing good as once it bore,
and teaches that it is itself exhausted and barren.⁷⁸

The environment in Theodulf's poem was a perverse mirror image of Paradise described in the Genesis story, which had been a model for Charlemagne's empire as garden. If the Carolingians saw the return of Christ and the end of the world as the ultimate positive outcome of *correctio* and

77 The dating is debatable. Dümmler thought that the poem came from Theodulf's early career. Alexandrenko, *The Poetry of Theodulf of Orleans*, 95–96n1. Heinrich Fichtenau thought that this poem was from the later years of Charlemagne's reign and was perhaps even read to the emperor himself. Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire*, trans. Munz, 183–84. Nineteenth-century scholars Louis Baunard and Charles Cuissard both assigned this poem to the years ca. 817–820 when Theodulf had been exiled from Orléans and imperial favour. Baunard, *Théodulfe, évêque d'Orléans et abbé de Fleury-sur-Loire*, 316–17 and Cuissard, *Théodulfe évêque d'Orléans*, 98–99. Dieter Schaller likewise dated the poem to Theodulf's period of exile, arguing that the pessimism of the poem thus reflects the bishop's own personal troubles alongside those of the world at large. "The poem's contrast with the earlier courtly praise verse fits with this interpretation. Schaller, "Philologische Untersuchungen zu den Gedichten Theodulfs von Orléans," 22–23.

78 "Cernere inest, ut eat mundus signetque ruinam, / Defectumque sui voce tacente canat...Non ea temperies hiemis prius ut fuit exstat, / Quae nutrire queat gramina, lingua, sata. / Copia deest solis torrendo aestate labori, / Verna nec officio sunt modo laeta suo. / Dulcibus haud adeo mustis autumnus redundant, / Foetibus arboreis non onerata vigent. / Nil modo terra boni sic fert velut ante ferebat, / Effaetam et sterilem semet inesse docet." Theodulf, *Carm.*, ed. Dümmler, pp. 468–69, lines 1–12.

renewal, these could only be achieved through the proper leadership of the ruler and the salvation of both the people and the land. Knowing as he did the discourse of *felicitas*, when Theodulf described the world ending in such biological and climatic entropy, his poem signalled a failure in Carolingian kingship even as it demonstrated the import of Carolingian ecological sovereignty as a measuring stick for rulers.

Inscribing Ecological Sovereignty

In this section, I turn to Alcuin's Genesis *tituli*, seemingly modest "captions" for church walls and altarpieces, that in fact crystallized an entire theological ecology of rule, nature, and disaster—the *felicitas* code itself. The imperatives embedded in the verses—Adam naming creatures and then being driven out—are not just narrative devices but warnings, mapping the role of gardener-king onto Charlemagne. He could heed God's warnings and remain paradise's steward, or neglect them and be expelled, like Adam.

Read through the coded language of *felicitas* and implicit responsibilities of *ministerium*, the *tituli* draw the Carolingians into sacred time, making their authority contingent on obedience to God's order. In this way, Alcuin's inscriptions served as concise reminders that ecological sovereignty, like Eden itself, could be lost through negligence or sin. Before doing so, it is important to pause and observe that this language of ecological sovereignty was not merely symbolic. It bore real stakes for Alcuin and the other courtier-theologians who plied their sovereign with its appeals to cheerfulness. The cluster of later eighth-century sources deploying the language of felicity and ecological disaster demonstrates its usefulness and prevalence among several courtiers and advisors to Charlemagne on this topic. Its appearance in both praises and admonitions suggests that the Frankish king himself understood its meaning as an emotive, in Reddy's sense.

To this point, I have referred to happy kingdoms/*felicia regna* mainly through its instrumentality as a means for the king's attainment or loss of ecological and political success, and its meaning has been hinted at obliquely by reference to surrounding contexts, or as an emotive signal for courtiers and subjects. It has meant the political realm, a bishop's authority, and even (thinking back to Alcuin's York poem) a description of heaven on earth. But its clearest sense connects "happy kingdoms" to the original idyllic Paradise of the Garden of Eden, a usage which maps onto the trajectory of Alcuin's thinking as it changed over time, thus offering a useful framework for considering this whole chapter. Indeed, as seen above it took shape in Alcuin's mind as far back as ca. 780, before he had even arrived at Charlemagne's

court, and it continued to exert influence in areas outside the royal context, almost as if spilling over from one reservoir to the next.

A careful reading of Alcuin's poetic lament for Lindisfarne shows this quite clearly. The poem has been described by Mary Garrison, and understood more widely, as "comfort literature, but reaching toward theodicy,"—i.e., the struggle to explain God and goodness in the face of evil and suffering. Yet, I think there is more at work in this text, and it points toward the crystallization of Alcuin's conclusions on rulership in a Christian empire, if one could make such a paradise on earth. Alcuin's poem draws on the imagery of Edenic Paradise lost and happiness subverted to make this point.⁷⁹ The first lines begin:

After the first man had left the gardens of Paradise
And entered the lands of misery, needy and banished,
in burdensome exile he and his children began to pay the penalty
for the wicked act of treacherous theft he had committed.
Human life passes rapidly through many sorts of disasters
and every man has had different kinds of days.
In the course of fate sadness will be mixed with joy;
no one has firm control over delight.
No one has had success every day,
no one always enjoys predictable happiness (*felices*).
Nothing remains eternal under the tall dome of the sky,
all things change at different times.
One day smiles, the next laments a catastrophe,
no stability is granted by a token of luck.⁸⁰

This is the image of the earth after the first humans' missteps—a model of Paradise corrupted by bad rule, for Adam's first task was to be a proper caretaker of the resources that had been assigned to him: lordship over his companion, the animals, and vegetation of his realm.

79 Garrison, "Alcuin, *Carmen IX* and Hrabanus, *Ad bonosum*," 72.

80 "Postquam primus homo paradisi liquerat hortos / Et miseras terras exul adibat inops, / Exilioque gravi poenas cum prole luebat, / Perfidiae quoniam furta maligna gerit, / Per varios casus mortalis vita cucurrit, / Diversosque dies omnis habebat homo. / Fatali cursu miscentur tristia laetis, / Nulli firma fuit regula laetitiae. / Nemo dies cunctos felices semper habebat, / Nemo sibi semper gaudia certa tenet. / Nil manet aeternum celso sub cardine caeli, / Omnia vertuntur temporibus variis. / Una dies ridet, casus cras altera planget, / Nil fixum faciet tessera laeta tibi." Alcuin, *Carm.* 8, ed. Dümmler, p. 229, lines 1–14 (hereafter, *Carm.*). Translation from Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, 127.

Alcuin drew on this biblical example to help explain the sorrow and loss of the attack at Lindisfarne, which, as I argued before, resulted in his mind from the actions of (in great part) bad kings. The lesson here, for Alcuin, was clear; and this episode demonstrates the truest meaning of *felicia regna*, which was the right stewardship of the *ministerium* that God had entrusted to a ruler: life, land, church, and people, coexisting happily under the watchful gaze of the cheerful king. For Alcuin, Charlemagne had achieved this status to a greater extent than any of his royal contemporaries, and yet, as the episode with the abovementioned Frankish altars that had been neglected and left spattered by animal excrement shows, there was some measure of concern that the Frankish king would not live up to these paradisiacal expectations.

Alcuin, along with his contemporaries who deployed the same framework, seems to have admonished the king repeatedly in letters and poetry, but the Yorkish cleric also offered something else that may have confronted Charlemagne when he was especially susceptible to correction. As discussed earlier, one of the top priorities of the Carolingian reform program was the improvement of biblical texts and production of exegetical commentaries on the Bible, and Alcuin authored at least one commentary on the Genesis text, showing some measure of interest in the subject. Alcuin, in fact, wrote a letter to a former pupil at York named Sigulf, explaining the purpose of his Genesis commentary, which was to collect his explanations on the text so that he could recall to memory what had been lost from their earlier conversations on the subject. This was a special concern for those “who are distracted by the occupations of the world and wearied by the various burdens of travel,” someone (one may speculate) like a diligent Carolingian king.⁸¹

We can see glimmers of the Yorkish cleric’s interest in these themes in the so-called Alcuin Bible, which may have been started under the courtier-theologian’s direction at Tours’ monastic scriptorium and presented to Charlemagne after the cleric’s death in 804. It articulated cosmic hierarchies in its depiction of Adam’s naming of the creatures of Paradise (Figure 6). In the upper right corner of the Alcuin Bible, this scene included the serpent, the animal that tempted Eve into sin (in the Carolingians’ view causing Adam’s sin, too, and that of all subsequent humans), along with other beasts named by Adam in Paradise. As Jill Bradley argues, the snake’s presence here (it was not depicted similarly in the other extant

81 “maxime nobis, qui saeculi occupationibus distrahimur et diversis itinerum molestiis fatigamur.” Alcuin, *Ep. 80*, ed. Dümmler, p. 122, lines 23–24. Translation from Allott, *Alcuin of York*, 138.



Figure 6. Genesis page from the Alcuin Bible, ca. 834–843. Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Msc. Bibl. 1, fol. 7v. Courtesy of the Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek. Public Domain.

illuminated Carolingian Genesis scenes) was meant to demonstrate the reptile's subordination to Adam, and that the "man should be able to command and control it."⁸² Indeed, the Alcuin Bible's depiction of the events of Genesis—the creation, instruction, and fall of the first humans, and their exile from Paradise—was meant to be read eschatologically as a "cycle of creation, sin, punishment and the possibility of redemption," meaning that Adam's story and the perils and promises of fulfilling God's commands to both care for the garden and to cultivate the earth were crucial models for Carolingian sovereignty. They were meant to instruct Charlemagne in the management of his garden, the entire realm.⁸³

The Bamberg Genesis *tituli* act not as simple labels but as interpretive cues, condensing extended scriptural passages into concise rubrics that control the viewer's reading of the cycle. Their "caption" verbs (*formavit*, *adduxit*, *increpavit*, *compellit*—He formed, He brought, He rebuked, He compels) make God the grammatical subject at each stage, though the shift from perfect to present at the last leaves the curse of labour still operative for the viewer. The captions thus bind the visual sequence to a theological trajectory: from God's creative sovereignty, through the rupture of human disobedience, to the punitive imposition of physical labour. The sequence unfolds as a tightly ordered descent. At the top, the caption announces the formation of Adam from earth and his commission to name the animals, a double sign of human dominion rooted in divine handiwork. The second line shifts abruptly to Eve's derivation from Adam's rib and the serpent's intervention, juxtaposing creation and corruption in a single register. The third and fourth captions bring divine judgment into focus: God's rebuke and the immediate expulsion from Paradise. The fifth and sixth emphasize exile and consequence, presenting Adam and Eve together in their banishment before isolating Adam in the toil of tilling the soil. The captions compress narrative into theological frames, transforming the images into a moralized sequence in which sovereignty yields to sin, and sin to subjection. The viewer is not simply shown Genesis in pictures but taught to read it as a paradigm of lost dominion and the burdens of postlapsarian existence.

Alcuin composed more Genesis *tituli*, perhaps meant to elucidate images like frescos that would decorate the walls of churches as well as altarpieces and other rooms. A reconsideration of these *tituli* in their likely intended context takes this analysis further. Alcuin wrote for Charlemagne

⁸² Bradley, "You Shall Surely not Die," 64, 67.

⁸³ Bradley, "You Shall Surely not Die," 75.

a series of labels explicating creation images from Genesis, and it is not known which buildings (if any) presented Alcuin's *tituli*, nor precisely which paintings they were meant to illuminate. But there is evidence for such biblical cycles adorning the walls of complexes like the palace chapel at Ingelheim, and similar Carolingian frescos are partially extant at an Alpine monastery in Münstair (Switzerland).⁸⁴ Alcuin's *tituli* derive from the lost *Codex Bertinianus*, which is the source for a number of Alcuin's other texts, including a poem on divine majesty, one depicting the crucifixion, and a sixteen-line poem (each line a caption to accompany an image) on the Genesis story of the Creation and Fall of the first humans.⁸⁵

For my purposes here, the Genesis ekphrasis is especially of interest. Alcuin imagines Paradise and human sovereignty over nature. Since they predate by several decades the earliest known Genesis cycles of Carolingian art, including the Alcuin Bible discussed above, Alcuin's *tituli* come at the beginning of a Carolingian tradition of biblical interpretation.⁸⁶ Alcuin's Genesis *tituli* begin with the creation of Adam out of dust, and his third caption enjoins the first man's sovereignty over the nonhuman: "Father Adam, give names to all living things."⁸⁷ This statement neatly encapsulates a concept that Alcuin and other Carolingian exegetes spent hundreds of lines of text articulating: the first man obeyed God by exercising sovereignty over the animals and creatures of Paradise.

Alcuin's captions adopted a narrative subject-verb structure, with two lines standing out because of their use of the imperative mood. In addition to the line that calls for "Father Adam" to name the creatures, this line deploys the imperative verb construction: "Go out, Adam, and leave behind

84 Ermold mentions in his panegyric for Louis the Pious the painted walls of the palace at Ingelheim, which were adorned with biblical episodes, including a lengthy description of the paradise image. Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmina in honorem Hludowici Caesaris*, ed. Dümmler, pp. 63–64, lines 181–99. There is a translation of this passage in Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, 174. For Münstair, see Wyss, Rutishauer, and Nay, eds., *Die mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien im Kloster Münstair, Grundlagen zu Konservierung und Pflege*, 63–76.

85 Alcuin, *Carm.* 115, ed. Dümmler, 346.

86 Arnulf, *Versus ad picturas*, 149–51. This Bible is also called the Bamberg Bible, and its text may have originated shortly after Alcuin's death (804) at Tours, although it is possible that it was produced under Alcuin's supervision for presentation to Charlemagne. Bradley, "You Shall Surely not Die," 64–65.

87 "Nomina pone pater cunctis animantibus Adam." Alcuin, *Carm.* 115, ed. Dümmler, p. 346, line 3.

the happy kingdoms (*felicia regna*)."⁸⁸ It is a clever play on words that at once echoes Adam's charge to dominate all the creatures of Paradise and captures the essence of the happy king and blessed environment paradigm.⁸⁹ This double meaning connects the order and good productivity of the earth in Paradise with that established under Charlemagne's rule (as the pseudo-Cyprianic discourse predicted).

Alcuin's verse implies that just as disobedience led to Adam's expulsion from the garden, so it would result in the Frankish king's downfall and the deleterious effects on nature of a bad king. The linkage of Adam/Charlemagne in this *titulus* also skilfully inserted the Carolingians into theological time and salvific history, according with a view of the Franks and their ruling family as the new *populus Dei*. Alcuin's sharp and concise imperative (in God's voice) warned against sin, death, and the abnegation of sovereignty through misdeeds, all themes bound up in the nature-disaster discourse and language of *felicitas* established in *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* and the other eighth-century texts surveyed above.

Alcuin's Genesis *tituli* unambiguously and efficiently expressed those warnings that, through the coded language of *felicitas*, infuse so many of his other writings on kingship and rule: the governor of the happily ruled, appointed by God, defends the rules and customs of Paradise or he will lose both realm and power. If the Carolingians did not uphold these duties, they—like Adam—would lose their dominions, which is precisely how Nithard explained the chaos and strife of the civil war fought among Charlemagne's grandchildren: once wholesome nature in open rebellion against its caretakers. It was the same warning issued by pseudo-Cyprian, vividly depicted through Cathwulf's thorns and thistles, and articulated by Alcuin and his contemporaries, the heeding of which sustained for a time Charlemagne's empire of happy kingdoms.

Alcuin's verse *tituli* likely worked in a similar way, impressing the point for any readers of the verses and on anyone contemplating the images they might have accompanied. The line explaining Adam's naming of the animals stands apart from most of the poem, which reports in the third-person: God created Adam, the angel guarded the gate of Paradise, Noah built an ark, etc. "Father Adam" adopts the imperative, marking this line of the text out as a command. Alcuin and others frequently deployed biblical epithets for

⁸⁸ "Perge foras Adam et felicia regna relinque." Alcuin, *Carm.* 115, ed. Dümmler, p. 346, line 7.

⁸⁹ See "Introduction," 20n51.

the recipients of their writings. Alcuin and his contemporaries regularly addressed the recipients of their writings through biblical epithets, and a reader accustomed to that habit might well have heard the imperative as reaching past Adam to the ruler who was to exercise the same dominion. Perhaps “Father Adam” was meant for Charlemagne, for elsewhere Alcuin portrayed all of creation as crying out to him, “Fare well, father.”⁹⁰

The terminology used by Alcuin to refer to “all living things” (*cunctis animantibus*) reflects the language of the Genesis text and Alcuin’s own commentary on it, but it also recalls Alcuin’s letter in which he depicted Pope Leo’s flight northward—the very event that the *Karolus Magnus* poet, examined in this book’s Introduction, also described, and that precipitated Charlemagne’s imperial coronation. As we saw earlier, in this letter Alcuin likens Leo’s escape to that of the flight of an “eagle” who fled to Saxony to see Charlemagne, “the lion, dominating over all living things and beasts” (*leonem, cunctis dominantem animantibus et feris*), further equating the Frankish king to the Edenic steward and subverting Leo’s own name in the process. But here Alcuin’s vivid depiction of Charlemagne as the “king of beasts” included the *feri* whose wildness resulted from the Fall and the corruption of creation and signalled a reorientation of the Franco-Papal political dynamic: from this time onward Charlemagne (the *leonem*), not the pontiff Leo, took charge.⁹¹

Carolingian reform efforts linked *correctio*, and thus exegesis, to a desire to transform the environment from a wilderness into a garden or game park of curated plants, animals, and people.⁹² The idea of tidying up nature took shape at Charlemagne’s court and spread throughout the Carolingian Empire during the next century. Charlemagne was the latest and best-positioned Adam, equipped and sanctioned to re-arrange and redeem the natural world, bringing it under Frankish dominion. Charlemagne’s ecological governance was simultaneously a political act, a theological imperative, and an eschatological necessity. Through councils, capitularies, letters, and exegesis, Alcuin and others taught the Carolingians to reimagine origin myths in

90 “Optime quod regem suscipit ipsa senem...Sidera sancta poli, viridis et gramina terrae, / Omnia conclament: ‘David ubique vale.’ / Terra, polus, pelagus, homines, volucresque, ferraque / Concordi clament voce: ‘Valeto pater.’” Alcuin, *Ep.* 174, ed. Dümmler, p. 289, lines 22, 25–28.

91 “Cui crederem, si quid dixisset de aquila? qui, nuper Romanae arcis deserens cacumina, ut biberet Saxonici ruris fontes et videret leonem, cunctis dominantem animantibus et feris.” Alcuin, *Ep.* 181, ed. Dümmler, p. 299, lines 7–9. For “king of beasts,” see Dutton, *Charlemagne’s Mustache*, 43–68.

92 Dutton, *Charlemagne’s Mustache*, 67.

the pages of the Genesis text, and their expansive vision of ecological sovereignty took as its model the first three chapters of that work.⁹³

Conclusion

Alcuin's warnings connected the rhetoric of happy kingdoms with the discourse of ecological sovereignty that Wigbod had found in Genesis and deployed to bolster Charlemagne's mission of *correctio*. Wigbod's commentary offered metaphorical instructions for achieving these goals, and Alcuin's (and other Carolingian authors') writings established an early warning system for detecting success or failure on the ruler's part in terms of happy kingdoms and disastrous environments. A ruler who governed rightly, according to both the demands of *correctio* and the standards of a just, happy king, was supposed to supervise and improve not only the living creatures of his good garden but also shape the land itself. For doing so legitimated and supported the goals of *correctio* according to the logic of Carolingian ecological sovereignty.

This chapter has shown how the Carolingian discourse of *felicitas* became a flexible yet powerful framework for measuring the responsibilities and failures of kingship. From Alcuin's prayers, letters, and poetic admonitions to the competing voices of rivals like Theodulf, we have seen how happiness, prosperity, and ecological well-being were cast not as incidental blessings but as the very proof of just rule. To be a Carolingian king was to embody a visible harmony between ruler, people, and environment—an emotional and material performance in which blooming fields, ordered churches, and smiling faces attested to sovereign virtue, while filth, famine, and disorder warned of collapse.

By weaving together biblical exempla, classical echoes, and the lived experience of the court, Carolingian authors forged a rulebook in which joy and justice, felicity and fertility, became inseparable measures of sovereignty, facts that could and should be observed in the transformation of the environment around them. It is no accident, then, that Charlemagne's grandson Nithard could summarize his grandsire's reign by declaring that he "ruled happily (*feliciter*) for thirty-two years, and no less held the helm of empire with all felicity (*felicitate*) for fourteen years."⁹⁴

⁹³ Leonardi, "Aspects of Old Testament Interpretation in the Church," 189.

⁹⁴ "Regnavit feliciter per annos duos et XXX imperiiq[ue] gubernacula nihilominus cum omni felicitate per annos quattuordecim possedit." Nithard, *Historiarum libri IIII*, ed. Müller, 2.

