

Narratio clericorum Remensium

(ca. 866)

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Translated by

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Courtney M. Booker and Thomas Ellison

University of British Columbia

(cbooker@mail.ubc.ca)

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When all the people deserted the emperor Louis and went over to his son Lothar, among them Bishop Ebo also committed himself to Lothar. Passing through the imperial palaces, Lothar brought his father with him to Soissons to the monastery of Saint-Médard. There, since [that place] was in his diocese, Ebo was compelled by the exhortations and pressure of the other bishops and princes of the realm to
5 impose public penance on [Louis]. For this act, [Ebo] incurred [Louis's] exceeding and enduring enmity. Thereafter, most of the leaders and people returned to the emperor, deserting his son Lothar, and they restored [Louis] to imperial power at the monastery of Saint-Denis [in 834]. However, at that time, Bishop Ebo was staying at the monastery of Saint-Basle, within the parish of Reims, being lame in both feet and afflicted by extreme infirmity. Indeed, since [Ebo] was neither able to escape with Lothar, nor
10 have the heart of the emperor softened in any way against himself, he was fearful, lest, just as often happens in such a whirlwind of fury, he should be killed by unruly and undisciplined men as if out of loyalty to the lord emperor. So [Ebo] ordered that he be carried to a certain river by the name of Marne, which was nearby, and be sent off on a ship; and in Paris, [that he] be taken to the cell of a certain hermit, hoping that he could remain there in safety, until he was able either to appease the heart
15 of the emperor somehow, or to recover his health and be able to follow Lothar. Hearing that [Ebo] had fled there, the lord emperor [Louis] sent [men] after him and ordered him to be placed under guard and held at the monastery of Saint-Boniface in Fulda, and after two years be taken to Thionville in the parish

of Metz, where the emperor held a public assembly. Presented at the council of bishops, [Ebo] first was accused by the emperor, and having been tormented for so long by extreme terrors, [and] having finally
20 taken counsel with other fellow bishops and his brothers – since according to the decrees of the holy fathers no bishop or archbishop, stripped of all his possessions, held under guard, and separated from his own church could be condemned in a synod that was neither convened by apostolic authority nor ratified by a legation from it – lest he be tormented any longer by such [terrors], and so that while sound in body he might by whatever means avoid the wrath of the greatest prince, acting under
25 compulsion [Ebo] wrote this tract:

“I, Ebo, unworthy, former bishop, recognizing my fragility and the weight of my sins, appointed for myself, as judges of my transgressions, [these] witnesses [as] confessors, namely Archbishop Aiulf [of Bourges] and Bishop Badarad [of Paderborn] as well as Bishop
30 Modoin [of Autun]. I gave a pure confession to them, seeking the remedy of repentance and the salvation of my soul, so that I might resign from the pontifical office and ministry, of which I recognize myself to be unworthy, and making myself an outcast on account of my offenses in which I confessed secretly to them that I had sinned, in order that these same men might be witnesses for another who should succeed [me] and should be
35 consecrated and put in my place as a substitute [as archbishop of Reims], one who might worthily preside over and be useful to the church, over which I have unworthily presided until now, and so that henceforth I might not be able to make a claim [of the see] or appeal by canonical authority, I have confirmed [this] by subscribing with my own hand.”

40 No one ever required the testimony of these [same] witnesses or confessors with respect to the succession and consecration of another man [as bishop of Reims], since one of them – namely, Badarad – was also at Ebo’s restoration.

When the council concluded, [Ebo] was then brought back under close guard to the same place, namely, the monastery of Saint-Boniface; after some time, he was similarly commended to the custody
45 of Bishop Frechulf of Lisieux, and then [to the custody] of Abbot Boso in the monastery of Saint-Benedict [Fleury], under whose hand [Ebo] was living in exile when the lord emperor [Louis] went the way of all flesh.

Now, with the emperor deceased, [Ebo] was brought back to Lothar by Abbot Boso and met with him at Ingelheim, where, in a synod assembled by apostolic authority and at the command of
50 Emperor Lothar [in June, 840], he was restored there by these bishops : Bishop Drogo [of Metz], Archbishop Hetti [of Trier], Archbishop Otgar [of Mainz], Archbishop David [of Lausanne], Archbishop

Amalwin [of Besançon], Archbishop Joseph [of Ivrea], Archbishop Audax [of Tarentaise], Bishop Adalulf [of Grenoble], Bishop Erminius, Bishop Badarad [of Paderborn], Bishop Agano [of Bergamo], Bishop Samuel [of Worms], Bishop Hrodingus, Bishop Frotharius [of Toul], Bishop Gisibertus, Bishop Ado [of Vienne], Bishop Hrambertus [of Brescia], Ratulfus called bishop [of Strasbourg], Hartgarius called bishop [of Liège], Amalricus called bishop [of Como], Abbot Boso from the monastery of Saint-Benedict, along with many other abbots, priests, and deacons.

So he was sent back to his own see, namely, the church of Reims, by Lothar, now called emperor, or by the council mentioned earlier. Coming to that [church], he was received on VIII. Ides of December [6 December 840] by his suffragan bishops, Bishop Rothadus [of Soissons], Bishop Simeon [of Laon], Bishop Lupus [of Châlons], Bishop Erpwin [of Senlis], together with envoys of all the other bishops of the diocese of Reims, who, detained by various infirmities, were not well [enough] to attend in person, but nevertheless through ecclesiastical envoys and written excuses exhibited their presence to him. In addition, he was also met by canons and monks, and neighboring priests of the whole diocese, with a boundless crowd of both men and women, who, with palm branches and burning candles, and with the loftiest voices shouting praises to God from the depths of their hearts. All went to meet him far from the church, and singing psalms ceaselessly, they conducted him right up to the church. Then, when prayer had been completed and silence imposed, Bishop Rothadus ascended the pulpit, leading the monk Ingobert with him, and he first addressed the rejoicing multitude about the welcome return of their shepherd [Ebo], and how he was being sent back to them, restored by a holy council or the emperor Lothar; and [Rothadus] ordered the monk Ingobert to read [Ebo's] restoration in a loud voice. In the presence of the whole church, the envoys of the bishops also each gave the written assent of his own bishop and people, all of which were read again publicly by Ingobert, monk of the church. Finally, Vitaus, a chorbishop and vicar of Bishop Theoderic [of Cambrai], gave the assent copied below, which we have inserted here before the others, so that the deed, however briefly described, might be more clearly known, and the consent of those who were not able to be present at [Ebo's] restoration might be more plainly understood.

“Since it is not unknown what appears to have been ascertained by many – namely, how this greatest church of the Gauls, under the rule of the Franks, has been troubled in these times, shaken by various disturbances and conflicts of princes as a result of [their] violent indignation, leading to the exile in various regions of a great number of bishops, driven by force from their own sees, or having abandoned their flocks out of fear. Among them also was Ebo, archbishop of the church of Reims, [who was] seized from his own see by the violent indignation of the princes, [and] led into exile. He was brought back under guard so

that he might escape imminent danger and mitigate the wrath of his persecutors by redeeming the time (cf. Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5), in order that he might preserve himself for a better time. With the consent of the bishops, he withdrew from [his] ministry as pontiff, since amid terrors and conflicts reason does not permit the offering of sacrifices, as the Lord says: *If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; Leave thy offering there*, and so on (Matt. 5:23–24). But after God restored more peaceful times to His Church, it pleased the princes and ecclesiastical masters that the same pastor [Ebo] should be restored to his own flock and take back into his care again those sheep whom he had unwillingly abandoned. To these proper ecclesiastical affairs, I, Theoderic, bishop of Cambrai, canonically proffer [my] approval – just as previously I grieved over his departure with compassion, so now rejoicing over his return I have signed and confirmed these decisions of the elders and brothers, since I have read that such things have also often happened in other ecclesiastical records.”

Thus, when these [matters] were accomplished, with [the bells] ringing out again, and the whole church crying out « *Te Deum laudamus* », the oft-mentioned Bishop Ebo was led into the vestry and clothed in episcopal vestments, like the other bishops, and they proceeded with him to celebrate mass. Bishop Rothadus [of Soissons], supporting him on his right hand, had on his side Lupus, bishop of the church of Châlons, and the priest Hirminfredus, later bishop of the church of Beauvais; Bishop Simeon [of Laon], supporting him on his left hand, likewise had on his side Bishop Erpwin [of Senlis] and Vitaus, chorbishop of the church of Cambrai. And thus, proceeding with him to the holy altar, they led [Ebo] to his own seat, and sitting with him they participated with him in every pontifical office on that day. However, during the long period of his exile, when [Ebo] was absent, bishops had been ordained – [namely,] Bishop Simeon, Bishop Lupus, [and] Bishop Erpwin – which is strictly prohibited by the most sacred canons. When the consecration and solemnity of the sacrifice had been completed with all joy and happiness in the presence of the entire church, they [the three bishops] besought [Ebo] that by his authority their ordination might be established and confirmed. Most kindly hearing their prayers, [Ebo] publicly gave to them before the sacrosanct altar the rings and the staffs of his own authority in confirmation of their ordination, and he spoke about them to the whole church so that all might know that he consented to and supported their ordination in the charity that is of God (cf. 1 Jn 4:7).

Afterward, receiving aid and a legation from the oft-mentioned Emperor Lothar, he proceeded to the threshold of the blessed apostles, not considering it sufficient for his restoration to have the consent of so many bishops and other good men without the authority of the apostolic see, where he was received most kindly by the most pious and spiritual father, the apostolic Lord Gregory [IV], and by

120 apostolic authority was most fully restored, as we have in our possession. At long last, after [Ebo] had peacefully performed all the episcopal offices for more than two years, the oft-mentioned mother church of Reims called us to the clerical ranks, to which God knows we did not advance ourselves inappropriately, but we were brought forward by the election of the ministers of the church, and by the acclamation of our masters as well as by the offering of the entire church.

125 Sometime afterward, when Emperor Lothar and our Lord Charles, most glorious king, divided among themselves their father's kingdoms, our already oft-mentioned mother church of Reims fell within the region and control of the most glorious King Charles, with whom was the most beloved and mighty Abbot Fulcho, who had previously held that same church as a priest of the lord Emperor Louis, and then by the grace of the same king [Charles], in whose company he [now] was, he obtained it once
130 again. Fearing [that king's] force and fury, the oft-mentioned Bishop Ebo, since he had not yet made peace with [Charles], separated [himself] by remaining with Lothar, with whom he had been initially allied, and stayed with him for a long time. Fearing that there was no way by which he could regain his see peacefully, [Ebo] obtained by apostolic authority and with the consent of bishops, and also by the gift of King Louis of Germania, the vacant see of Hildesheim temporarily, while it was vacant, always aspiring
135 to [regain] his own see, which many testified that he sought from the Lord King Charles, although he was burdened by severe problems with his feet. Hence, compelled by necessity, returning to the see of Hildesheim, after the restitution of the apostolic see he is proven to have performed the episcopal office steadfastly to the end of his life, where, among many other good things, he also made numerous ordinations, which are joyfully embraced without any objection by all those beloved of God.

140 Meanwhile, each one of us, in his own order, peacefully carried out his ministry, and with everyone coming together to the same mother church [of Reims], bishops as well as kings and other powerful figures, [each] partook of communion [in the sacrament], until the aforementioned King Charles, after a long time, entrusted that same church to the governance of a man worthy of reverence, Hincmar, who, hostile to us, immediately after his ordination [in 845], prohibited [us] from conducting
145 our ministry. When we had humbly inquired of him, seeking the cause of our dismissal, he did not want to cast any blame upon us, but nevertheless ordered [us] to desist from our duties. However, those of us who were unwilling to withdraw from the church of Reims due to this same prohibition afterward always practiced our ministry without any opposition. Thus, how many quarrels and disputes that broke out between him and our oft-mentioned ordainer Ebo would be lengthy to set down in writing, since he
150 could not achieve what he had sought. However, [Hincmar] finally obtained from the most pious Pope Leo that [the pope] should assign him judges of [Hincmar's] own choosing, [namely] Bishop Drogo, Archbishop Otgar, Archbishop Hecti, and Archbishop Gunbaldus ; and then sending letters to Hincmar, [Pope Leo] ordered that, with these men having their turn [in office], he should present himself at Trier

to render account of the charges against Ebo. This by no means came to completion due to various
155 intervening events. These things [below] contained between these two symbols † †, we heard from that
monk himself and from those who were present, although we ourselves did not see them.

†

160 Likewise also, as it is reported and as we have heard, when Hincmar at that same time
sought the pallium from apostolic authority, he was not able to obtain it until it was
confirmed by an oath sworn to that same holy Roman see by Ermenard, a certain monk of
Orbais, that Ebo had already departed from this world, although he was still alive and,
despite being weighed down by old age and various infirmities, nevertheless ruled peacefully
and governed the see of Hildesheim. But nonetheless, in those very letters of apostolic
165 authority, by which the use of the pallium was granted to Hincmar, it is read that a cautious
clause was inserted, as can be found in the archives of the holy mother Roman church: “We
grant you the use of the pallium, but with the dispute that is held between you and Ebo
remaining unresolved.”

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170 To finish this litigation of the dispute, that same Ebo never deserved to arrive by any command or any
order of authority. But while they were thus contending, we always bore and endured our ignominious
deposition humbly and peacefully.

Now when our ordainer [Ebo] died in the month of March [851], at once our lord Hincmar
175 obtained [permission] from King Charles that he should call a synod at the monastery of Saint-Médard
at Soissons [in April, 853], and he ordered us, who were at that time about 14 in number – priests and
deacons – to go there, promising that he would treat us mercifully. When we refused and humbly
begged that he not make us go there to our greater confusion and degradation, he did not listen, but
rather commanded our masters that they should make us go there by all means, which they did. When
180 we arrived there, he ordered us to give a written statement of accusation, which we by no means
wanted to do, already knowing in part (as we later learned more clearly) what was being planned for us.
Nevertheless, although compelled, we others gave it, except for one who, before Ebo was removed, had
been handed over by canonical documents to Liutadus, bishop of Vence, and afterwards was ordained
with us by his permission and request. For he was with King Charles, and by no means came to the
185 synod, since his own bishop was not there. Nor had he himself, like us, come having been summoned
canonically to the synod, and therefore he did not send his name written there, although he is said to
have written in the document to which we subscribed under violent compulsion, and to have

transmitted [it] there through Sigloardus, Leuton, and Isaac, which he by no means did. But when the document was given, our lord Archbishop Hincmar, rising, chose judges for himself: Archbishop Wenilo
190 [of Sens], Archbishop Amalricus [of Tours], and also Pardulus [of Laon], his own suffragan bishop, even entrusting his own position to him. He also ordered us to choose [judges], we who had already been uncanonically excommunicated, if it is right to say so, by him alone. Suspended in this supreme tribulation, and fearing that if we should not choose, it would be attributed to pride and arrogance. But if we should choose, we knew it would by no means benefit us, since everything was being forcibly
195 extorted from us, namely because it was not at all proper for us to speak out, either [due to] the prejudgment of condemnation or [due to] the illegal summons to the synod. Also, the judges, who were to be chosen by us, since no delay of time was decreed, would have been chosen peremptorily on grounds of necessity, whereas according to the established laws judges ought to be chosen over a space of time, so that they can be carefully instructed about the matters on which they are to judge.