

Ebbo of Reims, *Apologeticum (forma prior)*

(ca. 841–842)

Version found in

Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 32 Helmst., fol. 190r–194r

(saec. XI)

[ed. Albert Werminghoff, *MGH, Concilia*, 2, 2 (Hannover, 1908), 794–99.]

Translated by

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– August 2022 –

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The earlier (“prior”) version of the *Apologeticum* of Ebbo of Reims survives in two manuscripts:

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 576, fol. 13v–18r (saec. IX)

Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 32 Helmst., fol. 190r–194r (saec. XI)

The text of the two manuscripts is largely the same, apart from an introductory paragraph appearing solely within Vat. Pal. lat. 576. However, the arrangement of the text as preserved in the two manuscripts is significantly different. Albert Werminghoff, the editor of the text for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* series, privileged Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 32 Helmst., and followed the arrangement of its text, despite its being younger than the Vatican manuscript. He did this because Cod. Guelf. 32 Helmst. was created in Hildesheim, the site of Ebbo’s final years (845–851), and thus he believed it likely preserved a version of the text closer to Ebbo’s original (which he presumed Ebbo had brought with him to Hildesheim). Moreover, Werminghoff considered the inverted chronological order of the narrative in Vat. Pal. lat. 576 (it begins with Ebbo’s restoration in 840, before

narrating the events of his deposition in the early 830s) to be evidence of an edited or corrupted text. Recently, this reasoning has been questioned, and it may be that the arrangement of the text in Vat. Pal. lat. 576, produced in the vicinity of Reims, should be given priority, as it may reflect an original attempt to emphasize Ebbo's restoration in 840. See:

Charles West, "Dissonance of Speech, Consonance of Meaning': The 862 Council of Aachen and the Transmission of Carolingian Conciliar Records," *Writing the Early Medieval West: Studies in Honour of Rosamond McKitterick*, ed. Elina Screen and Charles West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 175–77.

In the translation below, we have highlighted the identical text in each manuscript in corresponding colors, so that one may more easily compare how the text is arranged. Text that has not been highlighted is peculiar to the specific manuscript.

Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 32 Helmst. (saec. XI)

fol. 190r–194r

<https://diglib.hab.de/mss/32-helmst/start.htm?image=00383>

// fol. 190r //

IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, GOD THE MOST HIGH. WHEN THE GLORIOUS
Caesar Louis was ruling, [his] reign glimmered and was exceedingly prosperous in its early period, but
by its end it was shaken by the greatest adversity, as if having suffered that divine indignation by which,
concerning these most recent times, the power of the Gospel always strikes fear, saying: *The brother also*
5 *shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the son: and the children shall rise up against their parents*
(Matt. 10:21). Many lords (*potentes*) were driven from their land; bishops as well as others of God's
ministry suffered imprisonment and exile; and certain lay nobles, both men and women, were forced
(*compulsi*) to [take up] the monastic habit, so that at least by these scourges they might feel the remedies
of salvation through the correction of swift compunction, while those [already] having been hardened
10 might gain a sense of the future judgments of damnation. It was necessary that dreadful adversity purge
those whom an alluring prosperity had corrupted, lest the divine majesty be overcome with rage for
[their] hellish punishment.

And indeed, when these manifest dangers were recognized, I, Ebo, unworthy bishop of Reims, in the midst of various troubles, was beset by three afflictions (*pressuris*), that is, by having everything taken away [from me], by having been subdued through the wrath and custody of the prince [Louis the Pious], and by having been weakened with a bodily infirmity. I did not blush to say with the blessed psalmist: *I will declare my iniquity and I will think for my sin* (Vulg. Ps. 37:19). Admonished by [these] divine scourges, if I neglected the Lord's law in prosperous times, I was obliged to take refuge in it in times of adversity, so that if I formerly harmed anyone unjustly by means of [my] power, henceforth I vowed that amid straits (*angustiis*) I would patiently suffer the giving of harm. Moreover, if I unjustly took anything from anyone, I did not object to everything being taken from me, but in removing [my] tunic, I even gave up my cloak (*pallium*) (cf. Matt. 5:40). If I ever neglected a friend, henceforth I learned to love [my] enemy and to pray for [my] persecutors (cf. Matt. 5:44). Thus, accusing myself, I chose to assuage with a humble satisfaction the wrath // **fol. 190v** // of those seeking vengeance rather than to quarrel [with them], just as the blessed Abraham taught, who, amid dangers, divesting himself of authority over his wife, chose to cede with humility the wielding of power rather than to resist in a manner worthy of condemnation (cf. Gen. 20:2 ff.). Certainly, the holy apostle taught the same [thing] when he said: *Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved; but give place unto wrath* (Rom. 12:19). Moreover, amid divine blows, the blessed Job preferred not to murmur, but to pray and confess [his] sins; when troubled, he said between many other lamentations: *I have sinned, what shall I do to thee, O keeper of men?* (Job 7:20)

Inspired by these various examples of the patriarchs, carried away by the same worldly force, and compelled (*compulsus*) to [attend a] palace tribunal [and] not a synodal council of holy men (to which it is not permitted to be dragged violently [as I had been], but rather [only] summoned canonically as a free bishop), nevertheless it happened that I stood on trial in the midst of a multitude of holy brothers [who were] afflicted by the long wintry torment of that place, and I was comforted by their devout consolation. Thereupon that divinely inspired pronouncement concerning the charity of those who suffer became readily apparent to me, as it is written: *When one member suffers anything, the other members suffer with him* (1 Cor. 12:26). Assisted by the counsel [of these brethren], I chose for myself from among them three most confidential helpers, namely, Archbishop Aiulf [of Bourges], and Bishops Badarad [of Paderborn] and Modoin [of Autun], with whom I attentively conferred about the manner of our salvation and the forgiveness of sins, mindful of the gospel precept that states: *If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and so forth, up to leave there thy offering before the altar* (Matt. 5:23–24).

Therefore, discerning by this authority [of scripture] that [my] brother, [and thus] how much more that my prince [Louis the Pious], was roused against me, I left the offering of my oblation before the altar and, submitting with the greatest satisfaction to the agreement of [what my] confessors and brethren said, I patiently suffered all the injuries that were inflicted [upon me] for the **rightful** recovery

of concord, and through the purity of confession I believed that I would obtain forgiveness and the remission of sins rather than condemnation. For I judged the pride within me to be diabolical murder, // **fol. 191r** // vainglory, everlasting ruin, harmful friendship with this world – that is, with the lovers of this world – which, according to divine testimony, pertains to the enemy of God. I condemned [all this] in myself as a hellish punishment, for the sacred scriptures say: *He who is shown to be a friend of this world will be reckoned an enemy of God* (James 4:4). In accordance with evangelical law, I reckoned [both] the reproach of a brother and a foolish utterance as hellish torture; indeed, I detest hatred or a lie no less than murder, for as the apostle testifies: *He who hateth his brother is a murderer* (1 Jn. 3:15). In the same way, I reject a lie as the worst kind of wickedness, which was given primacy and **dreadfully** pronounced by God: *Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie* (Vg. Ps. 5:7). By such wickedness, God is offended, neighbour deceived, and the deceitful man himself perishes by his own murder. Indeed, having been terrified and goaded by these and other most dreadful afflictions like them, I groaned, not falsely, but devoutly, with the Lord correcting me, who *correcteth those he loveth, [and] scourgeth every son whom he receiveth* (Heb. 12:6), as the holy apostle clamors, *When we are judged, we are chastised by the Lord, that we be not condemned with this world* (1 Cor. 11:32).

Therefore, lest wrathful [men] sin all the more on my account, I followed the example (*argumento*) of our Savior's escape, who amid the hands of his persecutors *hid himself and went out of the temple* (Jn. 8:59). With dangers threatening [me], I did not delay to go out of the temple and withdraw from the pontifical office; I had been violently driven out (*expulsus*) already for three years from [my] place of rightly making the sacrifice. To be sure, the apostles, frightened at the time of the Passion, also did not seek [to perform] the sacrificial rite, but, by the provision of secret foresight, [sought] only a hiding place for prayer (cf. Jn 20:19–31), because amid fraternal discord, [one who] fears does not celebrate the divine gifts solemnly, and likewise a time of mourning does not call for ceremonies, but rather the remedies of escaping, as scripture states: *I will confess against myself my injustices to the Lord: and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin. For this shall every one that is holy pray to thee in a seasonable time* (Vg. Ps. 31:5–6). Therefore, in this seasonable time, // **fol. 191v** // if the saints are laboring for the forgiveness of [our] sins, then it is certainly necessary that sinners not delay in running to the remedies of confession. In this respect, that public written statement (*inscriptio*) of my confession [is] by no means harmful, but rather the healthiest thing to be had, for by means of it a certain forgiveness of sins can take place, since the law of penitents, which begins from sorrow, arises by merit toward joy, as the divine pronouncement says: *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy* (Vg. Ps. 125:5). For the Lord is chosen not to despise or condemn, but rather to heal and raise up those contrite in heart (cf. Lk. 4:18). Therefore, amid straits (*angustiis*), I **lawfully** produced a subscription (*subscriptionem*) that by no means condemns me, but rather [gives evidence] of seizure; not convicted [of anything], but greatly

constrained, I carried it out. I have thought it better that it should be inserted here with the public attestation (*adnotatione*) as a witness of the truth, lest having been augmented or shortened, [the text] be blemished at any time by the lies of some envious person, and so that what was previously done by a hidden scheme (*argumento*) of seizure may be examined in public here and now, everywhere and by all, with the judgment of true charity. Since there is no specific offense [worthy] of condemnation found within [that text], by no means should anyone suffer confusion in [their] judgment [of me] any further. Therefore, such a subscription (*scriptio*) is not harmful, but greatly profitable to be had, for it assuaged the wrath of [those] seeking vengeance; having been offered [up], it lightened the wintry, troubling torments of the brethren, [and] also delivered me from the fury of wrathful men. Moreover, according to the authority of the holy scriptures, it also offered the forgiveness of sins to me, a confessor, if, castigated by heaven with respect to the initiated correction of [my] ways, I shall have persevered. To be sure, I wrote [this text], in which, before God, I did not fall, but rather recovered by means of a humble satisfaction. Thus, I present these proclamations for maintaining [my] power (*vim*), since I am certain and I know whom I have believed (cf. 2 Tim. 1:12):

“I, Ebo, unworthy bishop, recognizing my weakness and the weight of my sins (*peccatorum*), appointed for myself, as judges of my transgressions (*delictorum*), [these] witnesses, my confessors, // fol. 192r // namely Archbishop Aiulf [of Bourges] and Bishop Badarad [of Paderborn] as well as Bishop Modoin [of Autun]. I gave a pure confession to them, seeking the remedy of doing penance and the salvation of my soul, so that I may resign from the pontifical office and ministry, of which I recognize myself to be unworthy. Making myself an outcast on account of my offenses (*reatibus*), I confessed secretly to the [three] men that I had sinned (*peccasse*); [I did it] in this way so that these same men might be witnesses for another who should succeed [me] and should be consecrated and put in my place as a substitute [as archbishop of Reims], one who may worthily preside over and be useful to the church, over which I have unworthily presided until now. And therefore, so that henceforth I may not be able to make a reclamation [of the see] or appeal by way of canonical authority, signing below with my own hand I have confirmed [it].”

If anyone, on account of this salutary kind of treatise – devised amid difficulties (*in pressuris*) – should determine that I ought to be condemned, [then] he likewise will be able to censure me with respect to all my writings, in which I never represent myself as righteous, but always denounce [myself] everywhere, signing “an unworthy bishop.” Indeed, no one will be able to find me [to be] a violator or a liar in this same subscription (*subscriptione*), since no one there [in Reims] was afterwards more useful [than I]; for almost seven years, during the period of [my] penance, when according to the Holy Church

115 the forgiveness of sins is customary to be rendered to penitents, I, patiently waiting, did not impede the dignity of the consecration of anyone [else] there – *Therefore, condemn not, as our Lord God declares, and you will not be condemned; for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged* (Matt. 7:1–2).

Thus, if this treatise (*conscriptio*), created as the result of various necessities, that is, of sins and of [those] seeking vengeance, still begets uneasiness in anyone about the creation of scandal
120 (*scandalizanti*) [on my part], I entreat all to examine the evidence of [my] words there, in which the specific crime was found, from which a canonical condemnation duly follows, justly, I pray, and not to pass judgment in anger on [your] neighbour. For when one esteems himself as upright, let him take care lest he fall (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12), for the spiteful judge, in seeking the splinter // **fol. 192v** // in the eye of another, sees not at all the beam in his own (cf. Matt. 7:5; Lk. 6:41). To be sure, canonical authority
125 shines with a brighter light, since, just as a bishop is never driven out canonically without a specific crime, so neither [is he driven out] by a voluntary absolution. How much the less, [then], is it not permitted to remove a bishop under the forcible custody of another, without the presence of concord or the agreement of the citizens under that bishop's dominion!

Therefore, an ecclesiastical reclamation (*repetitio*) with respect to all these things worthily
130 prevails over any other harmful inventions or personal pleasures instead of the pursuit of Jesus Christ.

When these highest palace affairs concerning [my] restoration were settled canonically, the
authorization of my restoration by the bishops (*conprovincialium*), which had been solemnly confirmed on the VIII Ides of December (6 Dec. 840), was displayed in the foremost church and holy see of Reims, in the view of all the bishops (*praesulibus*) of the diocese who were rushing there, as well as fellow
135 illustrious citizens, whom, impelled (*promotis*) from afar by this ecclesiastical necessity or public utility, not a single impossibility could keep from coming. Rejoicing together in a general meeting, they, having been taught reasonably by the examples of the ancient fathers, produced this public subscription (*subscriptionem*), [which was] celebrated with unanimous agreement.

The bishops (*antistites*) unanimously sanctioned all these things appended below, beginning it by
140 writing:

“While it is not held as unknown, since it seems to be acknowledged by a great many, how this most excellent church of the Gauls under rule of the Franks has been troubled, shaken by various disturbances and conflicts of the princes in these times, whence a great number of bishops, driven out from their own sees by force, or having abandoned their flocks out of fear, were also exiled
145 among various regions. Among them also was Ebo, archbishop of the church of Reims, seized from his own see by the violent indignation of the princes, [and] led into exile. Whence, he was led back under custody, in order that he might avoid the imminent danger and assuage the wrath of [those] seeking vengeance, by redeeming the time (cf. Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5), so that he might

150 preserve himself for a better opportunity, he withdrew with the agreement of the bishops // **fol. 193r** // from [his] pontifical ministry, yet among terrors and conflicts reason did not allow [him] to offer sacrifices, as the Lord says: *If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave thy offering* (Matt. 5:23–24). But after God returned more peaceful times to His Church, it pleased the princes and ecclesiastical teachers that the same pastor be returned to his own flock and take back again into his care those whom he unwillingly
155 abandoned.

In these rightful ecclesiastical affairs, I, Teudericus, bishop of Cambrai, canonically proffer [my] approval – just as I previously lamented his departure with compassion, so now rejoicing over his return – by confirming these arrangements of the elders and brothers I sign below, since I often read of such things also having happened in other ecclesiastical accounts. Hrothadus, bishop of
160 Soissons, likewise thus affirms these matters. Hildemannus of Beauvais likewise. Lupus of Châlons likewise. Ragenarius of Amiens likewise. Erpwinus of Senlis likewise. Folcoinus of Théroutan likewise. Immo of Noyon likewise.”

Therefore, all things that are not clearly supported everywhere by canonical authority are
165 judged justly [as] invalid. At last, with so many and such great ecclesiastical assistants (*praesidiis*), I, the most faithful, sought for myself these present and eternal remedies of [my] salvation, since by keeping silent too much in a time for speaking, and by speaking too much in a time for keeping silent, among other things, I censured the harmful contagions within myself, imploring the divine majesty that He additionally set *a watch before my mouth: and a door round about my lips, not incline my heart to evil words, and to make excuses in sins* (Vulg. Ps. 140:3–4), but that *the just correct me always in mercy* (Vulg. Ps. 140:5). For as the divine power does not permit the just to correct unless in mercy, how will the sinner
170 rightfully be able to condemn the sinner // **fol. 193v** // without [eliciting] divine retribution? Certainly, the Lord gave assent to any of the rulers to condemn the prostitute deserving of legal punishments only if [they were] without sin (cf. Jn. 8:7), by which example of piety He showed [that He desires] not to mortify the contrite in heart, but wishes mercy rather than sacrifice (cf. Osee 6:6). Indeed, He did not condemn the publican accusing himself, but rather forgave [him]; He did not oppress [him], but extolled [him], for He did not say: *He who humbleth himself shall be condemned, but exalted* (Lk. 18:13–14; 14:11). Likewise, He did not reject the man cast down half-alive, but entrusted his care to the holy innkeepers, who have the power of binding and loosing, and, with their having received the divine payments of
180 denarii for restoring [that man], He exhorted [them] to sympathize from their own compassion for the gain of an eternal reward, saying *whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I, at my return, will repay thee* (Lk. 10:35). For the brief compunction of David did not merit degradation, but restoration. Moreover,

185 the holy apostles, having been rebuked for [their] promised and feigned perseverance during the
Passion, for Peter's denial, [and] for [their] foolishness and unbelief and hardness of heart after the
Resurrection, were by no means condemned, but even corrected and restored to their original
honours, purged by contrition of the heart. (cf. Matt. 26:33ff; 26:69ff) Such [mercy] with respect to the
redemption of backsliders (*lapsorum*) is not only celebrated, but also glorified everywhere by imitating
[the apostles], [and] is rejoiced by the holy church of God. It is clear that the laity, both men and
190 women, amid straits (*angustiis*), have been compelled (*compulsos*) by the modern authority of the palace
to assume the monastic habit of a penitent, and likewise, once peace has returned, [they have been
allowed] to return to their former secular status; indeed, it is well known that there is nothing shameful
if a lapsed cleric duly recovers his clerical office after the rite of a humble satisfaction.

Therefore, with such manifest divine examples of good deeds from the New and the Old
Testament having been exhibited by us, devoted, I offered myself for the purpose of the already
195 mentioned [and] commonly known humble satisfaction, because a humble satisfaction has always
merited restoration rather than condemnation at any time since the beginning. // fol. 194r // Indeed,
after this persecution, when Lothar Caesar, glorious heir of the offended prince [Louis the Pious], had
succeeded [him], ecclesiastical concord was soon restored to me, and the vacant church, which I had
formerly lost by way of force, I regained after the rightful satisfaction of nearly seven years, finding [it]
200 not with presumption, but by the petitions of the holy orders there, chiefly through the assistance of a
great number of magnificent bishops (*praesulibus*), by whose collective authority I was called back. It was
pleasing to make manifest this attestation (*adnotationem*), which should be read aloud in future times
with these writings worthy of remembrance (*scriptis his memorabilibus*) in the universal catholic Church
of God, and to eliminate the hostile opinions of false brethren by having this certain truth brought into
205 the open. It was proper to render a satisfaction with the holy and true brethren regarding all these
things. A delightful restitution worthy of God, furnishing, as it should have, more to rejoice together
over the grace of restoration than to lament over the uselessness of damnation, has provided these
things for the future.