

Narratio clericorum Remensium

(ca. 866)

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Translated by

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When all the people were deserting emperor Louis and going over to his son Lothar, among them bishop Ebo also committed himself to Lothar. This Lothar, coming through the imperial palace, brought his father with him to the monastery of Saint-Medard of Soissons, and there, Ebo, with other bishops and the foremost men of the kingdom encouraging and commanding [him], was forced (*coactus est*) to
5 impose a public penance upon [Louis], since [that place] was in his diocese. For this act, [Ebo] incurred [Louis's] excessive and continuous enmity.

Thereafter a large part of the nobles and the people returned to the aforementioned emperor, deserting his son Lothar, and restored [Louis] to the imperial office at the monastery of Saint-Denis [in
834]. However, at that time, bishop Ebo was impeded at the monastery of Saint-Basle, within the parish
10 of Reims, being lame in both feet and afflicted by extreme infirmity. Indeed, since [Ebo] was neither able to escape with Lothar, nor have the heart of the emperor softened whatsoever against him, he was fearful, lest, just as is wont to happen by such a whirlwind of fury, he be killed by capricious and undisciplined men as if out of loyalty to the lord emperor. He thereupon 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]
15 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 of the emperor by whatever means, or to become well and, with his health regained, follow after 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. When the council finally began [in Feb. 835] with other fellow bishops and his own brethren, [Ebo], who had been tormented for so long by extreme terror, was brought before a council of bishops and accused by the emperor. To be sure, 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 in a synod that was neither convened by apostolic authority nor ratified by a legation from it, could have been condemned. Under coercion (*coactus*), [Ebo] wrote this little book (*libellum*), [so that] he might not be tortured any longer, and also, [once] sound in body, that he might avoid by whatever means the wrath of the supreme leader [Louis]:

“I, Ebo, unworthy, former bishop, recognizing my weakness and the weight of my sins (*peccatorum*), appointed for myself, as judges of my transgressions (*delictorum*), [these] witnesses [as] confessors, 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 at any later time, signing below with my own hand I have confirmed [it].”

No one ever required the testimony of these [same] witnesses or confessors with respect to the succession and the consecration of another man [as bishop of Reims], although 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 likewise commended to the custody 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 the aforementioned abbot Boso and met with him at Ingelheim, where, in a synod assembled by apostolic authority and by

command of emperor Lothar [in June, 840], he was restored at this place 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 Giselbertus, 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, presbyters, and deacons.

60 So he was sent back to his own see, namely, to the Reims church, by Lothar, now called emperor, or by the council mentioned earlier. Coming to that [church], he was received on the 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 meet there by their bodily presence; nevertheless, those [absent] men appeared before him through
65 ecclesiastical envoys and justificatory letters, in addition to canons and monks, and neighboring presbyters of the whole diocese, with a boundless crowd of both men and women, who, with palm branches and burning wax candles, and for a long while shouting praises to God from the depths of their hearts and with the loftiest voices, all went to meet him by the church, and singing psalms without
70 ceasing, they brought him right up to the church. Then, when the 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 desired return of their shepherd [Ebo], and having been restored in such a way by the holy council and by the emperor Lothar, [Ebo] was sent back to them; and [Rothadus] ordered the monk Ingobert to read [Ebo's] restoration in a loud voice. To all present at
75 the church, the envoys of the bishops each gave the written assent of their own bishops and people, which was read aloud again in public to everyone at the church by monk Ingobert. Vitaus, a chorbishop and vicar of bishop Teudericus [of Cambrai], gave the final assenting subscription, which we have inserted here before the others, since it is pleasing that the thing that was done is recounted briefly within it [and thus] might be known more clearly, and [that] the agreement of those who were not well
80 [enough] to be present at [Ebo's] restoration might be more readily understood:

“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 due to the violent indignation of the princes in these times, whence a great
85 number of bishops, driven out from their own sees by force, or having abandoned their flocks out of

fear, were also exiled 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 preserve himself for a better opportunity, he withdrew with the agreement of the bishops 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 there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; Leave thy offering there before the altar,* and so on (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 into his care those whom he unwillingly 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 to others in ecclesiastical accounts.”

Thus, when these [matters] were accomplished, once again responding with gestures [signs of the Cross?] and exclaiming to all in the church, “Thee, O God, we praise,” the already oft-mentioned bishop Ebo was led into the vestry and clothed in episcopal vestments, as did likewise the other bishops, and they went in procession with him to the celebration of the mass. Bishop Rothadus [of Soissons], supporting him at the right hand, had of his own part Lupus, bishop of the church of Châlons, and presbyter Hirminfredus, later bishop of the church of Beauvais; bishop Simeon [of Laon], supporting him at the left hand, likewise of his own part [had] 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 all the men in every pontifical office sitting with him, took communion on [that] very day with him.

However, during the long period of his exile, when he was absent, bishops were ordained—[namely,] bishop Simeon, bishop Lupus, [and] bishop Erpwin—which is prohibited by every kind of the most sacred canons. The consecration and solemnity of the sacrifice having been completed with all joy and gladness, they [the three bishops] beseeched [Ebo] in the presence of the entire church that by his authority their ordination might be established and confirmed. Most benevolently obeying 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 announced to the entire church concerning them that all might know themselves in charity, which is of God (cf. 1 Jn 4:7), [and] to agree and subscribe to their ordination.

120 Moreover, after [these things], accepting the aid and legation of the already oft-mentioned emperor Lothar, by the agreement of so many bishops and other good men [Ebo] made his way to the abode of the blessed apostles [i.e., Rome] (his restoration being insufficient without the authority of the apostolic see), where, by the most pious and spiritual father Gregory [IV], namely the apostolic lord, [Ebo] was received most kindly and restored most fully by the apostolic authority, as we have at our
125 disposal. At long last, having performed all the episcopal offices in peace for more than two years, the already oft-mentioned mother church of Reims called us to the clerical ranks, to which, as God knew, we did not conduct ourselves inappropriately, but were granted [them] by the election [both] of the servants of the church and of our superiors, and also by the acclamation and offering of the whole church.

130 But after these things, 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 mightiest abbot Fulcho, who before as presbyter obtained the very church of lord emperor Louis, and by the grace of the same king, in whose company he [now] was [i.e., Charles], he acquired it once again.
135 The already oft-mentioned bishop Ebo, dreading the power and fury [of king Charles], since he had not yet made peace with that same king, separated [himself] by remaining with Lothar, with whom he had been initially allied, and stayed with him, fearing that there was no way by which he would have been able to obtain his see peacefully by apostolic authority and the consensus of bishops. Yet, through a gift of king Louis of Germania, he acquired the vacant see of Hildesheim (it being vacant for a time), [though]
140 he always continued striving for his own see [of Reims]. Indeed, despite being burdened by a powerful infirmity of the feet, Ebo was allowed to reclaim that [original see of Reims] by the lord king Charles and the testimony of many. Whence, compelled by necessity, returning to the aforementioned see of Hildesheim after the restitution of [his] apostolic see [of Reims], he discharged his episcopal duty to the end of his life without wavering, where, among many other good things, he also made numerous
145 ordinations, which were embraced with delight without any censure whatsoever by all those beloved by God.

 Meanwhile, each one of us, in accordance with his own order, peacefully carried out [our ministry] and, with everyone coming together to the same mother church, bishops as well as kings and other potentates, [each] partook [in the sacrament], until the already aforementioned king Charles
150 entrusted the same church to the governance of a man worthy of reverence long afterwards, Hincmar, who, immediately after his ordination [in 845], being hostile to us, prohibited [us] from conducting our ministry. When we had humbly entreated him, seeking the cause of our expulsion, he wished not 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 on account of this same prohibition afterwards
155 always practiced our ministry without any opposition. With respect to this, it is difficult to express in
writing how many quarrels and conflicts arose between him and our already very oft-mentioned
ordainer, Ebo, since that which [Hincmar] had desired he was unable to obtain. However, in the
presence of the most pious pope Leo he at last prevailed that [Leo] give to him as judges of his
vicissitude bishop Drogo, archbishop Otgar, archbishop Hecti, and archbishop Gunbaldus; and whence,
160 by sending letters to the already mentioned Hincmar, [pope Leo] ordered that he [Hincmar] present at
Trier his vicissitude to those upholding the case for his restoration against Ebo. On account of various
intervening circumstances, this hardly came to fruition. We heard the things that are held between these
two symbols [below] from the monk himself, and from those who were there, but we did not see these
[things] ourselves.

165 †
Likewise, as it is reported, [and] just as we heard, how when the same Hincmar sought by apostolic
authority the pallium, [which] he was formerly unable to obtain, it was confirmed by an oath to the same
holy Roman see by Ermenardus, a certain monk of Orbais, that Ebo had already departed from the
world, despite the fact that, though weighed down by old age and various infirmities, [Ebo] was still alive,
170 guiding and governing peacefully the see of Hildesheim. But in those documents of apostolic authority, in
which the use of the pallium was granted to the same Hincmar, as can be found in the archives of the
holy mother church of Rome, there is an insertion (*insertum*) that circumspectly reads: “We concede to
you the use of the pallium, despite the harmless dispute (*salva tamen contentione*) which took place
between you and Ebo.”

175 †
The same Ebo deserved to reach the ending of that contentious quarrel by no [such] command, by no
[such] injunction of authority at any time. To be sure, when these things were being disputed thus, we
always bore our ignominious degradation by maintaining humility and peace.

Now when our already mentioned ordainer [Ebo] died in the month of March [851],
180 immediately our lord Hincmar in the presence of king Charles gained [permission] to call a synod at the
monastery of Saint-Medard of Soissons [in April, 853], and he ordered that we presbyters and deacons
go there, at the time altogether 14 in number, promising that he would treat us compassionately. He did
not listen to our objections and humble prayers that he not make us go there for our rather great
embarrassment and degradation, but rather he commanded our superiors that they make us by any
185 means go there, which they did. When we had come there, he ordered us to give a proclamation
(*libellum proclamationis*), which we were hardly willing [to do], knowing, in part, at the time – and as we
learned more clearly afterwards – what was being debated regarding us. Nevertheless, having been

compelled, we gave [it], with the exception of one [of us], who, before Ebo was removed, had [already] been handed over by canonical documents to Liutadus, bishop of Vence, and afterwards was ordained
190 with us through the licence and entreaty of the same man. For this man was with king Charles, and by no means did he come to the synod, because his own bishop was not there. But he, having been summoned canonically to the synod, just as we also had been, had not arrived. Therefore, he did not send his own written name there, even if it is said to have been written by us in the booklet having been subscribed by the threat of violence, and [is said] to have been transmitted there through Sigloardus,
195 Leuton, and Isaac, [a thing] which was hardly done. When the booklet had been given, rising up, our lord archbishop Hincmar chose as his own judges archbishop Wenilo [of Sens], archbishop Amalricus [of Tours], and his own suffragan bishop, Pardulus [of Laon], even commending to him his own place. He ordered that we [also] choose [judges] – we who had already been excommunicated uncanonically, if it is right to say, by that man alone. Remaining in this supreme tribulation, we were afraid, since if we did
200 not choose, it would be attributed to [our] pride and arrogance, but if we did choose, we knew it would by no means profit us, because everything was being forcibly extorted from us, namely because [Hincmar] was not allowing us to speak out, either about the forejudgment of condemnation or about the illegal summons to the synod. Indeed, the judges, who were to be chosen by us, were to be chosen not by way of a [deliberately] introduced delay of time, but by the [sudden] interruption of unexpected
205 necessity, although according to established laws judges ought to be chosen over a period of time, so that they might be carefully instructed about those matters which they were to judge.