



PROJECT MUSE®

Sharers in the Contemplative Virtue: Julianus Pomerius's Carolingian Audience

Josh Timmermann

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Volume 45, 2014, pp. 1-44 (Article)

Published by Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies,
DOI: [10.1353/cjm.2014.0029](https://doi.org/10.1353/cjm.2014.0029)



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cjm/summary/v045/45.timmermann.html>

SHARERS IN THE CONTEMPLATIVE VIRTUE: JULIANUS POMERIUS'S CAROLINGIAN AUDIENCE

Josh Timmermann*

Abstract: Sometime between the end of the fifth century and the early sixth, the priest, grammarian, and rhetorician Julianus Pomerius composed a hortatory guidebook for bishops entitled *De vita contemplativa*. In the centuries following its composition, this paranetic text became erroneously attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine, the famous defender of Augustine's doctrine of grace in mid-fifth-century Gaul. Consequently, Pomerius's text was lent discernible authority, both through Prosper's well-known connection to Augustine as well as through the apparent Augustinianism of the text itself. The *De vita contemplativa* was also often paired closely with the work of Gregory the Great, which served to further enhance the importance of the text for Carolingian bishops. As this article argues, Pomerius's contention, that not only monks, but also worldly bishops could achieve an earthly form of perfection through a rigorous adherence to their duties as "watchmen," proved remarkably appealing, and useful, to the Carolingian episcopate.

Keywords: Julianus Pomerius; Augustine of Hippo; Prosper of Aquitaine; Gregory the Great; Carolingian bishops; Carolingian church councils; episcopal authority; Jonas of Orléans; the contemplative life; the active life.

Sometime between the end of the fifth century and the earliest years of the sixth century, the priest, grammarian, and rhetorician Julianus Pomerius composed a hortatory guidebook for bishops entitled *De vita contemplativa* ("On the Contemplative Life," hereafter *VC*).¹ Pomerius likely died not long after completing it. In the decades and centuries that followed his death, this paranetic text became erroneously attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine, the famous defender of Augustine's doctrine of grace in mid-fifth-century Gaul.² Among medieval readers, Prosper's name carried with it a far greater degree of "patristic" authority than did the increasingly obscure (though never entirely forgotten) Pomerius, despite the latter's historical connection to the well-known Caesarius of Arles, a student of Pomerius before ascending to the episcopate.³

What all these figures share is the historically inadvertent condition of working under the powerful shadow of Augustine of Hippo. Though Prosper alone among these three ecclesiastics experienced direct contact (via letters) with Augustine before the great bishop's death in 430, each of these writers was deeply influenced by the work, and posthu-

*History, University of British Columbia, joshtimmermann@yahoo.com.

¹ Pomerius, PL 59.411–520. In English as *Julianus Pomerius, The Contemplative Life*, trans. Mary Josephine Suelzer (Westminster 1947).

² On Prosper, see Alexander Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace: The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington, DC 2009).

³ William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge 1994) 73–75.

mous reputation, of Augustine.⁴ Thus, as I will argue in the opening section of this essay, it is “within Augustinianism” that the problem of authorial attribution, and the early stirrings of the “author-function” with regard to Pomerius/Prosper and the *VC*, must first be situated. While the *VC* could certainly, on its own merits, have passed muster as an “Augustinian” work, the closer, nominal connection to Augustine supplied by the mis-attribution to Prosper lent the *VC* an aura of patristic authority that Pomerius’s name would not have bestowed. This value-added benefit of Prosper’s name is clear by at least the middle of the eighth century, when Chrodegang of Metz, in composing his *Regula canonicorum*, invoked the name of “*sanctus Prosper*.”⁵ However, as I shall argue, the “Augustinianism” evinced by Prosper, in his polemical tracts defending Augustine’s more controversial writings, is not at all identical to, or indistinguishable from, Pomerius’s mostly middle-of-the-road Augustinianism. While this study cannot conclusively answer the questions of exactly how or when this mistaken ascription of the *VC* to Prosper was first made, it will aim to demonstrate that discerning a significant, probably irreconcilable difference between Prosper’s authentic works and the *VC* would not have been particularly difficult, even for the later generations of readers who had inherited the erroneous ascription of the *VC* to Prosper. One of these later generations takes center stage in the second section of this article. In the years leading up to the reign of Louis the Pious (814–840) and the Council of Aachen in 816, “Prosper’s” *VC* was utilized in new ways that were particularly well-suited to the efforts of ecclesiastical and social reform spearheaded by Charlemagne and his empire’s elite group of bishops. First, the *VC*’s provocative central message, that bishops, through the active life of their ministry, could share in the highest degree of perfection possible in this world, provided Carolingian bishops with a persuasive, “ancient” foundation upon which to argue for their greater authority over both monks and the lay magnates of the realm.⁶ Second, the ever-expanding textual strategy of pairing quotations from the *VC* with passages by the sixth-century pope (and likely reader of Pomerius) Gregory the Great simultaneously bolstered the authority of the *VC* as a patristic source, and re-contextualized Pomerius’s (or “Prosper’s”) work within the field of ecclesiological discourse. The Augustinianism of the *VC*, and perhaps more importantly its close association with Au-

⁴ See, in particular, Conrad Leyser, “Augustine in the Latin West, 430–ca. 900,” *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. Mark Vessey (Chichester 2012) 450–464.

⁵ Martin A. Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church: Chrodegang of Metz and the Regula canonicorum in the Eighth Century* (Cambridge 2004) 184.

⁶ On this point, see Michael E. Moore, “Ancient Fathers: Christian Antiquity, Patristics, and Frankish Canon Law,” *Millennium* 7 (2010) 293–342.

gustine through its ascription to Prosper, had firmly positioned the *VC* within the repertoire of authoritative sources drawn upon by Carolingian bishops. Yet, the grouping of “Prosper” with Gregory also meant that new types of meaning could be drawn from the *VC*, with the content of the work now interpreted in ways that differed from its earlier reception.

The third and final section of this study traces the years immediately following 816, when the Carolingian episcopate rose to new, precipitous heights of spiritual and political authority, aided in no small part by the *VC*. Following the pronouncement of the prophet Ezechiel—a scriptural passage also quoted and pondered by Pomerius—the bishops around Louis the Pious projected a powerful conception of themselves and their social function as “watchmen unto the House of Israel.” At a remedial council at Paris in 829, the *VC* would play a particularly crucial role in firmly asserting this ministerial argument for episcopal authority. Indeed, four years after the Paris council, these “Pomerian,” “Prosperian” bishops would preside over the extraordinary public penance and deposition of emperor Louis the Pious. However, the removal of Louis from the throne was short-lived. Upon his official restoration in 835, the audacious bishops who had collectively rebuked the wayward emperor fell quickly back in line. Forced to lay low and re-group, they retreated from their adoption of the bolder sentiments expressed in the *VC*. The value derived from both the author-function and the content of the *VC*, especially when used in conjunction with the ideas contained in Gregory’s *Regula pastoralis*, had declined in direct proportion with the shrinking purview of the humbled bishops’ ministry.

For early medieval ecclesiastics, the words of the Church Fathers, perhaps second only to the Word of scripture, were self-evident in their trans-historical, divinely-aided truth, not constructed by the discursive machinations of human society. Thus, while I shall argue that Carolingian bishops employed the *VC* and the works of Gregory, Augustine, and others in a strategic and creative manner, it is critical to acknowledge that they received these revered works with the utmost seriousness. In his examination of the ecclesio-political conflicts of the 830s, Courtney Booker advocates an approach that “examine[s] [early medieval] words and deeds within the discursive context of their time.”⁷ I have tried to follow this sound advice here. At the risk of my own (non-religious) subjectivity, I would prefer to engage a complex theological concept like “the possibility of spiritual perfection” (the subject of this article’s second section) from the vantage point of how

⁷ Courtney Booker, *Past Convictions: The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians* (Philadelphia 2009) 125.

my subjects appear to have understood this concept. For the *VC*'s readers among the Carolingian episcopate, an earthly form of "perfection" was indeed attainable, and, as Pomerius/Prosper had contended, not only for monks but for secular clerics as well. However, as I will show, it was imperative to the program of reform that ever more work had to be done—in particular, the work of conscientious ministry—before such a lofty goal could be realized here on earth. As I hope to make clear in the pages that follow, my argument is not only that Carolingian bishops used the *VC* to bolster their authority in a political sense, based on the constructed "patristic" status of the text and the name(s) attached to it, but also, and just as importantly, that these bishops believed the message contained within the *VC* to be true and vital to their own spiritual health and to that of the Church and realm.

I. WITHIN AUGUSTINIANISM

"Augustinianism" can be described as a heady, peculiar, not entirely coherent mix of ideas—some taken more or less directly from Augustine's work, some borrowed from the muddled understanding of his work by others, all of it associated powerfully and purposefully with one of the loftiest names in Christian history, outside of scripture.⁸ Yet, it is not at all clear how, and more to the point, when, the name of Augustine came to carry such tremendous gravitas. Even the notion of "Augustinianism" outlined above, while acknowledging the blurry contours of the reception of the great bishop's thought, is still symptomatic of a historiographical narrative that both inevitably compresses the temporal dimensions of Augustine's influence in the West, and suggests connections that are often extremely tenuous.⁹ While Possidius's biography of Augustine cast its recently deceased subject in the brilliant light of sainthood, core aspects of Augustine's theology were fiercely debated in the decades immediately following his death. In particular, the late-career writings associated with Augustine's doctrine of grace and predestination provoked serious contention between steadfast defenders like Prosper of Aquitaine (to whom we shall return) and the so-called "semi-Pelagians" of Gaul.¹⁰ However, it was from this very

⁸ See James J. O'Donnell, "The Authority of Augustine" *Augustinian Studies* 22 (1991) 227–255.

⁹ Leyser, "Augustine in the Latin West" (n. 4 above) 450, recently noted, that "when we take soundings in the Latin West during the five centuries after his death, we see that 'the making of St. Augustine' captures only one of the ways in which his presence functioned. If we are honest, we do not know how any of the church fathers 'became' such, let alone when. The data are not ready."

¹⁰ "Semi-Pelagians," a term that is inaccurately and confusingly applied to different theological factions (none of them "part" or "halfway" Pelagian), is declining in use, but there is not a clear consensus on what term scholars should use in its stead. Hwang, *In-*

period of controversy—when the name of Augustine, depending on the audience, might be as likely to start an argument as to end it—that a moderate, “middle path” emerged.¹¹ Efforts such as Jerome’s guide to “great men,” *De viris illustribus*, and later the sermons of Pope Leo I combined with the saintly image of Augustine in Possidius’s biography to forge the origins of the “emblematic” Augustine.¹²

POMERIUS’S AUGUSTINE

The composite emblem of Augustine was already the distanced, if not yet archaized, Augustine that Julianus Pomerius would inherit. Pomerius composed his treatise on the active and contemplative lives almost seven decades after Augustine’s death.¹³ It is possible that Pomerius, in writing this guidebook for bishops (allegedly commissioned by a certain bishop Julianus¹⁴), felt a kind of kinship with the late bishop of Hippo. Like Augustine, Pomerius was from North Africa, though he fled his besieged home of Maurentania (modern Morocco/Algeria) for Gaul. As with many African churchmen, Pomerius was doubtless eminently familiar with the writings of Augustine.¹⁵ Arriving in Gaul, he was ordained as a priest and established a school of rhetoric—a subject that had also once commanded the attention of Augustine as a young man in Milan. Around 497, “the only date known with any certainty in Pomerius’s life,”¹⁶ the esteemed rhetorician accepted as his student another, soon-to-be prominent Augustinian disciple: Caesarius, the future bishop of Arles. A sixth-century *Vita* of Caesarius mentions Pomerius only briefly, noting that he had “achieved

trepid Lover of Perfect Grace (n. 2 above) 4–6, argues for “*doctores Gallicani*” as the best alternative.

¹¹ Leyser, “Augustine in the Latin West” (n. 4 above) 454.

¹² Leyser, “Augustine in the Latin West” (n. 4 above) 452, 454.

¹³ The *De vita contemplativa* was apparently one of four works written by Pomerius. Only the *VC* remains intact, in complete form, though fragments of another text have survived. See Aime Solignac, “Les fragments du ‘De Natura Animae’ de Julien Pomère (fin V^e siècle),” *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 75 (1974) 41–60. Solignac identifies fragments of this otherwise “lost” work by Pomerius, misidentified in texts attributed to Julian of Toledo. He also shows (44) that parts of Pomerius’s *De natura animae* were utilized by “un certain Emmon (ou Hemmon),” and possibly, though less conclusively, by Hrabanus Maurus.

¹⁴ Nothing certain is known regarding this bishop. Joseph Plumpe, “Pomeriana,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 1 (1947) 227, hypothesizes that Pomerius may be referring to the bishop of Carpentras; while Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge 1990) 189, speculates that this ostensible patron may have been an alter ego for Pomerius himself.

¹⁵ Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (n. 14 above) 189.

¹⁶ Suelzer, “Introduction,” *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 4.

fame [in Gaul] by teaching the art of grammar.”¹⁷ Firminus (one of the numerous authors who together wrote the *Vita Caesarii*¹⁸) and an otherwise-unknown Gregoria had referred the promising student to Pomerius: “Seeing that the holy Caesarius was remarkably full of God’s grace, and was endowed by the gift of Christ with a wonderfully retentive memory, these noble-spirited individuals conceived of the idea that his monastic simplicity should be refined by the teachings of worldly knowledge.”¹⁹ Yet, such “worldly knowledge,” which the authors of the *Vita* associate with Pomerius, was precisely what Caesarius (allegedly) came to think needed abandoning. The *Vita* recounts a dream in which Caesarius, tired from his studies, received a disturbing sign, one pointedly reminiscent of God’s admonishment of Jerome for being a Ciceronian rather than a Christian:

During his brief nap, he saw the shoulder on which he was lying and the arm with which he had been resting on the book being gnawed by a serpent winding itself around him. Terrified by what he had seen, he was shaken out of his sleep and he began to blame himself more severely for wanting to join the light of the rule of salvation to the foolish wisdom of the world. And so he at once condemned these preoccupations, for he knew that those endowed with spiritual understanding possessed the adornment of perfect eloquence.²⁰

The *Vita*’s implied distinction here between the worldly mentor (Pomerius) and the ascetic pupil (Caesarius), who, as a result of this edifying vision, would reject the “foolish wisdom” of his teacher, has been questioned by William Klingshirn as having any basis in fact.²¹ As Klingshirn demonstrates, contrary to the *Vita*’s suggestion, Caesarius’s own reform efforts and approach to episcopal administration were clearly indebted to the “worldly” Pomerius’s views, not least Pomerius’s synthesis of asceticism and orthodox Augustinian ecclesiology.²² Nevertheless, the hagiographers’ casting of Pomerius as the profane man of letters—a deliberate foil to Caesarius’s “purer” form of

¹⁷ *Vitae Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis libri duo* (hereafter *Vita Caesarii*), I c. 9, MGH, SRM, ed. Bruno Krusch (Hannover 1896) 3.460; “Life of Caesarius,” *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters*, trans. William E. Klingshirn (Liverpool 1994) 13.

¹⁸ Klingshirn, “The Life of Caesarius: Introduction,” *Caesarius of Arles* (n. 17 above) 1.

¹⁹ *Vita Caesarii* (n. 17 above) I c. 9, 460; trans. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles* (n. 17 above) 13–14.

²⁰ *Vita Caesarii* (n. 17 above) I c. 9, 460; trans. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles* (n. 17 above) 14.

²¹ Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles* (n. 3 above) 74.

²² On Pomerius’s melding of Augustinian elements with ascetic aspects taken from the writings of John Cassian, see Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford 2000) esp. 72–78.

devotion—may have informed later, medieval readers’ perceptions of Pomerius and their attitudes towards his name (if not his work).

To be sure, Pomerius, like his revered African forebear Augustine, possessed a great familiarity with classical literature, regularly quoting or imitating passages by Cicero, Vergil, and Terence. His allusions to these ancient authors, however, pale in quantity to the dozens of references he made to Augustine himself, spread generously across the three books of his text. Near the end of the third and final book of the *VC*, Pomerius precedes a pair of quotations from the *De civitate Dei* with some strikingly effusive praise for its author:

The holy bishop Augustine, keen in mind, charming in eloquence, skilled in human learning, zealous in ecclesiastical labors, celebrated in daily disputations, self-possessed in his every action, Catholic in his exposition of our faith, penetrating in the solution of problems, prudent in the refutation of heretics, and wise in explaining the canonical writings—he, I say, whom I have followed in these little books to the best of my ability.²³

If the authority of the emblematic Augustine remained partial and contested in Pomerius’s time,²⁴ then Pomerius’s unqualified ode to “Sanctus Augustinus episcopus” reads as remarkably prophetic. His praise seems to anticipate the hallowed reverence with which Augustine’s name would be treated in the centuries to come (particularly in the Carolingian ninth century, when “St. Augustine” fully emerges²⁵).

Described in modern scholarship as an “Augustinian handbook for bishops,”²⁶ Pomerius’s seemingly introspective text is a meditation on the contemplative life in relation to the active life—in particular, the life of the bishop. Pomerius’s principal aim is to instruct *sacerdotes* and *pontifices* (terms he employs more or less interchangeably with reference to bishops²⁷) on how to achieve the contemplative perfection supposedly reserved for monks, while still properly attending to their

²³ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) III c. 31, PL 516–517: “Sanctus Augustinus episcopus, acer ingenio, suavis eloquio, saecularis litteraturae peritus, in ecclesiasticis laboribus operosus, in quotidianis disputationibus clarus, in omni sua actione compositus, in expositione fidei nostrae catholicus, in quaestionibus absolvendis acutus, in revincendis haereticis circumspexus, et in explicandis Scripturis canonicis cautus; ipse ergo, quem in his libellis pro possibilitate secutus sum.” Trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 165.

²⁴ Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 196 n. 122, notes that this fervent praise of Augustine, in the excerpted passage from the *VC*, “was written in territory that still heard Augustine accused of heresy ... [by] eminent opponents of Augustinism, such as Vincent of Lerins and Faustus of Riez.”

²⁵ Leyser, “Augustine in the Latin West” (n. 4 above) 455.

²⁶ Leyser, “Augustine in the Latin West” (n. 4 above) 454.

²⁷ Plumpe, “Pomeriana” (n. 14 above) 227–233.

pastoral duties in the world. Pomerius appears to hold what Robert Markus has called the “Augustinian perspective”—that the highest degree of contemplation is unattainable by anyone, of any clerical order, in this life.²⁸ Early in the first book of the *VC*, Pomerius concedes that “the perfection of the divine contemplation itself is reserved for that blessed life which is to come; that there they may see God perfectly as He is where they themselves will also be made perfect by attaining eternal life and the heavenly kingdom.”²⁹ Immediately following this explanation about the time and place for divine contemplation, Pomerius finds himself obliged to consider the meaning of 1 John 4.12: “No man hath seen God at any time,”³⁰ which he quickly counters with a quotation from Matthew (5.8), “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God,” reasoning that John meant that the *Visio Dei* was not “refused ... but deferred.”³¹ John’s notion of “at any time,” Pomerius implies, does not include “the future life” (*futura vita*). This distinction between temporal and spiritual planes of existence is reminiscent of Augustine’s thought in the *De civitate Dei*, a work that Pomerius references more than two dozen times in the *VC*. While the passage above on divine contemplation is not one of those many direct references, it still speaks to how predominantly (though not exclusively) “Augustinian” Pomerius’s thought was at the time of the *VC*’s composition.

Pomerius made use of approximately thirty different writings by Augustine, including those most familiar to later audiences—the *De civitate Dei*, *De doctrina Christiana*, *De Trinitate*, and even *Confessiones*, a work generally undervalued by early medieval readers.³² Yet, Pomerius mostly avoided those “later”³³ works of Augustine that had quickly proven divisive, particularly in Gaul, and that likely remained controversial at the end of the fifth century. Works such as the *De correptione et gratia*, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, and *De praedestinatione*

²⁸ Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (n. 14 above) 189.

²⁹ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 7, PL 424; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 26.

³⁰ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 7, PL 424.

³¹ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 7, PL 424, “Denique ut evidenter ostenderet visionem Dei non negatam esse sanctis hominibus, sed dilatam, quod in praesenti tempore negavit, in futuro promisit ...”; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 26.

³² On the reception of the *Confessiones*, see Michael M. Gorman, “The Early Manuscript Tradition of St. Augustine’s *Confessiones*,” in idem, *The Manuscript Traditions of the Works of St. Augustine* (Florence 2001) 216–247.

³³ Significantly, Leyser, “Augustine in the Latin West” (n. 4 above) 452, notes that while the “later Augustine is a figure of dubious appeal to a modern audience ... early medieval readers probably did not recognize the distinction between the ‘early’ and the ‘late’ Augustine.”

sanctorum are noticeably absent from Pomerius's long list of Augustinian references. These omissions, however, may have less to do with Pomerius shrewdly avoiding controversy, and more with his deeming unworkable "Augustine's refusal to claim certainty for the practice of moral correction."³⁴ Pomerius sought instead to produce a fool-proof guide for right, clerical existence. It is in this spirit, too, that Pomerius—while dutifully accepting Augustine's verdict on the mysterious, other-worldly nature of contemplation—proceeds to elaborate on how, given the impossibility of achieving "true" contemplation in this life, one might best strive to attain something close to it. Indeed, Pomerius informs his reader—a mere six short chapters after his Augustinian disclaimer discussed above—that "holy priests can become sharers (*participes*) in the contemplative life."³⁵ He begins the thirteenth chapter of Book One by cleverly twisting the logic that divine contemplation is off-limits to all living men, taking this universal prohibition rather to mean that all religious orders, including those active in the service of the Church, are equally fit to achieve a this-worldly form of contemplation, a kind of *pre*-perfection. Pomerius explains:

One who diligently considers what I have previously said about the contemplative life and who, being adequately instructed, understands when and where its perfection can be attained will not doubt that princes of the church can and should become followers of the contemplative life; for, whether, according to the opinion of some, the contemplative life is [1] nothing but the knowledge of future and hidden things; or whether it is [2] freedom from all occupations of the world; or [3] the study of Sacred Scripture; or [4] what is recognized as more perfect than these, the very vision of God: I do not see what objection can be brought forward to prevent holy priests from attaining the four things I have mentioned.³⁶

Pomerius follows this statement by noting that the first and final point of the four that he has listed will be "incomparably more excellent in that blessed life than this" (*incomparabiliter praestantiora erunt in illa vita beata quam in ista*), but this is presumably as true for monks as it is for *sanctis sacerdotibus*, "holy priests."³⁷ At any rate, the second and third criteria for achieving the contemplative life are, Pomerius con-

³⁴ Leyser, "Augustine in the Latin West" (n. 4 above) 455.

³⁵ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 13, PL 429, "sacerdotes sancti contemplativae vitae fieri participes possint"; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 33.

³⁶ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 13, PL 429; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 33–34.

³⁷ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 13, PL 429; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 34.

cludes, perfectly attainable in this life—by bishops as well as monks. The monastic order may claim a spiritual monopoly on the “freedom from all occupations of this world” (*vacationem videlicet ab omnibus occupationibus mundi*), but bishops (like Augustine) were burdened by the worldly duties of the episcopal office.³⁸ Yet, following Pomerius’s equation, those “who are bishops not by title only but by virtue” are “men fit for the contemplative life, and co-heirs of the joys of heaven.”³⁹ Markus suggests that Pomerius’s liberal conception of the contemplative life, while essentially paying lip-service to Augustine, is more directly informed by the views of Augustine’s contemporary, the monk and theologian John Cassian (d. 435). But where Cassian’s position was more measured and qualified, Pomerius “went so far as to place the pastoral life on a level with the contemplative, at times even hinting that it might be a higher calling.”⁴⁰ Put another way, Pomerius implicitly equated cloistered monasticism with an effete private leisure, whereas an active ministry in the world offered the possibility of far-reaching spiritual benefits. This sly, if subtle, reordering of the ecclesiastical *ordines* no doubt contributed to the *VC*’s later popularity among the Frankish episcopate (a point to which we shall return).

In the second book of the *VC*, Pomerius discusses the specific requirements for bishops hopeful of attaining contemplation. His prescriptions for the “princes of the church” (*Ecclesiarum principes*)⁴¹ appear decidedly monastic in character—indeed, they are largely compatible with the precepts enumerated in the *Regula Benedicti*, a text composed approximately a quarter-century after Pomerius’s paranetic work. (Intriguingly, if incidentally, the “Rule of the Master,” the model for Benedict of Nursia’s *Rule*, is believed to have been written around the same time as the *VC*). As in Benedict’s work for monks, Pomerius repeatedly emphasizes that bishops commit themselves fully to the apostolic ideal of poverty. In what would later prove to be one of the

³⁸ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley 1967/2000) 125–150, vividly describes the life of contemplation “lost” by Augustine upon his election to the episcopate. On the rather inauspicious office of the bishop in Augustine’s time, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 183–97. See also Kevin Uhalde, *Expectations of Justice in the Age of Augustine* (Philadelphia 2007).

³⁹ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 13, PL 430, “... qui sunt non appellatione tenus, sed virtute pontifices, vitae contemplativae capaces, et gaudiorum coelestium cohaeredes”; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 35.

⁴⁰ Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (n. 14 above) 191–192.

⁴¹ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 13, PL 429; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 34.

VC's most widely cited chapters (chapter nine of Book Two),⁴² Pomerius instructs his readers that:

It is expedient to hold the goods of the Church and to despise one's own possessions through love of perfection. For the wealth of the Church is not one's own, but common; and therefore, whoever has given away or sold all that he owns and has become a despiser of his own property, when he has been put in charge of a church, becomes steward of all the church possessors.⁴³

While an "ideology of sharing," ostensibly inspired by the model of the earliest community of Christians, was of crucial concern to Augustine and his ecclesiastical contemporaries, the practical, this-worldly quality of Pomerius's instructions for achieving such contemplative collectives carried special appeal for early medieval readers.⁴⁴ Indeed, in his study of Frankish aspirations to apostolic community, David Ganz has argued that "the theology of Augustine was to prove less influential in shaping these traditions than the writings of [the] African Late Antique grammarian, Julianus Pomerius."⁴⁵ This is a remarkable statement, given both Pomerius's own considerable debt to Augustine and the all-pervasive, if idiosyncratic, influence that Augustine has often been assumed to have exerted upon early medieval—and in particular, Carolingian—thought.⁴⁶

CHRODEGANG'S POMERIUS

The case of Chrodegang (ca. 712–766), the bishop of Metz whose career straddled the end of the Merovingian dynasty and the beginning of Carolingian rule, is particularly illustrative of Pomerius's enduring influence. Together with Benedict's *Rule* and works by both Gregory the Great and Pomerius's famous pupil, Caesarius of Arles, the *VC*

⁴² See David Ganz, "The Ideology of Sharing," *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge 1995) 24–26; Michael E. Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom: Bishops and the Rise of Frankish Kingship, 300–850* (Washington, DC 2011) 198–199, 297–298, 323.

⁴³ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) II c. 9, PL 453; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 72.

⁴⁴ See Ganz, "The Ideology of Sharing" (n. 42 above). Ganz also notes the prevalent appearance of Acts 4.32 in Christian literature relating to the administration of property.

⁴⁵ Ganz, "The Ideology of Sharing" (n. 42 above) 18.

⁴⁶ See Henri-Xavier Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme politique: Essai sur la formation des théories politiques du Moyen-Age* (Paris 1934/1955). Arquillière's thesis, long accepted by historians, has recently been challenged by historians who argue that other patristic figures, such as Ambrose and Gregory the Great, were, at times, more central to Carolingian political and religious discourses. See, e.g., John J. Contreni, "Carolingian Era, Early," *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids 1999) 128.

served as one of the key texts used by Chrodegang for his *Regula canonicorum*.⁴⁷ As Martin Claussen has demonstrated, Chrodegang attempted to create a “Hagiopolis,” or holy city with a connection to Christian antiquity, in his relatively, historically inauspicious diocese of Metz.⁴⁸ The *Regula canonicorum*, with its impressive collection of patristic sources—each subtly, purposefully re-shaped to suit Chrodegang’s aims—was a performative, ecclesiogical tool, which imposed an order and air of authority rooted in ancient Christian wisdom.⁴⁹ To effect such authority, an appearance of Augustinianism was central to Chrodegang’s program of reform. For example, in the first sentence of his *Rule*’s first chapter, Chrodegang quotes a passage from a sermon by the Augustinian disciple Caesarius, and thereby “parades his theological colors from the start.”⁵⁰ What may be more telling of the nature of Chrodegang’s reform program, however, is his implicit preference for Benedict’s *Rule* over that of Augustine, despite the seeming congruence of the bishop of Hippo’s text with the bishop of Metz’s circumstances.⁵¹ It would appear that a deeply expressed reverence for Augustine was effectively *pro forma* by Chrodegang’s era; a dutiful alignment with some general aspects of Augustine’s theology, rather than a close reliance upon his writings, was sufficient for Chrodegang’s purposes. The “emblematic” Augustine and a short-hand “Augustinianism” were taking shape, not least by Chrodegang’s own efforts.

However, the direct and particular work of other writers, rather than a general reverence for Augustine and Benedict, was, in fact, more central to the *Regula canonicorum*. In addition to the *Regula Benedicti*,

⁴⁷ Kevin Madigan, “*Regula*, Use After Augustine,” *Augustine through the Ages* (n. 46 above) 707, notes that the *Regula canonicorum* remained widely in use up to the period of the Gregorian Reforms in the 11th c. See also Jerome Bertram, *The Chrodegang Rules: The Rules for the Common Life of the Secular Clergy from the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Aldershot 2005) 26, 84–96.

⁴⁸ See Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church* (n. 5 above) 248–289.

⁴⁹ Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church* (n. 5 above) 5, writes, “Chrodegang accomplished this not by breaking with the past, but by harnessing it, using the images and works of earlier periods in Christian and Frankish history to help him achieve his goals. This past, as he understood it, provided him with models, but they were not the sort of models that could be transplanted unchanged into his own environment. Instead, these were exemplars and norms, requiring adaptation and realignment if they were to fit into the world of mid-eighth century Metz.” Chrodegang’s strategies represent an early example of the efforts by Carolingian bishops to construct an “archaized patristic tradition,” where no coherent tradition had previously existed, as argued by Michael E. Moore, “Carolingian Bishops and Christian Antiquity: Distance from the Past, Canon-Formation, and Imperial Power,” *Learned Antiquity: Scholarship and Society in the Near-East, the Greco-Roman World, and the Early Medieval West*, ed. Alasdair MacDonald et al. (Leuven 2003) 184.

⁵⁰ Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church* (n. 5 above) 180.

⁵¹ Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church* (n. 5 above) 115.

Chrodegang carefully engaged with the *VC*. As the earliest Frankish writer to cite the *VC*, he marked the second book of Pomerius's work as worthy of special attention, a preference often followed by the *VC*'s Carolingian readers.⁵² Where the first book of the *VC* is concerned mainly with the eponymous contemplative life, establishing the distinction between “the nature and degree of perfection of the contemplative life in this flesh” (*quae et quanta sit in hac carne vitae contemplativae perfectio*),⁵³ and the great perfection of “the future life” (*futura vita*),⁵⁴ the second book provides detailed instructions for how the active life of a bishop should properly be led in order to achieve contemplation. Pomerius's specific prescriptions for episcopal activity served as points of noble aspiration for Frankish bishops. The *VC*'s core contention, that bishops, like their monastic counterparts, were capable of attaining the greatest degree of perfection possible in this life, must have seemed a remarkably enticing, and useful, proposition. Such status would allow bishops to fully exercise their ministerial duties, situating them, as the chief moral arbiters of the realm, in a position to correct even the politically powerful members of their flock. As Claussen notes, “by equating the life of the bishop with that of a contemplative, [Pomerius] gives the bishop the moral *auctoritas* of the contemplative.”⁵⁵ Augustine had bemoaned the fateful burden of his election to the all-too-active position of Hippo's see, wistfully recalling the more spiritually satisfying experience of his time spent among the small, contemplative community at Cassiciacum.⁵⁶ For Pomerius, the harried life of a bishop need not be inevitably, spiritually inferior to that of those “dead to the world”; rather, *sacerdotes* could also become *participes*—“sharers in the contemplative virtue.”⁵⁷ This path breaking conception of the relationship between the active and contemplative lives must have appealed tremendously to an ambitious churchman like Chrodegang as a bishop who held the sanctity of the episcopal office in particularly high esteem. Chrodegang cites the author of this remarkable notion by name—the only such instance of explicit citation in the entire *Regula canonicorum*. Pomerius, however, is nowhere mentioned. Instead,

⁵² Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom* (n. 42 above) 297–298, 323, demonstrates that Book 2 of the *VC*, and, in particular, the ninth chapter of the second book, was frequently and repeatedly drawn upon by Carolingian bishops in conciliar records.

⁵³ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 8, PL 425; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 27.

⁵⁴ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 2, PL 419; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 19.

⁵⁵ Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church* (n. 5 above) 189.

⁵⁶ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (n. 38 above) 108–120.

⁵⁷ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 25, PL 440; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 52.

Chrodegang offers his tribute to “sanctus Prosper,” the Aquitanian champion of Augustine’s controversial doctrine of grace.⁵⁸

PROSPER’S AUGUSTINE

In order to understand the particular type of authority and set of associative meanings affixed to the *VC* through its attribution to Prosper (by Chrodegang and numerous other, later Carolingian writers), it is important to examine briefly the life and work of Prosper. What we shall see is that Prosper, while no doubt operating, like Pomerius, within the wide theological field of Augustinianism, espoused a particular type of Augustinianism discernibly his own.

Prosper of Aquitaine was born ca. 388, most likely into a Gallo-Roman family of some aristocratic pedigree, and died around 455—departing this life almost certainly well before Pomerius’s exodus from Africa to Gaul.⁵⁹ He first achieved prominence as an impassioned polemicist, defending Augustine’s writings on grace, perseverance, and predestination against different groups of opponents in Gaul.⁶⁰ Following this early, acrimonious chapter of his career, the ascetic Augustinian disciple resettled in Rome, where he may have served as a papal adviser or secretary at the court of Leo I. Around this time, Prosper labored on the last version of his *Epitoma chronicon*, a work modeled after, and intended as continuation of, Jerome’s chronicle.⁶¹ While

⁵⁸ Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church* (n. 5 above) 184.

⁵⁹ Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace* (n. 2 above) 38–41, persuasively demonstrates 388 as a likelier *terminus ante quem* for Prosper’s birth than the earlier-accepted date of 390. Hwang bases his argument on, among other factors, the system of education in Gaul—badly disrupted by the Gothic invasions in 406—and the apparent maturity of Prosper’s thought in the poem *De providentia Dei* (416), Prosper’s earliest known work.

⁶⁰ For better or worse, it is telling of Prosper’s success in this tireless campaign, and the nature of his polemical strategies, that the distinct groups and individuals criticizing specific aspects of Augustine’s work have been collectively branded by modern scholars as “Semi-Pelagians.” That most of Augustine’s Gallic critics in fact rejected the core principles of Pelagianism has proven largely beside the point; their misgivings regarding Augustine’s theology qualified them as at least partly Pelagian in character, according to Prosper (though, remarkably, not according to Augustine himself, as demonstrated by his own replies to these “brothers” before his death). On these points, see Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace* (n. 2 above) 81–90. Also, Ralph Mathisen, “For Specialists Only,” *Presbyter Factus Sum*, *Collectanea Augustiana*, ed. Joseph Lienhard (New York 1993) 35, shows that in 5th-c. Gaul, “Augustine’s non-controversial works were read and admired,” but in general, Augustine was considered “to be a topic for experts. His complexities could only be evaluated by specialists.”

⁶¹ Robert Markus, “Chronicle and Theology: Prosper of Aquitaine,” *The Inheritance of Historiography, 350–900*, ed. Christopher Holdsworth and T. P. Wiseman (Exeter 1986) 40. Elsewhere in this article, Markus argues that Prosper, rather than simply echoing Leo’s emphasis on the Roman Church, merged components of Leonine ecclesiology with a more inclusive conception of the Church, dissociating himself, for instance, from Orosius’s Rome-centric interpretation of the barbarian invasions (38). Hwang, *Intrepid*

Prosper may have softened aspects of Augustine's position in this late period by making greater room for the role of free will, the majority of his work is solidly characterized by an unwavering partisanship. Augustine's controversial statements—1) that grace is always both gratuitous and the *sine qua non* for the performance of good works, and thus is never earned through works performed independently of grace; 2) that the strength to persevere in faith is likewise a gift of God, not a product of individual human will; and 3) that those selected for salvation have been predetermined, with the results of this divine election being wholly mysterious and beyond our comprehension—were all, for Prosper, sacred truths, unquestionable because they had been expressed by the Church's foremost doctor.⁶² However, unlike Augustine's later, Carolingian admirers, who viewed this “ancient” Father as uniformly infallible, Prosper recognized in Augustine's thought an important path of developmental progress.⁶³ Every word that Augustine had written may not have been correct, or equally so; hence, the apparent contradictions in his work—most notably regarding predestination—that critics pounced upon and Prosper gamely acknowledged. But through the perseverance generously granted to him by God, Augustine had constantly been moving toward the sacred truth of scripture. Thus, Augustine's fully realized formulations of grace and divine election were, for Prosper, inevitable points of arrival in the trajectory of his thought. Because Augustine had, by the later years of his life and career, mastered the art of interpreting God's Word, his pronouncements needed only to be attentively understood and emphatically affirmed, not supplemented or refined (even if Prosper eventually adjusted parts of Augustine's program).

Consequently, much of Prosper's “defense” of Augustine appears intent on rehashing his work, occasionally muddling the finer points of Augustine's theology, while caricaturing or misrepresenting the arguments of his critics and heatedly rebuking them as impious.⁶⁴ In a sense, Prosper's “Augustinianism” is closer to Augustine's own posi-

Lover of Perfect Grace (n. 2 above) 235–239, suggests that it was during this period that Prosper's earlier, intractable association of Augustine with Catholic orthodoxy matured into a more nuanced understanding of the Church, guided closely by Leo's Rome-centered ecclesiology.

⁶² For a thoughtful, provocative reconsideration of Augustine's oft-misunderstood position on free will and predestination, see James Wetzel, “Snares of Truth,” *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London 2000) 124–141.

⁶³ On such development in the Church, see Karl F. Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140* (Princeton 1969).

⁶⁴ P. de Letter, “Introduction,” *Prosper of Aquitaine, Defense of St. Augustine*, trans. P. de Letter (Westminster, MD 1963) 3–20.

tion than most other sets of ideas attributed to, or associated with, Augustine. In Prosper's second letter to Augustine (the first is lost), the disciple informs the elderly bishop of the controversies brewing in Gaul, and requests writings from Augustine that will set these wrong-headed men right. Prosper greets Augustine as "the most holy bishop lord ... wonderful beyond words, honorable without comparison."⁶⁵ Prosper's fawning praise of his theological hero is rather similar to Pomerius's extended note of adulation quoted above ("keen in mind, charming in eloquence, skilled in human learning," etc.⁶⁶); in their effusive, unqualified praise of Augustine, Prosper and Pomerius may be somewhat remarkable, but they were by no means exceptional, among fifth- or early sixth-century writers. Their supreme reverence for Augustine seems more at home in a later age—specifically, the Carolingian era—when Augustine's name and reputation would acquire "patristic" status.⁶⁷ It is likely by way of Prosper's and Pomerius's shared enthusiasm for Augustine, and the clear influence that his writings had on their own works, that Pomerius's *VC* came to be mistakenly attributed to Prosper.⁶⁸ Yet beyond this commonality, the Augustinianism of Prosper and that of Pomerius are deeply dissimilar. Pomerius grounds his *VC* in "a broad, moderate, and thoroughly practical Augustinianism," happily utilizing Augustine's widely embraced, non-controversial works, while conspicuously avoiding nearly all those aspects of Augustine's theology that had provoked such debate in Gaul not long before, in Prosper's time.⁶⁹ Prosper, on the other hand, was an unabashed controversialist, a fervent "defender of the extreme views of Augustine."⁷⁰ Where Pomerius subtly synthesized ingredients from John Cassian's program for the contemplative and active lives with his own middle-of-the-road Augustinianism, Prosper, identifying Cassian with the "semi-Pelagian" threat, wrote passionately against him.⁷¹ By

⁶⁵ Prosper, *Epistula ad Augustinam*, PL 51.67: "Domino beatissimo papae, ineffabiliter mirabili, incomparabiliter honorando"; trans. de Letter, *Prosper of Aquitaine* 38.

⁶⁶ See n. 19 above.

⁶⁷ See Leyser, "Augustine in the Latin West" (n. 4 above)

⁶⁸ Max L. W. Laistner, "The Influence During the Middle Ages of the Treatise *De vita contemplativa* and Its Surviving Manuscripts," in Chester G. Starr, ed., *The Intellectual Heritage of the Early Middle Ages: Selected Essays by M. L. W. Laistner* (New York 1966) 45.

⁶⁹ Suelzer, "Introduction" (n. 1 above) 6.

⁷⁰ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000* (Oxford 2003) 130.

⁷¹ On the conflict between Prosper and Cassian, see Augustine Cassiday, "Rehabilitating John Cassian: An Evaluation of Prosper of Aquitaine's Polemic against the 'Semipelagians,'" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005) 270–284. In Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism* (n. 22 above) 69–77 (following the suggestion of Markus, *The End of*

redirecting our gaze, from the shared, general aspects of Pomerius's and Prosper's allegiance to Augustine, to look instead at the significant differences—within Augustinianism—that separate the two men, the re-attribution of the *VC* across this divide seems less understandable and more peculiar, if not outright perplexing.

IDENTITY, OBSCURITY, AND THE CREATION OF AUTHORITY

The precedent set by Chrodegang in explicitly attributing the *VC* to Prosper would prove to be powerful and long-lasting. Pomerius's name, on the other hand, had by the eighth century become relatively obscure.⁷² Already in the *Testimonia divinae scripturae*, a seventh-century *florilegium* incorrectly ascribed to Isidore of Seville, excerpts from the *VC* appear within the chapter entitled *Testimonia de libro Prosperi*.⁷³ Similarly, even when the author of the *VC* was identified correctly, as in Isidore's authentic *De viris illustribus* (this being the most prominent medieval attestation to Pomerius's existence), he was still subject to confusion; as Conrad Leyser has noted, "it seems likely that Isidore assimilated without warrant Pomerius to [the latter's] interlocutor bishop Julianus."⁷⁴ Regardless of whether this otherwise unknown Julianus was an actual bishop who commissioned the *VC*, or an alter ego fashioned by Pomerius to lend weight to his handbook for bishops (as Robert Markus has speculated), since at least Isidore's time he has become nominally conflated with Pomerius.⁷⁵ Making matters even more problematic, despite an abundance of other texts by Isidore, his *De viris illustribus* appears to have been quite rare in the Carolingian eighth and ninth centuries, surviving in only three manuscripts of the period outside of Spain.⁷⁶ This paucity of witnesses containing (semi-

Ancient Christianity [n. 14 above] 189), a strong case is made for Cassian's influence on the thought of Pomerius.

⁷² Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism* (n. 22 above) 67.

⁷³ *Testimonia divinae scripturae*, XI c. 33, PL 83 1215C–17A. See Robert E. McNally, "Isidoriana," *Theological Studies* 20 (1959) 438. Also, concerning the *Testimonia*, see Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789–895* (London 1977) 166 n. 1.

⁷⁴ Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism* (n. 22 above) 66 n. 4. For pre-Isidorian attestations, Leyser refers to the *Vita Caesarii* and Pseudo-Gennadius's continuation of Gennadius's *De viris illustribus*.

⁷⁵ Consequently, modern scholars identify Pomerius in a variety of ways: Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom* (n. 42 above), for example, cites "Julianus" Pomerius, while Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism* (n. 22 above), "[adopts] the practice of the earlier witnesses in referring simply to 'Pomerius.'" Perhaps Isidore possessed some knowledge, left unstated in his work, that this "illustrious man," Pomerius, was up to something akin to Markus's aforementioned point of speculation—that the bishop Julianus was an alter ego for Pomerius himself? See Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (n. 14 above) 189.

⁷⁶ Laistner, "The Influence" (n. 68 above) 45.

accurate information about Pomerius's identity may partly serve to explain his relative obscurity in the Carolingian era. Meanwhile, as Pomerius's name faded, Prosper's was growing brighter. A recent survey of patristic texts in Carolingian manuscripts copied and preserved at St-Gall estimates that Prosper's name appears nearly as often as those of Augustine, Jerome, Gregory, and Ambrose.⁷⁷ However, of the eleven extant St-Gall manuscripts containing works attributed to Prosper, three are copies of sections of the *VC* erroneously ascribed to him.⁷⁸ In some ninth-century witnesses, the *VC* is copied alongside authentic Prosperian texts, most often Prosper's *Epigrammata*.⁷⁹ Of course, ambiguity and confusion surrounding issues of authorship were certainly not limited to Pomerius: Another St-Gall codex, MS 570, groups the *VC* with works by Pseudo-Hormisdas, Pseudo-Gregory, and Pseudo-Cyprian, as well as authentic works by Isidore and Caesarius.⁸⁰ In other instances, such as Paris, BnF lat. 13400, Pomerius was apparently confused with Julian of Toledo.⁸¹ Although attributions of the *VC* to Prosper easily outnumber those to Pomerius in medieval manuscripts, Max Laistner, in his meticulous study of the *VC*'s transmission, raised two very important caveats, which must be considered in any estimation of Prosper's lofty status. First, the *VC*, quite ironically, "enjoyed infinitely more popularity" throughout the Middle Ages than any of Prosper's authentic theological writings.⁸² While Prosper's name lent the *VC* a good deal of "patristic" weight, his reputation must have been itself at least partly, if not largely, based on the widely esteemed and influential *VC*. Second, Pomerius's name, as the author of the *VC*, was

⁷⁷ Bernice M. Kaczynski, "The Authority of the Fathers: Patristic Texts in Early Medieval Libraries and Scriptoria" *Journal of Medieval Latin* 16 (2006) 9–12. For existing, albeit incomplete, surveys of the extant manuscripts of the *VC*, see Laistner, "The Influence" (n. 68 above) 49–56; and Albrecht Diem, "Monastic Manuscript Project" (www.earlymedievalmonasticism.org/texts/Pomerius-De-Vita-Contemplativa.html).

⁷⁸ The following manuscripts contain works attributed to Prosper: St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 29; 125; 148; 167; 184; 185; 186; 187; 277; 570; 877. The *De vita contemplativa* is preserved in manuscripts 186, 187, and 570.

⁷⁹ E.g., St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 187; Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek Weissenburg 56; Montpellier, École de med. 218; Montpellier, École de med. 484. For a careful study of Prosper's works, see Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace* (n. 2 above) 11–29.

⁸⁰ On St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 570, see Gustav Scherrer, *Verzeichniss der Handschriften der Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen* (Halle 1875) 183–184.

⁸¹ On Paris, BnF lat. 13400, see Léopold Delisle, *Inventaire des manuscrits de Saint-Germain-des-Prés conservés à la Bibliothèque impériale, sous les numéros 11504–14231 du fonds Latin* (Paris 1868) 101.

⁸² Laistner, "The Influence" (n. 68 above) 55.

never entirely forgotten.⁸³ Attributions of the *VC* to Pomerius coexisted alongside those to Prosper in the early Middle Ages.

II. THE POSSIBILITY OF PERFECTION

For Pomerius, there was no evident reason why the highest degree of perfection possible in this life should be the exclusive domain of monks, “dead to the world” and committed—at least in theory—to a life of prayer. Bishops, while administering their pastoral duties among their diocesan flocks, could also aspire to the perfection of the contemplative life. This could be achieved, according to Pomerius (or, for many of his medieval readers, Prosper of Aquitaine), both by diligently, thoughtfully attending to the important, everyday obligations of the episcopal office, and by complementing the fulfillment of those worldly demands with a rigorous commitment to prayer and the study of scripture. The *VC* instructed its readers on how one ought to strike such a precarious, yet possible, balance, which might even, implied its writer, facilitate a more complete, fully-realized form of contemplative perfection than that which could be achieved through a monastic life devoted solely—again, at least in theory—to study and prayer.

BISHOPS AND THE CAROLINGIAN REFORM PROGRAM

Though Frankish bishops since the time of Chrodegang of Metz gleaned much that could be of use in the *VC*, Pomerius’s work came to be regarded as an even more essential source of edification and authority during the period of the Carolingian reforms. In the second half of the eighth century, the Frankish Church strove toward a specific objective of *renovatio*, a movement that took center stage during the reign of Charlemagne.⁸⁴ The intended goal of this program of renewal was a recreation of “ancient” Christianity, an idealized, compressed vision of the age of the Fathers.⁸⁵ This Carolingian vision was, to be sure, more a typological than historical conception of the past. Fourth- and fifth-century giants like Ambrose and Augustine shared this imagined space with later figures like Caesarius of Arles and Gregory; underlying these

⁸³ Laistner, “The Influence” (n. 68 above) 43.

⁸⁴ See McKitterick, *The Frankish Church* (n. 75 above). See also, Giles Brown, “Introduction,” *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. in Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1993) 1–51, who shows that the Carolingian reform program was, in part, informed by earlier, like-minded efforts within the Visigothic and Anglo-Saxon territories. On the reform tradition in ancient Christian thought, see the classic study by Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform* (New York 1967).

⁸⁵ See Moore, “Ancient Fathers” (n. 6 above); Willemien Otten, “The Texture of Tradition: The Role of the Church Fathers in Carolingian Theology,” *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irene Backus (Leiden 1997) 1.3–50.

sacred names were their apparent scriptural forebears, together breathing the same rarefied, ancient air of perfect Christian orthodoxy. But before this lofty vision could be realized, some changes of a more practical nature needed to be made.

At the heart of the late eighth- and early ninth-century reform efforts—directed by Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, and the elite group of clerics advising them—was the contention that behavior among both clerics and laypeople must first be righted; the headier territory of ideas and beliefs could, by and large, be addressed later, and on a “need-to-know” basis.⁸⁶ Within this particular climate of reform, it is hardly surprising that Pomerius’s guidebook for bishops, though frequently associated with Prosper’s prominent name, assumed a greater degree of popularity and prominence than Prosper’s own authentic works, which centered more on the finer (and more controversial) points of Augustinian theology.⁸⁷ It is difficult to pinpoint the moment when, or geographic site where, the *VC* was first mistaken as a work by Prosper. Consequently, it would be rather audacious to directly, explicitly accuse the *VC*’s Carolingian readers of deliberately mis-attributing the *VC* to Prosper. The textual landscape of the earlier Middle Ages is, of course, littered with works or brief quotations from works that are ascribed to someone other than their actual writer—not to mention issues of pseudonymous authorship and forgery. And yet, the *VC*’s Carolingian audience included some of the period’s most learned figures, many of whom possessed a demonstrably sophisticated knowledge of patristic literature and a discerning eye for the nuances of orthodoxy. It is not at all difficult to imagine that some of these attentive readers could have—or, in fact, did—notice curious, potentially irreconcilable differences between the Augustinianism of the *VC* and that which was expressed by Prosper in his other known writings. But what would it have benefited these powerful churchmen to question the status quo? Prosper’s was a sacred and recognizable name associated not only with Augustine, but more generally with the “ancient” Christian past that Carolingian reformers sought to recreate.

IMPERIUM AND ECCLESIA

Negligentia, with regard to one’s *ministerium*, was among the most urgent concerns occupying the Carolingian elite in the first half of the

⁸⁶ See Thomas F.X. Noble, “Secular Sanctity: Forging an Ethos for the Carolingian Nobility,” *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. Janet Nelson and Patrick Wormald (Cambridge 2007) 8–36; and Brown, “Introduction” (n. 84 above).

⁸⁷ Laistner, “The Influence” (n. 68 above) 40–56.

ninth century.⁸⁸ Worries surrounding *negligentia*, as opposed to the proper, conscientious administration of one's duties, beset both the clerical and lay-political leaders of the empire. Mayke de Jong, reflecting on the Carolingian understanding of the empire as *ecclesia*, contends that the geographical expansion of the boundaries of imperial territory (especially during the reign of Charlemagne) was significant mostly for the added number of souls that would be living under the *imperium* of right-ordered Christendom.⁸⁹ Given the contemporary connotation of the ethno-political signifier "Frankish" as being essentially synonymous with orthodox Christian practice, or even with God's chosen people,⁹⁰ the grave concerns stemming from any behavior that might jeopardize the security of the empire, or the souls living within its boundaries, becomes more readily understandable. This conception of the empire and its populace seems to suggest at least the partial realization of something like "Political Augustinism," wherein the political and the spiritual spheres were understood to have become indivisibly merged. Yet De Jong argues that, despite such a process, the *ordines*, or "orders" of Carolingian society, remained mostly well-delineated and were, in fact, seen as integral to maintaining the stability of the realm. It was when the duties expected of one's station—whether emperor or count, monk or bishop—were neglected or insufficiently attended to that trouble was seen to occur. Thus, the *VC* contributed significantly to stability and right order within the empire by providing detailed

⁸⁸ On the centrality of *negligentia* to Carolingian ecclesiological and political discourses, see Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above); and Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814–840* (Cambridge 2009).

⁸⁹ As Thomas F. X. Noble, "The Monastic Ideal as a Model for Empire," *Revue Bénédictine* 86 (1976) 249, observed, the "identification of empire and Church has long been recognized and no reputable book on ninth-century ecclesiology or political thought omits mention of it." De Jong provides a cogent, thoughtful take on this concept in her essays, "Ecclesia and the Early Medieval Polity," *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Stuart Airlie et al. (Vienna 2006) 113–32; and "The State of the Church: Ecclesia and Early Medieval State Formation," *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – europäische Perspektiven*, Walter Pohl and Veronika Wieser, eds. (Vienna 2009) 241–254. On the translation of the term *imperium*, which, it is increasingly argued, should be translated as "imperial authority" as opposed "empire," with regard to Carolingian texts, see De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 27; and Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford 2011) 100–101.

⁹⁰ On this point, see Mary Garrison, "The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne," *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge 2000) 114–161; and eadem, "Divine Election for Nations: A Difficult Rhetoric for Medieval Scholars?" *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000–1300)*, ed. Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen 2006) 275–314.

instructions to bishops on how to fulfill the duties of their office, while cautioning against neglecting their ministry. At the same time, the contention in the increasingly popular *VC* that bishops, and not just monks, could become “sharers in the contemplative virtue,” subtly challenged contemporary understandings of the *ordines* themselves.

This point was especially true for the period of Louis’s reign. During this time, the monastic paradigm loomed large not only in Benedictine houses (the overwhelming majority of the empire’s monasteries), but also in the royal palace at Aachen and, more generally, in the governance of the vast empire that Louis had inherited from his father, Charlemagne. In his influential study of Louis’s reign, Thomas Noble argues that Louis, under the close guidance of his monastic adviser, Benedict of Aniane, conceived of the empire as a Benedictine monastery.⁹¹ In this scenario, Louis was the empire’s stern, but not inflexible, abbot, responsible for the oversight and, when necessary, correction of the many souls under his care, while at the same time not above correction from others should he himself deviate from the rules of the house.⁹² Within this monastically-informed empire, did the *ordines*, particularly the orders of regular and secular clergy, function in the discrete, theoretically distinct manner in which they were conceived? Prominent monks, not least Benedict of Aniane, but also others like Wala and Paschasius Radbertus (successive abbots at the monastery of Corbie), were among the era’s key movers and shakers, actively involved in the high politics of the realm. Other monks preached to the lay population in the area around their monasteries, picking up the ministerial slack in the apparent absence of secular clerics.⁹³ And what of bishops? If monks, who were supposed to have committed themselves to lives of prayer, study, and solitude within their cloistered communities, could preach to the populace and involve themselves in worldly politics, why, then, should bishops not be sharers in the contemplative life? And should the *abbas-imperator* require serious correction, who better to rebuke him than the able *gubernatores* of the *Ecclesia-navis* (including,

⁹¹ Noble, “The Monastic Model” (n. 89 above).

⁹² Noble’s revisionist take proved pivotal in changing the approach of scholars to this “monkish” emperor and his long-undervalued reign. See Janet L. Nelson, “The Last Years of Louis the Pious,” *Charlemagne’s Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, ed. Roger Collins and Peter Godman (Oxford 1990) 147–159; De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) esp. 3, 9, 46–58; Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above) esp. 226–33.

⁹³ On this point, see Thomas L. Amos, “Monks and Pastoral Care in the Early Middle Ages,” *Religion, Culture, and Society in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and John J. Contreni (Kalamazoo 1987) 165–180.

but not limited to, the Bishop of Rome)?⁹⁴ With the *VC* and other vital, authoritative works, such as Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis* and *Moralia in Iob*, lighting the way, the path to perfection, for bishops in particular, was increasingly, uniquely unobstructed.

MINISTERS OF AUTHORITY

The ascendance of bishops can be discerned from the records of the Frankish reform councils of 813, five meetings of high-ranking ecclesiastics that collectively represent the culmination of Charlemagne's program of renewal. Held at Mainz, Reims, Tours, Chalons, and Arles, these councils were called, but not attended by, the elderly Charlemagne, who crowned his son, Louis the Pious, as co-emperor a short time later, before his death in January 814.⁹⁵ Ushering in a new moment in Carolingian political culture, the 813 councils have been cited as the clearest example of the transition from legislation initiated mainly by the emperor to legislation initiated chiefly by the clergy.⁹⁶ That *negligentia* and the proper adherence to one's *ordo* were among the most pressing topics of discussion seems absolutely appropriate within this context; these were concerns that were understood to impact *Ecclesia* as a whole, and thus all aspects and segments of Frankish society.⁹⁷ To instruct bishops and monks on how to satisfy the demands of their orders, Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis* and Benedict's *Regula* were read, respectively, to these clerical groups.⁹⁸ The *VC* was also, less prominently, among the authoritative texts drawn on in 813 at Chalons; Chapter nine of Book II was quoted briefly, with no reference to its author.⁹⁹ Prosper's name was not needed to supplement this already well-worn passage treating the attitude that bishops should adopt toward the administration of church property, perhaps because the sentiment it expressed was uncontroversial (*viz.*, an aspiration to the apostolic ideal of ancient Christianity¹⁰⁰), or perhaps just because Pros-

⁹⁴ See Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above) 233–234; de Jong, “*Admonitio* and Criticism of the Ruler at the Court of Louis the Pious,” *La culture du haut Moyen Âge: une question d’élites?*, ed. François Bougard et al. (Turnhout 2009) 315–338.

⁹⁵ *Annales regni Francorum*, a. 813, MGH SRG, ed. Georg H. Pertz and Friedrich Kurze (Hannover 1895) 138; trans. Bernhard Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles* (Ann Arbor 1970) 95.

⁹⁶ McKitterick, *The Frankish Church* (n. 75 above) 12. On differing conceptions of the relationship between the royal and clerical institutions in the Carolingian era, see Karl F. Morrison, *The Two Kingdoms: Ecclesiology in Carolingian Political Thought* (Princeton 1964).

⁹⁷ De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 121.

⁹⁸ Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom* (n. 42 above) 280.

⁹⁹ Council of Chalons (813), c. 6, MGH, *Concilia* (Hannover 1906) 2(1) 275.

¹⁰⁰ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) II c. 9, PL 454 “Et idcirco scientes nihil aliud esse res ecclesiae, nisi vota fidelium, pretia peccatorum, et patrimonia pauperum; non eas vindic-

per's name was already closely connected with this recurring snippet of wisdom. Whatever the case, by 813 the *VC* had become a reliable source for establishing standards of conduct among bishops, so that they might aspire to something like the perfection of their monastic counterparts. Michael E. Moore argues that "the councils of 813 insisted on the distinction of bishops as a separate group with a unique dignity and authority to rule the people of God."¹⁰¹ Yet, in terms of the consistent application of their *ministerium* and the place occupied by bishops within the structure of the *ordines*, work remained to be done before the impressive vision of right episcopal rule projected at the councils of 813 could come to fruition.

GREGORY THE GREAT AND THE *DE VITA CONTEMPLATIVA*

The increasingly typical pairing of the *VC* with Gregory the Great's work, as evinced at the Council of Chalons and especially by Halitgar of Cambrai's subsequent text *De vitiis et virtutibus et de ordine poenitentium libri quinque*,¹⁰² lent the *VC* an even greater degree of patristic authority and cultural currency, while subtly recoloring both Pomerius's ideas and Gregory's when presented together. Where Prosper's name carried considerable weight among Carolingian readers, Gregory's was as powerful as it was ubiquitous. Geoffrey Koziol has recently argued that, for the formation of early medieval Christianity, "Augustine was important, but not as important as Gregory."¹⁰³ Carolingian Christians, preferring to regard themselves, first, as faithful Augustinians, might have quibbled with this bold statement, but from the vantage-point of historical hindsight, it is difficult to refute Koziol's claim. Some early medieval ecclesiastics might even have concurred. Though groupings of the Church Fathers varied among ninth-century list-makers, Gregory was consistently cited among Western Christendom's most sacred post-apostolic names.¹⁰⁴

caverunt in usus suos, ut proprias, sed ut commendatas pauperibus diviserunt"; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 73, that since "the possessions of the Church are but the vows of the faithful, the ransom of sinners, and the patrimony of the poor, [bishops ought not] claim them for their own use, as being their own, but [divide] them as a trust among the poor." Cf. Council of Chalons (813) (n. 99 above) c. 6, 275, "res ecclesiae, quibus episcopi non ut propriis, sed ut commendatis uti debent, pretia sunt peccatorum, patrimonia pauperum, stipendia fratrum in commune viventium."

¹⁰¹ Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom* (n. 42 above) 281.

¹⁰² Halitgar of Cambrai, *De vitiis et virtutibus et de ordine poenitentium libri quinque*, PL 105.667–670.

¹⁰³ Geoffrey Koziol, "Leadership: Why We Have Mirrors for Princes but None for Presidents," *Why the Middle Ages Matter: Medieval Light on Modern Injustice*, ed. Celia Chazelle et al. (London 2012) 189.

¹⁰⁴ Kaczynski, "The Authority of the Fathers" (n. 77 above) 9–12.

At the same time, Pomerius's most enduring text became closely linked with the works of Gregory. This was probably not a matter of coincidence. "There is so much in Gregory's writing that is reminiscent of Julianus's that it is hard to suppose that he had not read it," observes one of Gregory's modern biographers.¹⁰⁵ There are "traces" of Pomerius in Gregory's work, suggests another.¹⁰⁶ The comment by the first biographer, however, continues with a caveat: "but there is no conclusive evidence that he had [read Pomerius's writing]."¹⁰⁷ Gregory is part of the "problem" here: he rarely acknowledges or quotes directly from his non-scriptural sources. For instance, in the *Regula pastoralis*, another guidebook for the secular clergy that shares much in common with the *VC*, Gregory is especially reticent regarding his sources, aside from a brief mention of his namesake, Gregory of Nazianzus,¹⁰⁸ whose *Apologia* was a likely source for Gregory's work.¹⁰⁹ An even more formidable obstacle to detecting which works influenced Gregory is suggested by the other scholar quoted above. Carole Straw observes that "Gregory always digests and transforms the ideas of others, shaping them to his own requirements."¹¹⁰ If Gregory had read the *VC*—and I strongly suspect that he did—he was not content to recite Pomerius's views. Instead, he used Pomerius's work as an intellectual point of departure, mulling over the contours of Pomerius's argumentation, then taking that path of argumentation one step further where, for Gregory, it logically had to go.¹¹¹ Gregory's conception of the active and contemplative lives is a rich example of his (likely) use of Pomerius, pushing the already daring central conceit of the *VC* into new and uncertain territory. Gregory concludes the fifth chapter of the *Regula pastoralis*'s first book as follows:

So, there are those who, endowed, as we have said, with great gifts, in their eagerness for the pursuit of contemplation only, decline to be of service to

¹⁰⁵ Robert A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge 1997) 19.

¹⁰⁶ Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley 1988) 16.

¹⁰⁷ Markus, *Gregory the Great* (n. 105 above) 19.

¹⁰⁸ Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* III prologue, PL 77.49; trans. Henry Davis, *Gregory the Great, Pastoral Care* (Westminster, MD 1950) 89.

¹⁰⁹ Davis, "Introduction," *Gregory the Great* (n. 108 above) 13–14.

¹¹⁰ Straw, *Gregory the Great* (n. 106 above) 16.

¹¹¹ Gregory's writing is very different from Augustine's, but both are brilliant at effecting the appearance of transparent thought, ostensibly letting the reader in on the process by which they arrived at the end-point of their discussion. Even if, as skilled rhetoricians, they are fully aware of where their argument is going and exactly how they intend to get there, their writings are most vivid when Augustine and Gregory appear to be "thinking out loud," working their ideas out on the page. On this point, see especially Roger Ray, "Triumph of Greco-Roman Rhetorical Assumptions in Pre-Carolingian Historiography" *The Inheritance of Historiography, 350–900* (n. 61 above) 67–84.

the neighbor by preaching; they love to withdraw in quietude and desire to be alone for meditation. Now, if they are judged strictly on their conduct, they are certainly guilty in proportion to the public service which they were able to afford. Indeed, what disposition of mind is revealed in him, who could perform conspicuous public benefit on coming to his task, but prefers his own privacy to the benefit of others, seeing that the Only-Begotten of the Supreme Father came forth from the bosom of His Father into our midst, that he might benefit many?¹¹²

Robert Markus asserts that this key passage “defines the perspective Gregory adopts for his treatise on the pastoral office,” while representing “Gregory’s definitive solution of his personal dilemma”—his election to the papacy and consequent, permanent removal from the monastic solitude he had so cherished.¹¹³ While Pomerius had flirted with the notion that the active life may be more noble than one devoted solely to monastic contemplation, Gregory unabashedly trumpets the merits of active involvement in the world, drawing pointedly on the model case of Christ’s ministry.¹¹⁴ This is not to say that, for Gregory, the active life was simply superior to the contemplative life; rather, he saw the division between these two modes of existence as artificial, and contrary to the example set by Christ himself while he was present in the earthly world among men.¹¹⁵ Both modes of life, or Gregory’s proposed amalgamation of the two, are carried out in this inherently imperfect world. Yet, by blurring the lines delimiting the attributes of the active and contemplative lives, Gregory returns us to the level playing field of Pomerius, but with anything resembling perfection withheld from all until the next life.

The question remains whether Gregory would have made this brave leap forward without the *VC* as a probable catalyst for his consideration of activity and contemplation. Suggestive, if not quite definitive, points of comparison abound between the *Regula pastoralis* and the *VC*. The evidence, while intriguing, is admittedly inconclusive. Nevertheless, Carolingian bishops certainly recognized affinities between the thought

¹¹² Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* (n. 108 above) I c. 5, PL 19; trans. Davis, *Gregory the Great* (n. 108 above) 31.

¹¹³ Markus, *Gregory the Great* (n. 105 above) 26.

¹¹⁴ Gillian R. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge 1986) 109, recognizes Cassian as an influence for Gregory’s position on contemplation and action, but she does not take note of Pomerius’s “synthesis” of Cassian and Augustine (argued best in Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism* [n. 22 above] 72–80), likely a closer source for Gregory’s discussion of these matters.

¹¹⁵ Straw, *Gregory the Great* (n. 106 above) 20, reasons from Gregory’s thought that “complete devotion to the contemplative life is dangerous, as is the pursuit of the active life. Good stands in balance and equilibrium, which is achieved when both poles are embraced properly for the good qualities each possess.”

of Gregory and the *VC*'s author.¹¹⁶ Following the creative compilation of Chrodegang of Metz's *Regula canonicorum*, ninth-century writers like Halitgar of Cambrai, Jonas of Orléans, and Aeneas of Paris found that the work of Gregory and "Prosper" complemented one another very well indeed. Conciliar records from this period evince a similar appreciation for the congruity of the *VC* with, in particular, the *Regula pastoralis*.¹¹⁷

However, beyond the basic harmony uniting the views of Gregory and Pomerius, it is my contention that the *VC* was sometimes used to temper the more powerful, but also more radical, ideas of Gregory. Conrad Leyser perceptively observes that, where Pomerius saw the monastery as "a separate space," representing a still-significant difference between cloistered monasticism and the secular clerical orders, Gregory demolished the walls dividing the ecclesiastical *ordines*.¹¹⁸ For "the idea of monastic community itself buckled at the approach of the Last Days."¹¹⁹ The profoundly eschatological character of Gregory's thought should be understood, at least in part, as symptomatic of the deeply unstable socio-political landscape of his time and place. While the subject of Gregory's eschatological viewpoint is beyond the scope of this article, it is nevertheless worth considering the close relationship between this integral feature of Gregory's thought and his untidy conception of the *ordines*.¹²⁰ Bearing in mind, in particular, the extent to which these aspects of Gregory's work were affected by the tenuous social structures of his time may help us, by way of comparison, to better assess the application of Gregory's writings in Carolingian

¹¹⁶ This point is particularly true of northern, court-affiliated ecclesiastics. It is not necessarily so for the southern, "Visigothic" episcopate. Abigail Firey, *A Contrite Heart: Prosecution and Redemption in the Carolingian Empire* (Leiden 2009) 138–139 and n. 78, suggests that Southerners, like the Lyonnaise bishops Agobard and Amulo, preferred localised authorities. Firey notes that Agobard scarcely used work by Gregory, and never Pomerius. Ganz, "The Ideology of Sharing" (n. 42 above) 26 n. 52, however, detects some allusion to Pomerius in Agobard of Lyons, *Liber de dispensatione ecclesiasticarum rerum*, ed. Lieven van Acker, CCCM 52 (Turnhout 1981) 121–142. Ganz refers here to Jean Devisse, "L'influence de Julien Pomère sur les clercs carolingiens," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 61 (1970) 285–95, though Devisse concedes (293 n. 60) that he cannot identify any reference to the *VC* by Agobard. Agobard's modern editor, Van Acker, in his *Index scriptorum* (405–414, 462), does not list Pomerius among Agobard's sources.

¹¹⁷ Firey, *A Contrite Heart* (n. 116 above) 182, concludes that the *VC* was a "perfect companion text to the writings of Gregory the Great, who saw the ideal bishop as both practicing active service to his fellows and also restoring his spirit with the penitential exercises of the contemplative life."

¹¹⁸ Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism* (n. 22 above) 159.

¹¹⁹ Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism* (n. 22 above) 159.

¹²⁰ See esp. Markus, *Gregory the Great* (n. 105 above) 51–67. See also Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (n. 114 above) 43.

sources. The early decades of the ninth century enjoyed a higher degree of institutional stability than Gregory's sixth-century Italy. In the Carolingian era, the distinctions that demarcated the monastic order from other segments of society, far from appearing irrelevant, as Gregory had effectively concluded, were of paramount importance. This is why, as noted earlier, Gregory's *Regula pastoralis* and Benedict's *Regula* were read to the episcopal and monastic attendees at the reform councils of 813. The campaign to unite the empire's monasteries under the latter rule—initiated by Benedict of Aniane, Louis the Pious's trusted adviser who had renamed himself in homage to the *Regula*'s writer—was a cornerstone of the Carolingian reform program.¹²¹ Such reforms had served to erect a seemingly solid structural edifice, wherein the definition and delineation of the *ordines* felt vital¹²²—even if, in practice, the roles associated with the separate orders were sometimes rather ambiguous. Carolingian ecclesiastics certainly found much in Gregory's work that felt immediately applicable to their needs. But a conceptualization of the *ordines* as distinct social entities made sense to ninth-century bishops and monks in a way that it had not to the sixth-century pope, for whom all was equally imperfect and soon to end. For Gregory's ardent Carolingian admirers, the specificity of Pomerius's message to the office of the episcopate was therefore a reminder of the normal order of things, modestly scaling back Gregory's radical vision of amorphous imperfection.

“PROSPER” AT AACHEN

The precise distinction between the *ordines* was among the most critical topics addressed at the Council of Aachen in 816, a synod at which the *VC* and Gregory's work played extremely significant roles, if we are to judge from the conciliar record.¹²³ Where Charlemagne, in the final year of his life, had merely requested notice of the proceedings at the reform councils of 813,¹²⁴ Louis the Pious himself opened this gathering of the empire's ecclesiastical and lay elite.¹²⁵ With Benedict of

¹²¹ On this point, see Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751–987* (London 1989) 109–124. On the self-refashioning of the “Visigothic warrior-aristocrat” Witiza as the revered holy man Benedict of Aniane, see Felice Lifshitz, *The Name of the Saint: The Martyrology of Jerome and Access to the Sacred in Francia, 627–827* (Notre Dame 2006) 2–6.

¹²² On the relationship between institutional stability and religious culture, see Peter Brown, “*Gloriosus obitus*: The End of the Ancient Other World,” *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, ed. William Klingshirn and Mark Vessey (Ann Arbor 1999) 289–314.

¹²³ Council of Aachen (816), MGH *Concilia* (Hannover 1906) 2(1) 307–464.

¹²⁴ McKitterick, *The Frankish Church* (n. 75 above) 12.

¹²⁵ On this council, see De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 23.

Aniane at his side, Louis had recently, upon inheriting the throne, “cleansed” the palace of the vices tolerated at Aachen under his father.¹²⁶ The council convened in the summer of 816 was meant to demonstrate the fruits yielded by Louis’s “Christianizing” labor, while focusing the efforts of the empire’s best and brightest toward correcting the problems that remained. Naturally, the “words of the holy Fathers” (*sanctorum patrum dictis*) would be essential for these purposes.¹²⁷

The *acta* of the 816 council display an extensive familiarity with the *VC*. The identity of its author/compiler is unclear, but one recent study suggests that it may have been Bishop Amalarius of Metz.¹²⁸ This suggestion stands to reason if one recalls the path breaking use of the *VC* in Amalarius’s diocese by the earlier bishop of Metz, Chrodegang. At any rate, the number of times that the *VC* is quoted or referred to is striking, especially in comparison with its appearance in the Chalons council *acta* produced just three years earlier. The 816 record, essentially an extended *florilegium*, includes eleven chapters dedicated to Pomerius’s words, cited as Prosper, among the approximately fifty-eight chapters that consist of patristic quotations.¹²⁹ In addition to the usual inclusion of Pomerius’s remarks on church property, chapters thirteen, declaring explicitly that “holy priests can become sharers in the contemplative life,” and fifteen, on the danger of pastoral *negligentia*, plus three others (20, 21, 22), are used from Book I of the *VC*. Six chapters are taken from Book II (chapters 9–14, which deal mainly with the administration of church property and the negotiation of personal assets by bishops).¹³⁰

The grouping of the patristic chapters in the conciliar *acta* of 816 may itself be telling of how the words—and names—of the Fathers were utilized as discursive tools by the Carolingian clergy. Of the eleven chapters from the conciliar record that center on “Prosper,” five are preceded by other “Prosper” chapters. Three of the remaining six chapters using the *VC* immediately follow chapters drawing from Gregory’s work (an especially generous portion of the *Regula pastoralis* is included in the conciliar text); a chapter or multiple chapters referring to Isidore are compiled between Gregory and “Prosper” in the other

¹²⁶ See Paul E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (Lincoln 1994) 54–60.

¹²⁷ Council of Aachen (816) (n. 123 above) 313.

¹²⁸ Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom* (n. 42 above) 295. Moore (295 n. 48) names Ansegesis and Benedict of Aniane as other possible authors. On Amalarius, see Allen Cabaniss, *Amalarius of Metz* (Amsterdam 1954).

¹²⁹ Council of Aachen (816) (n. 123 above) c. 19, 26, 28, 32, 35, 106–11, MGH *Concilia*, 2(1):342, 347–48, 351, 353–54, 356–57, 381–85.

¹³⁰ See n. 64 above. See also Devisse, “L’influence de Julien Pomère” (n. 116 above) 286.

three instances.¹³¹ The *VC*, when employed immediately or soon after chapters drawing from Gregory's work, clearly complements, but perhaps also, as I have suggested, tempers the commanding words of Gregory. Augustine, meanwhile, appears only occasionally in the conciliar record—just often enough, perhaps, that the general tone of the document might be considered sufficiently Augustinian, a credential that Prosper's name also served to endorse. Pomerius/"Prosper" and Gregory, along with Isidore, are center stage, names of weighty authority, providing correction and edification by virtue of their patristic antiquity.

For the *VC*'s audience within the Carolingian episcopate, the possibility of perfection was on the table as a point of aspiration, and a crucial reminder to fulfill the duties of their *ministerium*. The spiritual authority normally ascribed to monks—and perhaps even the political authority of kings—were up for grabs in Charlemagne's final years and the early period of Louis the Pious's reign, due in large part to the unique circumstances of reform in this period. The *VC*, especially when employed in conjunction with like-minded works by Gregory, lent the bishops' case for authority and perfection an ancient gravitas that was absolutely congruous with the aims and ideals of Carolingian reform.

III. WATCHMEN UNTO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

In the twentieth chapter of Book I of the *De vita contemplativa*, Pomerius asserts that "it avails a priest nothing to live a good life, if by his silence he does not correct him who lives a bad life."¹³² Following this statement, Pomerius elaborates on the obligations of *sacerdotes* (for Pomerius, bishops) to correct, in particular, the most powerful souls under their pastoral care:

Since he knows that if he spares the rich and powerful, if he even favors those who live a bad life, he causes their ruin and at the same time perishes himself, he should both live a holy life because of the example he must give, and teach because of the charge of his ministry, being certain that his personal justice will not avail him from whose hand a doomed soul is required. When any other person who has no obligation to teach perishes, he alone will pay the penalty of his crime; but he who has the commission of dispensing the word, however holy the life he lives, if he is either embarrassed or afraid to reprimand those who live wickedly, perishes with all who are lost through his silence. And what will it profit him not to be punished for his own sin if he is to be punished for another's? If I am not mistaken, this is

¹³¹ See n. 64 above.

¹³² Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 20, PL 434, "Quod nihil prosit sacerdoti, etiamsi bene viviat, si male viventem tacendo non corrigat"; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 41.

what the Lord states through the Prophet Ezechiel under the threat of some fear, when he says to him: *So thou, O son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel* (Ezech. 33.7). Nor should we give passing heed to the fact that he calls a bishop a ‘watchman.’ It is the work of a watchman to look out from a higher place and to see more than all others: so, too, a bishop should stand out above all by the sublimity of his pattern of life and should have the attraction of a superior knowledge of the way of life whereby he may be able to instruct those who live under him.¹³³

Pomerius’s contention, that bishops must serve as “watchmen” (*speculatores*), steadfast in their instruction and oversight of God’s chosen people, was one that his audience among the Carolingian episcopate took to heart.¹³⁴ This chapter from the *VC* was used in the record of the 816 Council of Aachen, and, as we shall see, it would continue to function as a critical notion in the ecclesiastical and political discourse of the next two decades. The compatibility of Pomerius’s instruction with statements by other revered figures—especially Gregory the Great in his *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam*¹³⁵—made this a particularly compelling and potent message. A collective understanding that bishops were, by the duty of their *ordo*, Ezechiel’s “watchmen unto the house of Israel” strengthened the moral authority of the “princes of the Church” as they rose boldly to Pomerius’s challenge, not only correcting but eventually deposing a seemingly wayward emperor.

Before we proceed to examining the performance of Carolingian bishops as *speculatores*, it is important to again consider the relevance of the other half of this Ezechielian exhortation. The typological association, in the Carolingian cultural imagination, of the Frankish people with God’s elect people, the “house of Israel,” is a trope that should not be interpreted too literally, nor read from the vantage point of modern assumptions about the meaning of such rhetoric. It is also by no means unique to the Carolingians among pre-modern societies.¹³⁶ Yet, the frequency with which such typology—the Franks as the Israelites of the Christian age, and their king in the role of David—entered

¹³³ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 20, PL 434; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 42–43, modified slightly.

¹³⁴ The episcopal role of the watchman has been discussed by Michael H. Hoeflich, “The Speculator in the Governmental Theory of the Early Church,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980) 120–129; Christine Mohrmann, “Episkopos-Speculator,” in eadem, *Études sur le latin des chrétiens* (Rome 1977) 4.232–252; and Conrad Leyser, “Let Me Speak, Let Me Speak: Vulnerability and Authority in Gregory’s Homilies on Ezekiel,” *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo* (Rome 1991) 2.169–182.

¹³⁵ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam Prophetam*, 1.11.4–8, CCSL 142, ed. Marcus Adriaen (Turnhout 1971) 170–173.

¹³⁶ See Garrison, “The Franks as the New Israel?” (n. 96 above); and eadem, “Divine Election for Nations” (n. 96 above).

into eighth- and ninth-century discussions of church and polity warrants consideration of how contemporary readers understood the pronouncement in Ezechiel 3:17/33:7. Bishops of this period—at once edified and empowered by their familiarity with the *VC*—believed it was their duty to “look out from a higher place and to see more than all others,” guarding the new house of Israel against the dangerous proliferation of sinful behavior, not least *negligentia* and *iniquitas* (“iniquity,” a serious concern at this time, and also addressed in Ezechiel.)

REMEDIES FOR SIN

For the deep spiritual and social ills caused by such serious sins, the ideal remedies were voluntary confession and penance.¹³⁷ Indeed, Pomerius discusses the confession of sins and the necessity of stern rebuke in medicinal terms:

As to the sins of any persons that somehow come to light though in their guilt they did not intend to confess them, whatever sins are not remedied by the gentle medication of patience are to be cauterized and cured by the fire, as it were, of kindly reproof. But if even the remedy of such gentle forbearance and kindly reprimand avails nothing in persons who, though long endured and admonished for their own good, refuse to amend, like decaying parts of the body they should be cut off by the knife of excommunication. Otherwise, just as morbid flesh, if not removed, impairs the health of the rest of the body by the infection it brings, so those who despise correction and persist in their infirmity, by remaining with their depraved morals in the company of the good people, will infect them by the example of their own wickedness.¹³⁸

Pomerius was likely inspired by the Gospels in his use of such a lurid corporeal metaphor.¹³⁹ Yet, in neither Matthew (5.29) nor Mark (9.42–46) was the call to excise various, malignant parts of the body connected directly to a discussion of confession or penance. For Pomerius, the watchman must also be a physician, carefully inspecting the body of the church and, when necessary, placing in quarantine its infected parts, including potentially contaminated members of the clergy. But before such drastic measures should be effected, instructs Pomerius, sinners should be reprimanded with a “gentle rebuke” so as to under-

¹³⁷ See Firey, *A Contrite Heart* (n. 116 above) 97–110; and Natalie Brigit Molineaux, *Medici et Medicamenta: The Medicine of Penance in Late Antiquity* (Lanham 2009).

¹³⁸ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) II c.7, PL 451; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 69.

¹³⁹ Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 184 n. 25.

stand the severity of their sins and the value of proper correction.¹⁴⁰ All the better that such a desire for “efficacious penance” (*efficacis poenitentiae*) be a “voluntary” (*voluntariae*) expression by the sinner, one “not convicted by human judgment, but of their own accord” (*non humano convicti iudicio, sed ultro crimen agnoscunt*).¹⁴¹

It cannot be known for certain whether Pomerius’s discussion of penance was on the minds of the court-connected ecclesiastical elite (or even, perhaps, that of the emperor himself) in 822; given the prominence of the *VC* in this period, it is not improbable. The sincere willingness which Pomerius had lauded was, at least ostensibly, on striking display in that year,¹⁴² as Louis the Pious became the first emperor in over four centuries to perform an act of public penance.¹⁴³ In the interval between this gathering at Attigny and the Council of Aachen six years earlier, Louis, despite his “pious” aspiration to Christian governance, was understood to have committed several grievous wrongs: among them, ordering his nephew, Bernard of Italy, to be blinded following Bernard’s failed revolt (the lesser sentence of blinding, as opposed to execution, nevertheless had led rapidly to Bernard’s death); the banishment from court of Abbot Adalard of Corbie and his brother and successor Wala, key advisors to Louis’s father; and the forced tonsuring of Louis’s “brothers” (in Christ). At the assembly in Attigny, “after talking it over with his bishops and magnates,” Louis—apparently by his own volition and not by the compulsion of his clerical and lay inner circle—“made a public confession and did penance” for these sins, while also, according to the writer of the 822 entry in the *Annales*

¹⁴⁰ Regarding the early medieval practice, and discursive limits, of correction and criticism, much has been written in recent years. See, for example, De Jong, “Admonitio and Criticism of the Ruler at the Court of Louis the Pious” (n. 94 above); Mary Garrison, “An Aspect of Alcuin: ‘Tuus Albinus’—Peevish Egotist? Or Parrhesiast?”, *Ego Trouble: Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini (Vienna 2010) 137–152; Courtney M. Booker, “Murmurs and Shouts: Speaking the Conscience in Carolingian Narratives,” *Politische Theologie und Geschichte unter Ludwig dem Frommen / Histoire et théologie politiques sous Louis le Pieux*, [Relectio. Karolingische Perspektiven—Perspectives carolingiennes—Carolingian Perspectives, 2], ed. Martin Gravel and Sören Kaschke (Ostfildern, forthcoming); and Irene van Renswoude, “License to Speak: The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages” (PhD diss., Universiteit Utrecht 2011).

¹⁴¹ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) II c.8 59 452; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 70–71.

¹⁴² On the importance of penance being voluntary, or at least perceived that way, see De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 244–245.

¹⁴³ The last instance was in 390, when the Emperor Theodosius was compelled by Ambrose of Milan to perform penance following the massacre at Thessaloniki. See Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley 1994) 323–330; Van Renswoude, “License to Speak” (n. 140 above) 137–174; De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 122.

regni Francorum, “[trying] with great humility to make up for any similar acts committed by him or his father.”¹⁴⁴ A Davidic leader of the house of the Franks,¹⁴⁵ Louis had publicly imbibed the spiritual medicine of confession and penance—even if some critics of the emperor would later charge that he was less than convincing in his display of guilt and contrition.¹⁴⁶ Most onlookers at the time, however, were presumably satisfied by Louis’s show of humility, including the bishops whose counsel had been sought by the troubled emperor, and who, following Louis, themselves repented for their own sins.¹⁴⁷

JONAS OF ORLÉANS AND THE *DE VITA CONTEMPLATIVA*

It is probable that among those bishops to whom Louis appealed, and who, in turn, witnessed his confessions, was Jonas of Orléans, one of Pomerius’s most attentive Carolingian readers. Jonas seems to have been favored by the emperor,¹⁴⁸ having been appointed by Louis as the bishop of Orléans, replacing the exiled, accused traitor Theodulf¹⁴⁹ about four years before Louis’s penance at Attigny. Among his contemporaries, Jonas was highly regarded for his literary and theological abilities.¹⁵⁰ It is possible that he developed these skills, in part, while attending the palace school as a youth.¹⁵¹ Though little is known for certain about Jonas’s early life, it is likely that he was donated as a child to a monastery in Aquitaine.¹⁵² This explanation fits well with the asceticism that clearly informed the future bishop of Orléans’s thought, while also helping to account for Jonas’s preferences in source mate-

¹⁴⁴ *Annales regni Francorum*, a. 822 (n. 95 above) 157–159; trans. Bernhard Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles* (n. 95 above) 111.

¹⁴⁵ On this point, see the fruitful speculation in De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 122.

¹⁴⁶ See Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above) 163; De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 126–127.

¹⁴⁷ De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 36, observes, “Louis set an example, for the bishops present followed him with a confession of their negligence in life, doctrine and ministry. The moral high ground during this assembly [at Attigny] was undoubtedly dominated by the emperor himself.” On the 822 penance, see also Thomas F. X. Noble, “Louis the Pious and His Piety Re-Reconsidered,” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 58 (1980) 312–313.

¹⁴⁸ Mary Jegen, “Jonas of Orleans (c. 780–843): His Pastoral Writings and Their Social Significance” (PhD diss., Saint Louis University 1967) 8.

¹⁴⁹ On the rise and fall of Theodulf, see June-Ann Greeley, “Raptors and Rebellion: The Self-Defence of Theodulf of Orléans,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 16 (2006) 28–75.

¹⁵⁰ Jegen, “Jonas of Orleans” (n. 148 above) 18–19, noting that all but one of Jonas’s extant works are known to have been commissioned by admirers.

¹⁵¹ James Lepree, “Sources of Spirituality and the Carolingian Exegetical Tradition” (PhD diss., City University of New York 2008) 15–16.

¹⁵² Lepree, “Sources of Spirituality” (n. 151 above) 16.

rial; in addition to the *VC*, Jonas drew purposefully from the *Regula Benedicti* and the work of Cassian.¹⁵³

That Jonas drew on Cassian for his *De institutione regia* (ca. 831), one of the relatively few Carolingian tracts that deals explicitly with the subject of kingship (written for Pepin of Aquitaine, son of Louis the Pious),¹⁵⁴ is particularly revealing for our purposes. His apparently intimate familiarity with both Cassian's work and the *VC* put the bishop of Orléans in the best position, among Pomerius's Carolingian audience, to discern the un-Prosper-like qualities of the *VC*. Pomerius, as Conrad Leyser and others have demonstrated, strove to synthesize aspects of Cassian's ascetic writings within his core program of Augustinianism, whereas Prosper, by contrast, had written a polemic against Cassian. James Lepree shows that Cassian's work, understood in conjunction with Benedict's Rule, was indeed central to the formation of Jonas's thought and spirituality.¹⁵⁵ More specifically, Jonas managed to weave a Cassianic treatment of the vices congruously, even seamlessly, into a treatise on ideal royal leadership that fit particularly well within the Benedictine model of governance established under Louis the Pious.

In his earlier *De institutione laicali*, written sometime before 828, Jonas drew liberally from all three books of the *VC*,¹⁵⁶ in addition to working from a familiarity with the *VC* itself, Jonas may additionally have utilized extracts of the *VC* collected in the *Liber scintillarum*, the late seventh- or early eighth-century *florilegium* compiled by "Defensor" of Limoges.¹⁵⁷ Writing at the behest of Count Matfrid of Orléans, Jonas, in the *De institutione laicali*, selectively re-contextualized the *VC*'s advice for bishops toward the task of edifying the laity. For instance, Jonas quotes at length and nearly verbatim from the *VC* in reflecting upon the nature of "the blessed life" (*vita beata*), explaining that "those who attain it by accomplishing good works will be like the blessed angels and together with them will reign eternally with God" (*ad quam qui bonorum operum consummatione pervenerint, beatis*

¹⁵³ Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione regia*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 407, ed. Alain Dubreucq (Paris 1995). See Lepree, "Sources of Spirituality" (n. 151 above) 19–29.

¹⁵⁴ Morrison, *The Two Kingdoms* (n. 96 above) 10 n. 14.

¹⁵⁵ Lepree, "Sources of Spirituality" (n. 151 above) 19. Lepree also observes that scholars have failed "to recognize Jonas as an early Carolingian transmitter of the principal themes of Cassianic monastic and ascetic literature."

¹⁵⁶ Laistner, "The Influence" (n. 68 above) 48.

¹⁵⁷ Lepree, "Sources of Spirituality" (n. 151 above) 37–39. In Jonas's *De institutione laicali*, the words of "Prosper" are situated alongside those of, most prominently, Gregory (especially the *Regula pastoralis* and *Moralia in Iob*) and Augustine (*De sermone Domini in monte* and *De doctrina Christiana*, in particular).

angelis similes erunt, et simul cum Deo sine fine regnabunt).¹⁵⁸ What is good advice for ministers of God, suggests the *De institutione laicali*, is no less spiritually useful for His followers among the Christian laity. Jonas employed the *VC* as a tool for counseling Matfrid on the sin of Adam;¹⁵⁹ the importance of temperance;¹⁶⁰ the danger of envy to one's soul and its close connection to pride (Jonas softens Pomerius's "disease of pride," *superbiae morbo*, to *superbiae modo*, unless, of course, this subtle alteration is simply a transcription error);¹⁶¹ the need for reflecting on one's own sins before rebuking the faults of others;¹⁶² and other topics of seemingly equal concern for lay or clerical readers. In the majority of instances in which the words of "Prosper" are invoked, Jonas pairs his quotation with a complementary passage from Gregory the Great. Occasionally, though less frequently, the excerpts from the *VC* are placed near quotations from Augustine; in one case, Jonas's chapter on envy, the "Prosper" passage is inserted directly between quotations from the *De doctrina Christiana* and the *Moralia in Iob*, with the excerpt from the *VC* serving as a transitional link between the respective positions of Augustine and Gregory.

MEDIATORES INTER DEUS ET HOMINES

The *VC* would again play a crucial role in 829 at the Council of Paris, a gathering for which Jonas served as notary, compiling most, though probably not all, of the conciliar *acta*.¹⁶³ This assembly at Paris was one of four reform councils called by Louis the Pious and his co-emperor and eldest son, Lothar, in 829 (the records for the other councils held at Mainz, Lyon, and Toulouse are lost). The foremost purpose of all these councils was to address the problem of why both the lay and clerical elite had strayed from the proper, established duties of their respective *ordo*, and to set both orders back on course.¹⁶⁴ This wayward behavior, of which no one, including the emperors, was innocent, was understood by both Louis and his bishops as the source of the troubles then plaguing their territories; other ills, such as the lingering presence of sorcer-

¹⁵⁸ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 4, PL 421–22; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 21. Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* III c. 20, PL 106.277–278.

¹⁵⁹ Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* (n. 158 above) I c. 1, PL 125. Cf. Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) II c. 20, PL 465–66.

¹⁶⁰ Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* (n. 158 above) I c.10, PL 140–142. Cf. Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) II c. 22, PL 467–469.

¹⁶¹ Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* (n. 158 above) III c. 5, PL 242. Cf. Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) III c. 5, PL 480.

¹⁶² Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* (n. 158 above) II c. 28, PL 230. Cf. Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) II c. 6, PL 450.

¹⁶³ Jegen, "Jonas of Orleans" (n. 148 above) 250.

¹⁶⁴ De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 170.

ers and pagans,¹⁶⁵ were viewed both as eliciting God's wrath and as symptomatic of the disorder and confusion among the empire's political and ecclesiastical leadership. Both orders of society were perceived to be in need of correction. To right the problematic behavior among the non-clerical leadership of the realm, sizable portions of Jonas's *De institutione laicali* were included in the *acta* of the Paris council as a guide for the laity, while Pomerius/"Prosper" and strong doses of Gregory the Great, among other patristic authorities, were employed as models for the clergy. Right from the start of the synodal record, the remedial quality of penance is particularly emphasized.¹⁶⁶ As Michael E. Moore observes, "The reason a council could placate an angry God, the authors believed, was that the council was a penitential act for the king, and by extension, for the entire kingdom."¹⁶⁷ The high-ranking *sacerdotes*¹⁶⁸ gathered at Paris consequently had to perform a high-wire act, simultaneously acknowledging that the episcopate itself required stern correction, while demonstrating that the empire's bishops were nevertheless the most appropriate mediators between God and men—the true *vicarii apostolorum*¹⁶⁹—using carefully selected sources, such as the *VC*, as authoritative evidence that bishops alone should serve in this critical capacity.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above) 151.

¹⁶⁶ Council of Paris (829), ed. Albert Werminghoff, *MGH Concilia* (Hannover 1908) 2(2), 606–607.

¹⁶⁷ Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom* (n. 42 above) 316. See also, on this point, De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 178; and Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above) 151.

¹⁶⁸ The Council of Paris record often uses the general term *sacerdotes*, rather than the more specific *pontifices*, in referring to bishops, perhaps an echo of Pomerius's unusual, if not altogether unique, choice of words. De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 179–180, provides a brief summary of the ancient uses of this term, though she does not consider its more recent, widespread use in the *VC*. See also Plumpe, "Pomeriana" (n. 14 above) 227–239, for a conclusive demonstration that Pomerius used the terms *sacerdotes* and *pontifices* interchangeably, and in both cases with reference to bishops.

¹⁶⁹ Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) 608.

¹⁷⁰ As observed in Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom* (n. 42 above) 315, Steffen Patzold, *Episcopus* (Ostfildern 2008) 149, shows that at the Council of Paris the developing notion of the bishop as *mediator inter Deus et homines* came particularly to the fore. De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 177, argues that the bishops gathered at Paris, in setting a much remarked-upon precedent through their use of the provocative letter of Pope Gelasius (494), "had no intention of proclaiming a doctrine of the two swords, or of undermining the position of Louis the Pious; on the contrary, these bishops dealt with an extremely powerful ruler, and tried to reaffirm their own authority (*pondus sacerdotum*) by projecting themselves as the only valid mediators between an enraged deity and a penitent Carolingian leadership—royal, ecclesiastical and secular." [The emphasis is mine.] Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above), largely concurs with this revisionist position, which stands in stark contrast to the conclusions of earlier scholars. For instance, Jegen, "Jonas of Orleans" (n. 148 above) 246, casually observes, "It is generally con-

In the uncertain times of the late 820s, it was imperative that the watchmen themselves be on guard, attentive to ministerial duties they may have neglected or insufficiently fulfilled, and protective of the moral status they had progressively cultivated over the decades of the Carolingian reform. From the surviving *acta* of the Paris council, however complete or partial a glimpse they provide of the assembly itself, it is not hard to imagine the gathering at Paris as an intense ecclesio-political negotiation. Somewhat paradoxically, bishops were sincerely atoning in the face of accusations that they had overstepped boundaries, meddling too much in worldly affairs, and at the same time were formulating a compelling case for wielding even greater authority within the hierarchy of the *ordines*.

The *VC* was particularly useful in helping Jonas and his fellow bishops clarify some of this potentially dangerous confusion. The long-cited passage in Book II, chapter nine, on church possessions being “the vows of the faithful, the ransom of sinner, and the patrimony of the poor,” is again, predictably, trotted out in the 829 council *acta* alongside other quotations from this same chapter of the *VC* to remind bishops of how they ought to administer ecclesiastical property.¹⁷¹ Pomerius’s consideration of the obligation of bishops not only to avoid sin themselves, but also to rebuke sinners had likewise been drawn on before by his Carolingian audience, but here the passage takes on a new potency and immediacy. In the excerpt quoted in the conciliar record, Pomerius asserts, “When any other person who has no obligation to teach perishes, he alone will pay the penalty of his crime; but he who has the commission of dispensing the word, however holy the life he lives, if he is either embarrassed or afraid to reprimand those who live wickedly, perishes with all who are lost through his silence. And what will it profit him not to be punished for his own sin if he is to be punished for another’s?”¹⁷² The correction of sinners is firmly situated here as a spiritual obligation of the episcopate; that bishops should be the members of Christian society administering the correction is proper and to be expected, given that this is an integral and inherent component of the job. This is the same section of Book I, chapter twenty, where, as

ceded that in his government Louis the Pious was hardly more than the spokesman for the higher clergy who used him as the agent for implementing their own programs.”

¹⁷¹ Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) I c. 5, 623: “vota fidelium, pretia peccatorum, et patrimonium pauperum”; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 73.

¹⁷² Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) I c. 20, PL 434; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* 42. In the Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) I c. 5, 613: “Ille, inquit, cui dispensatio verbi comissa est, etiamsi sanctae vivat et tament perditte viventes arguere aut erubescat aut metuat, cum omnibus, qui eo tacent perierint, perit; et quid ei proderit non puniri suo, qui puniendus est alieno peccato?”

mentioned above, Pomerius invoked Ezechiel 33.7 to explain the role of the bishop as *speculator*. Perhaps working from this textual cue, the compiler of the Paris conciliar record anticipated this passage from Pomerius with the relevant quotations from Ezechiel (33.2–6; 3.17–18), including, in its earlier form (3.17), the Old Testament prophet’s message, “*Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel.*”¹⁷³ Just after the passage from Pomerius quoted above, another brief quotation from the same chapter of the *VC* is added to the Paris *acta*, one that reflects on the special meaning for *sacerdotes* of these verses from Ezechiel.¹⁷⁴ The message—that Carolingian bishops are, despite their own confessed sins and shortcomings, the empire’s true and loyal watchmen, deserving of the authority and respect associated with this vital role described by the prophet—was thus delivered loud and clear.

NAMING NAMES

By contrast, what are not at all clear, but rather quite perplexing, are the attributions given to the excerpts taken from the *VC* that appear in this chapter (5) of the Paris conciliar record. Both of the quotations drawn from Book I, chapter twenty, noted above, are attributed not to Prosper, but to Pomerius, who, for the second quotation, is cited as “*hisdem doctor Pomerius.*” This correct citation is remarkable on its own, given the overwhelming tendency of early medieval writers to attribute the *VC* to the far more famous and authoritative Prosper. Making matters even stranger is that, just a few lines after the second quotation from Pomerius, another quotation, again meditating on the meaning of the verses from Ezechiel, is lifted from the *VC*, but in this instance it is taken from a slightly later chapter (1.22) and the attribution is to Prosper.¹⁷⁵ Curiously, throughout the Paris *acta*, misattributions for excerpts drawn from the *VC* are split between Pomerius and Prosper (see Table, below), but in this specific instance, the peculiarity of the conflicting citations is magnified: how could the composer, or composers, of this chapter in the conciliar record correctly identify and then *misidentify* the *VC*’s author within such a limited textual space, and when the points being expressed are so clearly similar?

¹⁷³ Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) I c. 5, 613. See, on this section of the conciliar record, De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 114–118.

¹⁷⁴ Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) I c. 5, 613.

¹⁷⁵ Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) I c. 5, 613.

Chapters in the Council of Paris <i>acta</i> containing quotations from the <i>VC</i>	<i>VC</i> chapter from which the quotation was drawn	Name cited as source of quotation
Book I, chapter 3	Book II, chapter 2	Prosper
I.5	I.20	Pomerius
I.5	I.20	Pomerius
I.5	I.22	Prosper
I.13	I.15	Pomerius
I.15	II.9	Pomerius
I.18	II.9	Pomerius
III.9	II.2	Prosper

TABLE. The *De vita contemplativa* at the Council of Paris (829)

It is, of course, impossible to say for certain. The likeliest explanation may well be that a group of writers who collaborated on this chapter of the conciliar record (a group which likely did not include Jonas, given his evident familiarity with all three books of the *VC*) worked from multiple sources, such as *florilegia* or records from previous church councils. Each of these texts may have contained different assembled fragments from the *VC*, and at least one of these hypothetical sources must have attributed its excerpts from the *VC* to Pomerius. This, in a sense, the most “medieval” of potential solutions, given the vagaries of textual transmission and reception, and practices of composition and compilation in the Middle Ages.¹⁷⁶ Admittedly, this solution is less dramatic than an argument insisting that wily bishops intentionally manipulated the textual evidence to their own political profit. Yet, the former explanation seems much more plausible than the latter one. In some instances, the medieval clergy no doubt did manipulate its records to suit its worldly interests, but in far more cases, medieval readers and writers made honest mistakes as a result of the often haphazard transmission and circulation of texts.

At any rate, we do not need to be able to say that Jonas or some other bishop at Paris deliberately mis-attributed the *VC*, in order to

¹⁷⁶ On this point, see Ernst Goldschmidt, *Medieval Texts and Their First Appearance in Print* (London 1943); and Marcus Bull, *Thinking Medieval: An Introduction to the Study of the Middle Ages* (New York 2005).

demonstrate what is absolutely clear from the conciliar *acta*: that the ideas expressed in the *VC* (whether ascribed to Pomerius or Prosper) provided crucial support for the bishops' overall case. The chapter centering on the Ezechiel verses and the *VC*'s conception of the bishop as *speculator* may be the most striking example of the council's use of the *VC*, but another instance, near the end of the conciliar record (Bk. III, chap. 9), also warrants close consideration. It is a rather lengthy quotation, from a chapter of the *VC* "in praise of holy priests" (*de laude sanctorum sacerdotum*),¹⁷⁷ which is introduced as being written by "blessed Prosper" in his book "about the contemplative and actual life" (*de contemplativa et actuali vita*).¹⁷⁸ The chapter then proceeds with the following quotation from the *VC*, modified only slightly to fit the context of the synodal passage:

They especially have received the charge of caring for souls. Ably bearing the responsibility for the people entrusted to them, they untiringly supplicate God for the sins of all as for their own; and, like an Aaron, offering the sacrifice of a contrite heart and a humble spirit, which appeases God, they turn the wrath of future punishment from their people. By the grace of God they become indicators of the divine will, founders of the churches of Christ after the Apostles, leaders of the faithful, champions of the truth, enemies of perverse teaching, amiable to all the good, terrifying even in appearance to those of evil conscience, avengers of the oppressed, fathers of those regenerated in the Catholic faith, preachers of the things of heaven, shock troops in battles unseen, patterns of good works, examples of virtues, and models for the faithful. They are the glory of the Church, in whom her luster is enhanced; they are the very strong pillars which, founded on Christ, support the whole multitude of believers; they are the gates of the eternal city through which all who believe in Christ enter unto Him; they are the gatekeepers who have received the keys of the kingdom of heaven; they are also the stewards of the royal house whose decision assigns each one's rank and office in the court of the eternal king.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) II c. 2, PL 444; trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* (n. 1 above) 58.

¹⁷⁸ Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) III c. 9, 673.

¹⁷⁹ Compare the text as given by both Pomerius and the *acta* of the Council of Paris. I have underlined the few places where the text differs. Pomerius, *VC* (n. 1 above) II c. 2, PL 444–445: "Ipsis enim proprie animarum curandarum sollicitudo commissa est; qui pondus populi sibi commissi utiliter sustinentes, pro peccatis omnium velut pro suis infatigabiliter supplicant Deo, ac velut quidam Aaron incensum contriti cordis, et humiliati spiritus offerentes, quo placatur Deus, avertunt iram futurae animadversionis a populo qui per Dei gratiam fiunt divinae voluntatis indices, Ecclesiarum Christi post apostolos fundatores, fidelis populi duces, veritatis assertores, pravae doctrinae hostes, omnibus bonis amabiles, et male sibi consciis etiam ipso visu terribiles, vindices oppressorum, patres in fide catholica regenerantium, praedicatores coelestium, primi phalanges invisibilium praeliorum, exempla bonorum operum, documenta virtutum, et forma fi-

This same passage from the *VC* was also used early in the first book of the *acta* in an even longer form that includes subsequent remarks by Pomerius,¹⁸⁰ but that were again attributed to Prosper. In this earlier case, Pomerius's effusive praise of the clergy was paired closely with a note of caution from Gregory's *Regula pastoralis*.¹⁸¹ Gregory warns that, "It is obviously necessary that they, who give utterance to words of holy preaching, should first be awake in the earnest practice of good deeds, lest, being themselves slack in performing them, they stir up others by words only."¹⁸² Only after profound self-examination and "severe penance" is the minister qualified to "set in order the lives of others by their words," and "before they utter words of exhortation, they should proclaim in their deeds all that they are about to say."¹⁸³ In this instance, Gregory's words represent the weighty burden of responsibility for those in the pastoral order, while the passage from Pomerius paints a glowing picture of the ideal bishop. But these images are, of course, two sides of the same coin. In order to become "models for the faithful" (*forma fidelium*)—and consequently, in Pomerius's view, to become potential sharers in the contemplative virtue—righteous ministers must undergo the rigorous self-chastisement described

delium. Ipsi sunt Ecclesiae decus, in quibus amplius fulget Ecclesia; ipsi columnae firmissimae quibus in Christo fundatis innititur omnis multitudo credentium; ipsi januae civitatis aeternae, per quos omnes qui credunt in Christum ingrediuntur ad Christum; ipsi janitores quibus claves datae sunt regni caelorum; ipsi etiam dispensatores regiae domus, quorum arbitrio in aula regis aeterni dividuntur gradus, et officia singulorum." Trans. Suelzer, *Julianus Pomerius* 59.

Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) III c. 9, 673: "Ipsis enim, inquit, id est sacerdotibus, proprie animarum curandarum sollicitudo commissa est; qui pondus populi sibi commissi viriliter sustinentes, pro peccatis omnium velut pro suis infatigabiliter supplicat Deo, ac velut quidam Aaron incensum contriti cordis, et humiliati spiritus offerentes, quo placatur Deus, avertunt iram futurae animadversionis a populo qui per Dei gratiam fiunt divinae voluntatis indices, Ecclesiarum Christi post apostolos fundatores, fidelis populi duces, veritatis adsertores, pravae doctrinae hostes, omnibus bonis amabiles, et male sibi consciis etiam ipso visu terribiles, vindices oppressorum, patres in fide catholica regenerantium, praedicatores caelestium, praemiorum exempla bonorum, documenta virtutum, et forma fidelium. Ipsi sunt decus Ecclesiae, in quibus amplius fulget Ecclesia; ipsi columnae firmissimae quibus in Christo fundatis innititur omnis multitudo credentium; ipsi januae civitatis aeternae, per quos omnes qui credunt in ingrediuntur ad Christum; ipsi janitores quibus claves datae sunt regni caelorum; ipsi etiam dispensatores regie domus, quorum arbitrio in aula regis aeterni dividuntur gradus, et officia singulorum."¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) I c. 4, 611–612.

¹⁸¹ Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* (n. 108 above) III c. 40, in Council of Paris (829) (n. 166 above) I c. 4, 611.

¹⁸² Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* (n. 108 above) III c. 40, PL 125; trans. Davis, *Pastoral Care* (n. 108 above) 233.

¹⁸³ Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* (n. 108 above) III c. 40, PL 125–126; trans. Davis, *Pastoral Care* (n. 108 above) 233.

by Gregory. In this capacity, per Matt. 18:18–19 (alluded to by Pomerius in the passage above), as “the key bearers of the kingdom of heaven,” with the ultimate ability to bind and loose souls,¹⁸⁴ Carolingian bishops knew well that they themselves had to undertake some intense soul-searching. At the Council of Paris, they challenged the empire’s lay leadership to do the same.

CONCLUSION: AFTER 829

In 829, Louis’s ability to lead his empire, that vast, unwieldy conglomeration of souls that comprised Christendom, was already a source of considerable friction among the realm’s ecclesiastical and lay elite. Four years after the Council of Paris, a second attempt at rebellion, headed by Louis’s elder sons and endorsed by key members of the clergy, led to a second public performance of penance by the emperor, presided over by the vigilant *speculatores* of the episcopate. But this time Louis was deposed, and promptly replaced on the throne by his eldest son, Lothar. “After such and so great a penance,” asserted the bishops in their record of this ceremony, “no one may ever return to the secular military service.”¹⁸⁵ And yet, within a year of this ostensibly binding ritual, Louis was restored to the throne, where he remained until his death in 840.

Following Louis’s official restoration late in February 835, most of his episcopal opponents moved themselves back in line. Jonas, among other critics, became “completely loyal once more.”¹⁸⁶ Ebbo, who had ordered Halitgar of Cambrai to compose a work correcting erroneous penitentials, was removed from his office as the archbishop of Reims, and served as the scapegoat for the “shameful” treatment of the emperor.¹⁸⁷ The increasing efforts of Carolingian bishops to become “sharers in the contemplative virtue,” worthy of acting as the ultimate mediators between God and man, had hit an enormous stumbling block and fallen short when Louis triumphed over the rebellion. In the years

¹⁸⁴ On the special importance of this concept from Matthew for Carolingian bishops, see Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above) 140.

¹⁸⁵ *Relatio episcoporum* (833), ed. Courtney M. Booker, *The Public Penance of Louis the Pious: A New Edition of the Episcoporum de poenitentia, quam Hludowicus imperator professus est, relatio Compendiensis* (833),” *Viator* 39 no. 2 (2008) 19, “ut post tantam talemque poenitentiam nemo ultra ad militiam saecularem redeat”; trans. Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above) 263. Booker identifies this statement from the episcopal *Relatio* as a close reference to the words of Pope Leo I in Epistle 167.

¹⁸⁶ De Jong, *The Penitential State* (n. 88 above) 53.

¹⁸⁷ On Ebbo’s fate, and the controversy that he would continue to generate for decades to come, see Booker, *Past Convictions* (n. 7 above) 183–209; Bart Selten, “The Good, the Bad or the Unworthy? Accusations, Defense and Representation in the Case of Ebbo of Reims, 835–882” (MA thesis, Universiteit Utrecht 2010).

that followed, the influence of the *VC*, so formidable throughout the first three decades of the ninth century, quickly waned. In 836, Louis called another church council at Aachen, to be headed by Jonas.¹⁸⁸ At this council, many of the core concerns and convictions expressed at the Council of Paris in 829 resurfaced, despite the altered landscape of royal-ecclesiastical relations;¹⁸⁹ the appearance of a return to normalcy, which, of course, meant reform, seems to have been the order of the day. The *VC*, however, was quoted only three times in the 836 conciliar record (in each instance being attributed to Prosper). Two of the quotations come from the by-then perfunctory remarks by Pomerius on the proper handling of church property.¹⁹⁰ The third quotation comes, somewhat more surprisingly, from the same passage, transcribed above, “in praise of holy priests” (*VC* Bk. II, chap. 2, which had twice been invoked in the Council of Paris *acta*).¹⁹¹ Perhaps, following the turbulence that had rocked the empire and its clergy in the time between the Council of Paris (829) and this gathering at Aachen (836), the re-insertion of this laudatory note from the *VC* was meant to serve as an implicit reminder that the *sancti sacerdotes* of the realm remained worthy of both the admiration of their flock and the authority of their sacred office.

¹⁸⁸ Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom* (n. 42 above) 340.

¹⁸⁹ Moore, *A Sacred Kingdom* (n. 42 above) 340.

¹⁹⁰ Council of Aachen (836) c. 19, 48, MGH, ed. Albert Werminghoff, *MGH Concilia* (Hannover 1908) 2(2) 709, 719.

¹⁹¹ Council of Aachen (836) (n. 190 above) c. 45, 717.