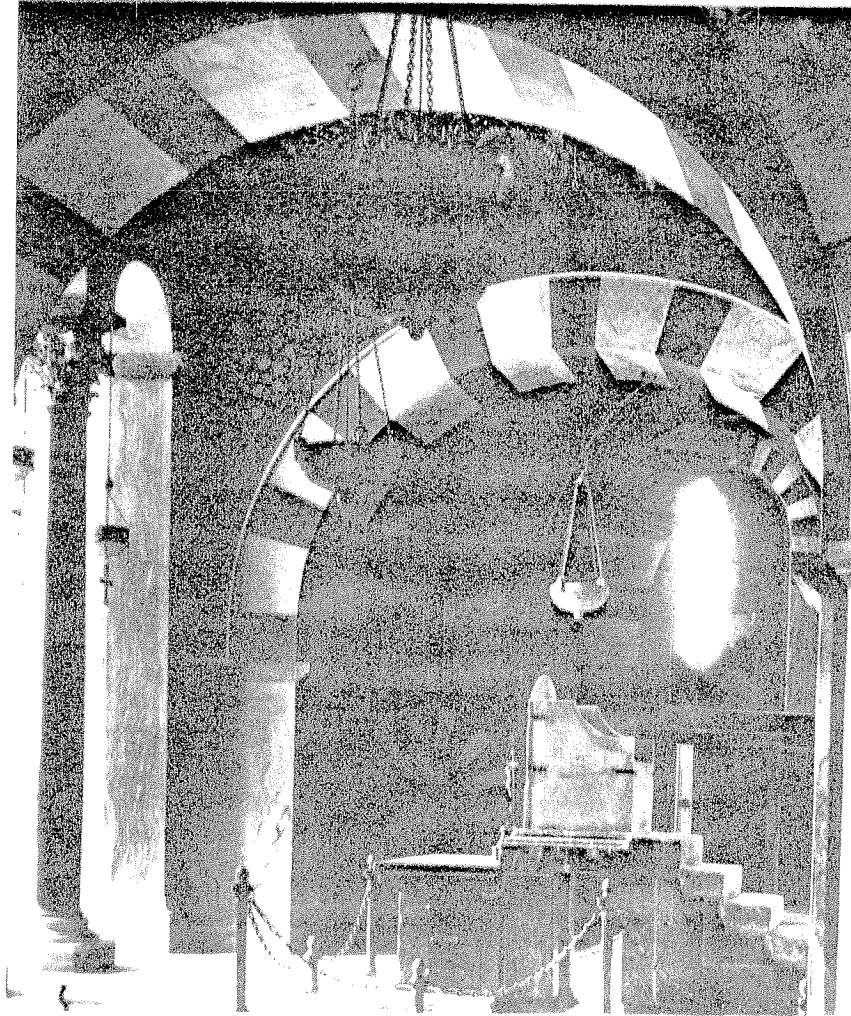


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Charlemagne's throne in the gallery of the octagon of the palace chapel at Aachen. The throne, which is approached by a staircase with six steps consists of four stone pillars supporting the *mensa*, i.e. the base on which the chair is raised. The chair is made of oak planks encased in slabs of white marble. The side pieces are curved to provide elbow rests. The back, rounded at the top, consists only of an upper part; the space below is filled by an upright wooden plank.

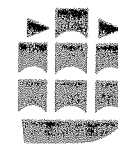
Installed in the seclusion of the royal (later imperial) loggia, the throne faced the main altar, which was visible through the centre opening of a three-part bay formed by two marble pilasters and two marble columns. Charlemagne could thus follow the Mass and liturgical offices. For an even clearer view, the bronze grilles, made at Aachen, which barred the lower part of the bay could be opened at the centre. The throne, like the chapel as a whole, dates from the late eighth or early ninth century.

F. L. Ganshof

The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy

Studies in
Carolingian History

Translated by Janet Sondheimer



Longman

XII. The last period of Charlemagne's reign: a study in decomposition*

The last period of Charlemagne's reign

of the Franks, already guilty of conquering the Byzantine province of Istria, could assume the title borne by the βασιλεύς and pretend to the same authority, was bound to appear on the shores of the Bosphorus as a usurpation past all precedent and an event big with menace. Apart from the political aspect, there is also the emotional impact to be borne in mind, given the 'superiority complex' which permeated Byzantine attitudes to the barbarians; for there can be no doubt that in the eyes of the Greeks the king of the Franks, for all his might, was a barbarian. It was a triumph for the barbarian when, thanks to his armed successes, he made Byzantium give way: in 812 ambassadors from Michael I came to Aachen and saluted him with the titles *imperator* (αὐτοκράτωρ)⁴ and βασιλεύς.

Quite apart from the recognition it conferred on certain conquests Charlemagne had made in the Adriatic basin, this gesture on the part of Byzantium brought satisfaction to his self-esteem, removed the last doubts about the legitimacy of his power and enhanced his prestige. The βασιλεύς, forced by the needs of an evil moment to bestow his own title on the king of the Franks, resigned himself to a humiliation he could believe to be transitory, just as he sometimes had to resign himself to paying tribute over several years to the Arabs. So far as he was concerned, he was not prepared to accept the western emperor as a colleague associated with himself in the possession of a time-honoured—but wholly theoretical—supreme authority over the Christian world: he did not intend Charlemagne to play Anthemius to another Leo.⁵ The western emperor remained an uncouth and redoubtable monarch dressed up in an ill-gotten title, and fifty-nine years later one of Michael's successors would ram the point home to Charlemagne's great-grandson.⁶ Yet there is no denying that both in law and in fact the legitimate heir of Constantine, Theodosius and Justinian had abdicated the age-old claim of all his predecessors, as of himself, to the universality of imperial power. From that time forward two empires claimed to be Roman: the idea of empire was about to become susceptible to a geographical or national definition.⁷

As emperor, Charlemagne pursued the political and military course he had been following before 25 December 800.⁸ Extinction of the last pockets of Saxon resistance dates from operations carried out in 802–4, and this same period saw the accomplishment of certain political and ecclesiastical measures—notably the treaty concluded at Salz in 803 with nobles from all parts of Saxony⁹—which helped to make the union of that country with the Frankish monarchy a reality: a surprising union after thirty-three years of warfare and atrocities, but one so rapidly effected that Einhard, writing about 830, could boldly declare that Saxons and Franks formed a single people.¹⁰ Another achievement during these years was the final pacification of the lands in the middle Danube region conquered from the Avars, and their organisation for administrative and ecclesiastical purposes: but the only territories effectively united to the Carolingian realm were

THE 'LAST PERIOD' of Charlemagne's reign can be said to run from the imperial coronation to his death, and thus covers the thirteen years and one month from 25 December 800 to 28 January 814.

The imperial coronation itself falls outside this period, but it conditioned what followed, and we shall have to examine some of its effects. For the moment I merely want to draw attention to the contradiction in Charlemagne's newly acquired dignity, a contradiction manifest in the very title he assumed, *Karolus serenissimus augustus a Deo coronatus magnus pacificus imperator Romanum gubernans imperium, qui et per misericordiam Dei rex Francorum atque Langobardorum*. This looks very much like a compromise, and it seems to have been arrived at only after several months had elapsed:¹ a compromise between Charlemagne's firmly held view that his power, though placed no doubt at the disposal of the Christian faith and the Church, was nonetheless total, something he 'felt' to be effective and real, and the conception divorced from reality held by empire-minded clerics, who saw in him a Roman emperor God had invested with a universal magistracy for the defence and exaltation of faith and Church; a compromise between the idea of an imperial power which might add lustre and completeness but made no essential difference to a power already extant, and the idea of an imperial power which differed essentially from any other authority.²

The first result of the imperial coronation was to provoke a conflict with Byzantium which lasted nearly six years and from 804 virtually became open war. The twists and turns of this conflict, which was not finally settled until the reign of Louis the Pious,³ do not here concern us; the important thing is to understand its full significance. It must be appreciated that at Byzantium the event which took place on 25 December 800 could only be regarded as a scandal. The empire was one empire; that the king

those north of the Drave, which were attached to the Bavarian 'march', and to the south of that river those which lay closest to Friuli. Again, it was only after 800 that the idea of creating a Pyrenean glacis, an aim ever since 785, was actually realised: 801 saw the fall of Barcelona, which would become the centre of a 'march' designed to keep the Saracens in Spain out of southern Gaul. But subsequent efforts to occupy the line of the Ebro were a failure and Tortosa, occupied in 811, had to be abandoned. Navarre, at the other end of the southern slope of the Pyrenees, was the scene of successful expeditions in 806 and 813, but their only result was to create an ascendancy which proved deceptive.

Saxony, the middle Danube and Spain were thus three zones in which the Franks and Christianity registered advances during the years 801-13; in these three zones, all things considered, the balance sheet of the reign closed favourably. It was not so in other parts.

The Lombard duchy of Benevento in southern Italy recognised Charlemagne's authority as supreme, but it was an empty authority and the military operations of 801 and 802 made no difference. The Bretons of the Armorican peninsula, who had ostensibly submitted in 799, in fact remained independent and disturbed the peace of the 'march' set up round Rennes and Nantes. A successful campaign was fought against them in 811, but even so it proved impossible to establish Frankish authority permanently in the region. The completion of the conquest of Saxony, together with the Frankish occupation of the lands of the middle Danube, made Charlemagne pay increased attention to the northern Slavs, who along substantial parts of his frontiers were now his immediate neighbours. He tried to annex Bohemia, which jutted like a wedge between Bavaria and the lands conquered from the Avars; in 805 and 806 the Czechs had to defend themselves in campaigns whose outcome was indecisive, and while it may be true that Bohemia was from that time forward considered an integral part of the empire, its dependence remained purely nominal. Further north, the representatives of Frankish authority on the Saale and the Elbe had their hands full with the Sorbs, Wilzes and Linones. The territory of these tribes was penetrated by Frankish forces in 806, 809, 811 and 812, and fortifications were erected to halt their incursions. But unlike the Obodrites of the far north, who in a sense became Frankish protégés, the other Slav peoples retained their independence intact.

All in all, the efforts to extend Charlemagne's authority in the far south and to west and east produced disappointing results; in none of these regions, however, was there a threat of immediate danger.

The situation on the Danish frontier was very different. Denmark was in process of achieving political organisation under King Godfred, who appears to have had ambitions of extending his sway to the Slav countries, Saxony and Frisia. He was even credited with designs of attacking the

imperial residence at Aachen,¹¹ but this may have been a bluff. Neither Godfred nor his successors made a frontal attack on Charlemagne; Godfred nevertheless twice ravaged the country of the Obodrites, who were Frankish protégés, and in 808 barred the way into southern Jutland with an earthwork, while in 809 Charlemagne threw up fortifications along the Stoer and on the right bank of the Elbe. The tension seemed to be building up towards war. In 810, while Charlemagne was preparing to take the offensive, a Danish fleet ravaged Frisia, one of the empire's most prosperous regions; this attack had been preceded by several other less serious raids on various points along the coast. Steps were taken to establish fixed and mobile defences for the littoral, but apparently with only partial success: they certainly did not prevent the Danes from making another raid on Frisia in 813.

The future, even the immediate future, looked ominous. In the Mediterranean the situation was equally grave, although in Provence, Septimania and Italy an earlier start had been made in fitting out warships. It is true that in the period 806-813 Saracen landings on Corsica and Sardinia and on the coasts of Provence and Italy alternated with naval battles from which the Franks more than once emerged the victors. But Frankish naval strength was inadequate to shield the Mediterranean parts of the empire from attacks launched from Spain or north Africa.

One of the most important questions posed by the years 801 to 813 is what influence Charlemagne's assumption of the imperial title exerted on the conduct of his government. This problem must first be dealt with under its Roman aspect. The dignity of emperor clearly underpinned Charlemagne's authority in Rome and the papal state, giving it a more solid legal basis than he had derived from his quality of 'patrician of the Romans':¹² it allowed him greater authority in the exercise of jurisdiction, whether in his own person or through his *missi*.¹³ We find the *missi* intervening quite actively in Roman affairs, perhaps more so than in the past; but the character of their activity does not differ markedly from what was already open to them before 25 December 800, and it was still the same 'means of power' which made such activity possible. Turning to Pope Leo III, we find that the imperial dignity acquired by the king of the Franks made little difference to relations between the two: on Charlemagne's side there is the same deference as before, but also the same concern to impose his will; on the pope's side, the same obsequiousness. Charles's imperial majesty in no way deterred Leo III from complaining about alleged encroachments by the *missi* on his rights, nor of hostility towards him from Pippin, king of Italy; above all, Charles's imperial majesty did not deter the pope from withholding his assent to decisions reached by a council of the Frankish Church on a doctrinal and liturgical question, the procession of the Holy Ghost.¹⁴ At the practical level, it cannot be said that Charlemagne's acquisition of the imperial title left any profound

mark on his exercise of governmental functions at Rome or in the papal state, or that it added substantially to his power.

When we look at the same question under its Frankish and Lombard aspect, we must first of all be clear that Charlemagne was emperor throughout his realms. In 802 all his subjects, who had previously sworn fidelity to him as king, were required to take an oath of fidelity to him as emperor,¹⁵ so it seems that at that particular juncture the imperial dignity occupied an important place in the scheme of government. This supposition is borne out by Charles's conduct during 802, the year which followed his return from Italy. He may possibly have arranged for a synod to meet at Aachen as early as November 801, to concern itself with the level of education among the clergy and the way their ministry was exercised.¹⁶ But the really important event took place in March 802, when the emperor presided over a great assembly at Aachen. Having taken counsel from its members, he decided to despatch *missi* of high rank to tour the empire; their task was to supervise the administration of the aforesaid oath, and more important still to see whether everyone was 'living according to the rightful law'.¹⁷

To assist them the *missi* received, in addition to the customary memorandum, a more lengthy document which set out the objectives to be achieved and the abuses they were to eliminate, both in the Church and among the laity.¹⁸ This document sounds a fresh note. True, Charlemagne had already made his mark as a legislator and a reformer of the Church and lay society; one has only to think, for example, of the synod of Frankfurt in 794.¹⁹ But never before had men encountered such majesty of tone or breadth in the matter encompassed; nor, for that matter, had they encountered the deliberate stress on imperial power, in virtue of which the emperor issued his commands.²⁰ Even so, what strikes one most in this capitulary is first and foremost the clearly affirmed recognition of the emperor's responsibility before God for the conduct of all Christians subject to his authority.²¹ 'Let each man keep himself in the sacred service of God, following the divine commandments and observing whatever promise he may have made, fully, to the best of his understanding and powers: for the lord emperor cannot exercise his vigilance or power of correction over every man.'²² The same recognition is found at the end of the article in which bishops, abbots, abbesses and counts are urged to live in mutual harmony, applying and respecting the law, following the commandments of God, aiding and protecting the poor, widows, orphans and pilgrims, 'so that, thanks to their good intent, we shall be more deserving of the reward of eternal life than of damnation'.²³

What next strikes one—and fundamentally the point is the same as the first—is that this programme was even more markedly religious and ecclesiastical in emphasis than any of the capitularies which had preceded it, apart from those addressed primarily or exclusively to the clergy. It is not only that the emperor commands; he sermonizes.²⁴ Here indeed we see

him as the secular head of the Christian community, endeavouring to make unity and concord prevail among its members and to ensure their eternal salvation; his goal is to make the terrestrial city so far as possible a reflection of the city of God—the line of thought and action which has been dubbed '*augustinisme politique*'.²⁵

A twofold assembly which met at Aachen in October looks very much like a continuation of the earlier assembly in March. One part consisted of a synod at which, after conciliar canons, papal decretals, and the Rule of St Benedict had been read aloud with commentaries, the participants undertook to conform to their prescriptions and to see that the clergy, monks and lay faithful did the same, each so far as concerned him.²⁶ The other part was an assembly of magnates and men practised in law (*legislatores*): the existing laws were read aloud with commentaries, and measures agreed which would correct and complete the laws and commit to writing those for which there was no received text; agents of authority should adhere to these texts in the dispensing of justice, which must be done honourably, and with respect for the law.²⁷ Now that he had had opportunity to study reports received from the *missi* sent out in March, Charlemagne was determined to use the occasion to define the ecclesiastical and secular law of the empire. The preoccupation with order and stability reflected in these decisions had long been with him; but it had never before been translated, as now, into a collection of measures aimed at embracing the whole of the law and intended to encourage the dissemination of the best and most up-to-date texts, whose meaning was more readily comprehensible and of whose binding force there could be no doubt. There is no mistaking the emperor-legislator, but he is an emperor who legislates that the will of God may be done on earth.

All these decisions—both of the spring and the autumn—were backed by executive measures. The *missi* pledged the emperor's subjects to live in accordance with God's commandments, and did what they could to see that the pledge was carried out.²⁸ The laws were amended and perfected, those who had a duty to apply them had to undertake to do so;²⁹ but much remained undone, and the achievement fell short of the scope and breadth envisaged for it in 802.³⁰

From the fully and consciously imperial attitude displayed in Charlemagne's acts of 802, let us turn to another act executed by the same monarch only a few years later: the *Divisio regnorum* of 806.³¹

On 6 February of that year, at Thionville, Charlemagne made arrangements for his succession: his realms were to be divided among his three sons, Charles, Pippin and Louis, the partition to take effect after his death. His aim was to avert any conflict between his sons and to ensure that in future harmony prevailed between them. But of the imperial dignity there is no mention, not even in connection with the defence of the Roman See, a task

which would naturally devolve on the emperor if there was one: in this matter the heirs are exhorted to follow the example of previous interventions by Pippin and Charlemagne in their capacity as king.³² The term *imperium* is used in its purely geographical, territorial sense, while the sole imperial power (*dominatus imperialis*) mentioned in the text—and that only once—is the imperial power wielded by Charlemagne himself.³³ This is surprising, and scholars have cast about for an explanation. Most have rallied to the suggestion that Charlemagne had scruples about making dispositions for the imperial power before it had been recognised by the Byzantine βασιλεύς, or alternatively that he feared the promulgation of such dispositions might delay Byzantine recognition or totally prevent it: this theory assumes that Charlemagne deferred his decision on the succession to the imperial title to a later date.³⁴ I find these suggestions difficult to accept. In the first place, the same fears and scruples would enter into the use of the imperial title—and Charles uses it in the *divisio*, as in his other acts. More important still, these scruples and fears are difficult to reconcile with the military and political pressure Charlemagne was applying in order to force the βασιλεύς to recognise his imperial dignity. Another explanation which has been advanced, sometimes in combination with the first, seems to me more plausible: that Charlemagne regarded the imperial dignity as exclusively personal, and hence as non-hereditary.³⁵

However that may be, the absence of any disposition for the imperial power, and the fact that the *divisio* is a partition pure and simple, which would make it totally incompatible with the idea of empire, are surely in violent contrast with the lofty conception of the empire and the imperial power manifested in the acts of 802. In terms of real results, those acts remained without issue. The idea of empire made very little impact on Carolingian institutions; just as it was inadequate to preserve the unity of the Carolingian state, so did it fail to stimulate important changes in its administrative or judicial organisation.³⁶

The acts of 802 belong to one particular and unique moment in the history of the Carolingian monarchy. The explanation for them lies in the operation of factors which were active at that moment and at no other. In my opinion the first of these factors was a personal one. Rome, with its constant reminders of Roman law and imperial law-making, had made its impression; at Rome, in that propitious setting, ideas of imperial majesty and power must have penetrated to Charlemagne and gone a little to his head; Rome was the place where he had exercised his authority exclusively as emperor. We can imagine that he returned from Italy captivated by a new ideology, and no doubt also in some considerable turmoil. The next important factor is the part played by the empire-minded clerics, above all Alcuin. True, Alcuin was not at the Palace when Charlemagne returned from Rome, but the two men were in correspondence, and it was during the weeks Charlemagne spent in meditation, trying to sort out the images

and ideas which obsessed him,³⁷ that Alcuin sent him a little treatise on the Trinity: the dedicatory epistle which accompanies it refers to the forthcoming great assembly—the assembly of March 802—and stresses in no uncertain terms the role Charles should play as emperor to secure the triumph of the faith and to promote harmony among Christians.³⁸ Moreover, if Alcuin was absent, his faithful disciple Candidus (whose name was actually Witto) was present at the Palace; in all likelihood he attended the March assembly, and could be expected to take part in the synod held in October. There are also grounds for thinking that Pridugis, nicknamed Nathanael, another of Alcuin's disciples, was in residence at the Palace during this period.³⁹ Archbishop Arn of Salzburg, who combined great affection for Alcuin with respect for his authority, also seems to have been present at the March assembly, and towards the end of May was already busying himself with matters to be dealt with at the synod and assembly to be held in October.⁴⁰ These influences, coming together at that particular moment, in my view account for the events of 802 and for the direction Charlemagne's government appeared to be taking.

But these were not lasting influences. The imperial mirage, compounded of the ideas and images brought back from Rome, must have quite quickly dissipated when it came in contact with realities: all the more rapidly in that the concept of empire was a clerical concept, which Charlemagne himself no doubt never fully grasped. Since it tended towards unity, the emperor's sons, or certain of them at least, were bound to oppose the idea; most of the lay aristocracy must have found it beyond their reach, since it was quite alien to their collective habit of thought. The semi-disgrace of Alcuin,⁴¹ followed in 804 by his death, meant that the most effective counterweight to these hostile forces was removed. There was a return to old Frankish traditions, to the idea of a kingdom divided like any other patrimony, to what the men in the saddle believed, or perhaps more precisely felt, to be the law; the imperial dignity survived as a title of prestige which raised the person invested with it above other kings and increased his responsibilities before God, but that was all—or very nearly all—there was to it.⁴² It is somewhat strange that the Royal Annals, the semi-official record of Charlemagne's reign, make no mention of the assemblies of 802. One is tempted to think they are silent precisely because the new orientation apparent at those assemblies was transient, but this would be to enter the dangerous realm of gratuitous speculation, and for the moment it would be better not to press the point.⁴³

We surely need to ask what the political and social situation was like inside this western empire—virtually identical with the Frankish and Lombard kingdoms—during the years 801 to 814. The answer, beyond any doubt, is that this was a period during which the Carolingian state experienced, as never before, a rampant growth of all the symptoms and consequences of a bad administration: malfunctioning of the public

services,⁴⁴ arbitrariness and extortion, acts of individual and collective violence, threats to the security of individual and corporate bodies and their property, especially where humble folk were concerned; to be convinced, one has only to read the capitularies, which year after year denounce the same abuses.⁴⁵ The fact is that the Frankish and Lombard kingdoms had to function with a totally inadequate administrative and judicial apparatus, which left too much to the discretion of agents of public authority, many of whom had not the slightest compunction in sacrificing their official duty to their greed.⁴⁶

Charlemagne did what he could to remedy the situation. But as we look at the last years of his reign, it becomes clear that even institutions he had encouraged or promoted in hopes of providing a remedy proved a disappointment. Vassalage, which Charles attempted to build up as a prop to his authority alongside the regular agents of public power—and where need be as a check on them—turned out to be an element of dissociation from the state.⁴⁷ Even the *missi dominici*, the royal commissioners who were supposed not only to detect but also to eradicate abuses, on occasion showed signs of slackness and complaisance.⁴⁸ In 811, at the very moment when it was vital to organise defences for the northeast of the empire against Danish pirates, the assembly of magnates was presented with an official document reporting the growth of disobedience among the emperor's subjects: surely an alarm signal!⁴⁹ Not even the Church was beyond reproach. In 813 Charlemagne demanded from churchmen proposals for correcting the disorders and irregularities which were as widespread in the Church as in lay society; the councils which met during that year in the western parts of the empire disclosed much that was disquieting, for example the fact that some high ecclesiastics, through their machinations, had all but deprived the faithful of their patrimony.⁵⁰

The years 801 to 814 thus witnessed a great deterioration. How had this situation come about?

Through his personal activity and interventions on the spot Charlemagne had long been able to compensate in some measure for the want of system in the institutions of government; in this he was powerfully assisted by his own decisiveness and his talent for devising expedients. When his physical and mental powers started to fail, the situation was altered. The fact that the emperor left Aachen less and less frequently, so that by 808 a change of residence had become exceptional,⁵¹ was bound to favour anarchical tendencies in a state run only on skeleton administrative cadres, poorly equipped for their task. Finally, the heightened sense of his responsibilities induced in him by the imperial coronation made Charlemagne insist that more and more matters be brought to the Palace:⁵² the resulting congestion bred yet further confusion.⁵³

In 810 death removed Charlemagne's second son, Pippin, king of Italy;

in 811 Charles, the eldest son, followed his brother to the grave. There remained only the third son, Louis, king of Aquitaine.

The *Divisio* of 806 could at a pinch have been applied in the changed situation, by assigning Pippin's share to his son Bernard and dividing Charles's portion between Bernard and Louis.⁵⁴ No doubt this solution was mooted, but it was another which carried the day. In 813, on the advice of magnates assembled at the Palace, for whom Einhard, the emperor's future biographer, acted as spokesman, Charlemagne resolved to confer the imperial dignity on his son Louis: he alone should succeed him, which meant that the unity of the empire would be maintained; Pippin's son Bernard would continue to govern Italy as a subordinate, using the royal title. In September Charlemagne had Louis acclaimed emperor at Aachen and on the following day crowned his son himself: this was done without recourse to pope and clergy, just as Charlemagne had probably wanted to crown himself emperor in 800. It is natural to ask what reasons prompted this change of attitude. The fact that the emperor had only one surviving son no doubt played a part.⁵⁵ But it is difficult to see why, at this point, the imperial dignity should be regarded as hereditary and brought into the limelight unless some other factor was at work. In my view we must again look for specific influences.

During the last years of Charlemagne's reign there was, seemingly, one person whose stock with the emperor was very high, his cousin, count Wala.⁵⁶ A statesman, but at the same time a man of letters, Wala had responded to the influence of the first Carolingian Renaissance. The events of the following years would show that he had grasped what the concept of empire implied and had convinced himself it must be made the fundamental principle of government, which made him determined to oppose all plans for partition.⁵⁷ I think it highly probable that Wala's influence over the emperor, combined with the weight he carried in the imperial councils, was responsible for the decision taken in 813. And if he was responsible, so no doubt were others who had been won over to the same cause: his brother Adalhard, whose role is not entirely clear, Einhard, and perhaps Fridugis, Alcuin's former pupil and his successor at St Martin's of Tours.⁵⁸

Charlemagne died at Aachen on 28 January 814. It is sometimes tempting to set his glorious reign and impressive achievements in opposition to the disorders which marked the reign of his successor and led to the breakup of the Carolingian empire. The contrast between the two reigns is certainly arresting. But if we make it too stark, if we overlook the nuances, our picture is likely to be somewhat inaccurate and certainly incomplete: the historical reality is more complex. Study of the last thirteen years of Charlemagne's reign reveals a state with many ill-defined frontiers, bordered by territories inhabited by populations nominally subject but in process of converting themselves into enemies, and from the sea threatened by some

formidable foes. Most of the men in its ruling circles remained impervious to the very idea of empire, which had to be accepted if the state was to be united. In changed circumstances, these men would demand, if it was in their interests, a return to the custom of partition. A defective administration gave rise to a concealed anarchy which endangered the safety of persons and property, and made the emperor's exercise of his authority unpredictable in its effect. In the Church, too, abuses were numerous and productive of scandal. We have to make generous allowance for this situation if we are to understand the reign of Louis the Pious and to grasp some of the deep-seated reasons for the resounding failure to which he was foredoomed. It was an empire already far advanced along the road to decomposition which in 814, on the death of his father, received the new emperor.⁵⁹

NOTES

* 'La fin du règne de Charlemagne, Une décomposition', *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Geschichte* (1948) 533-52.

1. The diploma given at Rome 4 March 801 (MGH *Dipl. Karol.*, I, no. 196, ed. E. Mühlbacher) bears the following royal title: *Carolus, gratia Dei rex Francorum et Romanorum atque Langobardorum*, which Mühlbacher has mistakenly corrected to read as the traditional royal style. Although this diploma survives only in a (ninth-century) copy, it gives no ground for suspicion. P. Kehr (*Neues Archiv*, XLIX (1932), 702-3, n. 283) was undoubtedly wrong to doubt the authority of this text as evidence for the study of Charlemagne's titles, especially since the title which figures in it is also found in one of the Murbach formulae (no. 5; MGH *Formulae*, p. 331). The hesitations which preceded the adoption of the definitive imperial style are discussed by E. Caspar, 'Das Papsttum unter Fränkischer Herrschaft', *Zeitschrift f. Kirchengeschichte* (1935), 260 ff.
2. The views summarised here will be developed elsewhere. For some of them, and my reasons for adopting them, see my review of K. Heldmann, *Das Kaisertum Karls des Grossen*, 1928, in *Le Moyen Age*, XL (1930), and my article 'La revision de la Bible par Alcuin', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, IX (1947), Ch. III above.
3. An account of these events will be found in my contribution to F. Lot, C. Pfister and F. L. Ganshof, *Les Destinées de l'Empire en Occident de 395 à 888* (2nd edn, Paris, 1941), 497-84.
4. *ARF*, 812. For the equivalence of *imperator* and *αυτοκράτωρ* see E. Stein, 'Postconsulat et Autocratoria', *Mélanges J. Bidez*, II (Brussels, 1934), 901.
5. In other words, I am not in agreement with scholars who interpret the peace of 812 as re-establishing, at least in theory, the unity of the Empire: thus, J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I* (London, 1912), 325, followed by A. Vasiliev, *Histoire de l'Empire byzantin*, I (Paris, 1932), 355 (in English, *A History of the Byzantine*

- Empire* (Madison, 1952), 268-9) and L. Bréhier, *La vie et mort de Byzance* (Paris, 1947), 100. For more realistic interpretations see C. Diehl in C. Diehl and G. Margais, *Le Monde oriental de 395 à 1081* (Paris, 1936), 294, and by G. Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des Byzantinischen Staates* (Munich, 1940), 136-7 (in English, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford, 1956), 175-7), which broadly speaking represent my own views.
6. I refer to the conflict over the imperial title between Basil I and Louis II.
 7. As comes out clearly in the letter Charlemagne wrote on this occasion to Michael I, in which he speaks of *din quaesitam et semper desideratam pacem inter orientalem atque occidentalem imperium* (MGH, *Epist.*, IV, p. 556).
 8. For political and military events I refer the reader once and for all to my chapters in the work cited above, n. 3.
 9. The historicity of this agreement was established, to my mind convincingly, by M. Lintzel, 'Der Sachsenfrieden Karls des Grossen', *Neues Archiv*, XLVIII (1929).
 10. *VK*, vii.
 11. *ibid.*, xiv; cf. *ARF*, 809, 810.
 12. L. Duchesne, *Les Premiers temps de l'état pontifical* (3rd edn, Paris, 1911), 179-80, rightly drew attention to this point which is well taken up by E. Amann, *L'Époque carolingienne* (Paris, 1937), 164.
 13. We must be wary of Heldmann's exaggerated views on this matter (*op. cit.*, 207 ff.).
 14. For an excellent account of the relations between Charlemagne and Leo III after 25 December 800 see Caspar, *op. cit.*, 240-54.
 15. *Capitulare missorum generale*, c. ii (MGH *Cap.*, I, no. 33). The imposition of the new oath is in itself sufficient to demolish Heldmann's view (*op. cit.*, 402 ff.) that Charles's emperorship was confined to Rome and the non-Lombard parts of Italy.
 16. *Annales Inuvenses Maiores* 801, (MGH *SS*, xxx), might be thought conclusive evidence, but the text is not free from contradictions and its authority strikes me as weak. Mühlbacher (*op. cit.*, nos 376a, 377, 378) accepts the synod as a fact and links it with the instructions to the clergy printed MGH *Cap.*, I, nos 36 and 120; he recognises, however, that we are no better informed as to the exact bearing of those texts than we are for nos 37 and 38.
 17. *Annales Laureshamenses*, 802 (MGH *SS*, I), and *Cap. misc. gen.*, 802, c. i (MGH *Cap.*, I, no. 33). The date of the assembly can be established by comparing these texts with *Annales S. Amandi* 802 (MGH *SS*, I) and *Annales Inuvenses Maiores* 802.
 18. The memorandum is preserved in copies made for the *missi* of three *missatica* located in Neustria and Burgundy: *Capitularia missorum specialia*, MGH *Cap.*, I, no. 34. The programmatic character of the *Capitulare missorum generale* was pointed out by H. Brunner and C. von Schwerin, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, II (2nd edn, Munich, 1928), 129, and again by A. Kleinclausz, *Charlemagne* (Paris, 1934), 308.
 19. See my article 'Observations sur le synode de Francfort de 794', *Miscellanea historica in honorem A. de Meyer* (Louvain, 1946).
 20. In addition to expounding the significance — much enlarged — of the fidelity due to the emperor, the capitulary covers many different aspects of life in the

- Church and among the laity, the maintenance of public peace, the activities of subordinate agents, and so on. The articles which most explicitly invoke the imperial power are c. ii, iii, v, ix (at end), xxx and xxxi.
21. L. Halphen rightly stresses this point in his *Charlemagne et l'empire carolingien* (Paris, 1947), 211.
 22. c. iii: . . . *ut unusquisque et persona propria se in sancto dei servitio secundum Dei preceptum et secundum sponsonem suam pleniter conservare studeat secundum intellectum et vires suas, quia ipse dominus imperator non omnibus singulariter necessariam potest exhibere curam et disciplinam.*
 23. c. xiv, at end: . . . *ut nos per eorum bona voluntatem magis premium vitae aeternae quam supplicium mereamur*; see also the conclusion to the last article in the capitulary, c. xl.
 24. F. Lot, 'Le concept d'empire à l'époque carolingienne', *Mercur de France*, CCC (1947), 417, speaks of the 'hortatory' tone noticeable in the imperial capitularies. Of all the capitularies, *Cap. miss. gen. 802* is the one to which this remark most justly applies. Alcuin, in a letter to Charlemagne written at the time of the March assembly of 802, and in my view composed for that very occasion, commends the accompanying treatise on the Trinity to him as a weapon in *predicatione catholicae fidei*; later we have this characteristic passage: . . . *dum principem populi christiani cuncta scire et praedicare quae Deo placeant necesse esse notissimum est. Neque enim quemquam magis decet vel meliora nosse vel plura, quam imperatorem, cuius doctrina omnibus potest prodesse subiectis.*
 25. The title of the book by H. X. Arquillièrre (Paris, 1934) in which he traced the formation of this doctrine. Halphen, *op. cit.*, 212-14, while to some extent reserving his position, notes certain aspects in which Charlemagne's political doctrine coincided with ideas advanced by St Augustine.
 26. *Ann. Lauresh.*, loc. cit. (see above, n. 17). The series of texts extracted from a collection of canons and from the Rule of St Benedict printed *MGH Cap.*, I, no. 37 looks as though it has some connection with this synod; the same may be true of nos 36 and 120. But we cannot say this for sure; see above n. 16 and C. de Clercq, *La Législation religieuse franque de Clovis à Charlemagne* (Louvain, 1936), 224-5, 227-8, 289-90: this scholar regards no. 36 as a diocesan statute and n. 38 as a memorandum drawn up by *missi*. The collection of canons and decretals 'received' by the synod must have been the *Dionysio-Hadriana*: thus G. Le Bras, in P. Fournier and G. Le Bras, *Histoire des collections canoniques en Occident depuis les Fausses Décrétales jusqu'au Décret de Gratien*, I (Paris, 1931), 95-7.
 27. *Ann. Lauresh.*, loc. cit.
 28. See for example the documents printed *MGH Cap.*, I, nos 38 and 121.
 29. *Capitulare legibus additum* of 803, with the note relating to its 'publication' at Paris, *MGH Cap.*, I, no. 39 and *Capitulare legi ribuariae additum*, also 803, *ibid.*, no. 41. Some scholars connect this activity with the redactions of the Law of the Thuringians, the text known as *Ewa Chamavorum*, and the so-called Law of the Frisians (for one such view, expressed with considerable reserve, see H. Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, I (2nd edn, Leipzig, 1906), 473, 475, 481); these hypotheses have to be treated with caution.
 30. Einhard, *VK*, xxix.
 31. *MGH Cap.*, I, no. 45.
 32. c. xv.

33. c. xx.
34. For examples of this viewpoint, see A. Kleinclausz, *L'Empire carolingien* (Paris, 1902), 251-2 and *Charlemagne*, 348, and J. Calmette, *Charlemagne* (Paris, 1945), 293-5. Article six of the *divisio* reserves to Charlemagne the right to alter or supplement any of its provisions.
35. See in particular Heldmann, *op. cit.*, 406-8, Halphen, *op. cit.*, 136-7, Lot, *op. cit.*, 418.
36. Halphen, *op. cit.*, 136, makes the same point, but in somewhat too drastic a fashion: there was more to the new oath imposed in 802 than mere protocol, and compared with what it had been, the very idea of fidelity to the emperor was greatly expanded; cf. *cap. miss. gen. 802*, c. ii-ix (*MGH Cap.*, I, no. 33).
37. Kleinclausz, *Empire carolingien*, 416-18, does well to insist on this period of reflection, which is implied by *Ann. Lauresh.* 802, where mention of the despatch of *missi* throughout the empire (decided on at the assembly in March) is preceded by the words: *Ita anno demoravit dominus Caesar Carolus apud Aquis palatium quietus cum Francis sine hoste.*
38. *MGH Epist.*, IV, p. 415: *Quapropter universorum precibus fidelium optandum est, ut in omnem gloriam vestrum extendatur imperium; ut scilicet catholica fides, qua humanum genus sola vivificat, sola sanctificat, veraciter in una confessione cunctorum cordibus insigatur: quatenus summi regis donante pietate, eadem sanctae pacis et perfectae caritatis omnes ubique regat et custodiat unitas.*
39. This is implied by the letter from Alcuin to Arn dated 24 May 802, *MGH Epist.*, IV, no. 254, p. 411, ll. 19-20, and by another letter from Alcuin to Candidus and Nathanael, which must have been written in the middle of 802, *ibid.* no. 245.
40. *ibid.*, no. 254, ll. 4-9.
41. A. Kleinclausz, *Alcuin* (Paris, 1948), 273-5.
42. 'Das Kaisertum ist gewissermassen das potenzierte Königtum', to use the felicitous expression of H. Brunner and C. von Schwerin, *op. cit.*, 129.
43. If, as Dümmler thought possible (W. Wattenbach, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter*, I (7th edn, Stuttgart, 1904), 216-19), the author of the section of the Annals covering 801 composed his text about 808, one would be tempted to think the omission deliberate. We should not, however, ignore the fact that between 796 and 808 the Royal Annals make no mention of any synod, nor indeed of any assembly, apart from the *comentus* of 806 at which the *divisio regnorum* was made, although from what is said in other sources this was by no means the only assembly to meet during the period in question.
44. For a fuller account of what follows, with references to the relevant capitularies and other necessary sources, see my article 'L'Échec de Charlemagne', *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. Comptes Rendus des Séances*, Ch. XIII below. Here I cite only sources with a bearing on points not treated in that article, or for which the documentation I give there needs to be supplemented.
45. Along with many other texts, note the beginning of the passage in *Ann. Lauresh.*, 802, which follows the sentence quoted above n. 37: *Sed recordatus misericordiae suae de pauperibus, qui in regno suo erant et iniustitias suas pleniter abere non poterant. . . .* We find that the 'fathers' of the councils which met on Charlemagne's orders during 813 dwell consistently on the same abuses:

- Council of Arles, c. xxiii, Mainz, c. vii, Chalon-sur-Saône, c. xi and xxi, Tours, c. xlv; *Concordia episcoporum*, c. iv, and the capitulary based on these canons, c. xxii. (MGH *Concilia* II, nos 34, 36–8, Appendices B and A = MGH *Cap.*, I, no. 78).
46. In addition to the many articles in the capitularies, note the following passage in Alcuin's letter to Arn written 24 May 802 (MGH *Epist.*, IV, p. 411; see above, n. 39): *De bona siquidem voluntate domni imperatoris valde certus sum, quod omnia ad rectitudinis normam in regno sibi a Deo dato disponi desiderat, sed tantos non habet iustitiae adiutores, quantos etiam subversores, nec tantos praedicatores, quantos praedatores. Quia plurius sunt qui sua desiderant quam Dei.*
47. See my article 'Benefice and vassalage in the age of Charlemagne', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, VI (1939), 174–5.
48. In 802 (*Ann. Lauresb.*, same year) Charlemagne decided to stop using as *missi* vassals who were *non casati* or had only meagre landed provision, because of the alarming increase in venality among them; in 803 he was obliged to remind *missi*—recruited now from the bishops, abbots and counts—that they should be conspicuous for their *prudencia* and *constantia*, and refrain from burdening local inhabitants by making prolonged stays with an excessive retinue (*cap. miss.* of 803, c. xxvi and xxvii, MGH *Cap.*, I, no. 40).
49. *Capitulare de rebus exercitalibus in placito tractanda*, c. ix (MGH *Cap.*, I, no. 73): *Quod super omnia maius fiunt inoboedientes ipsi pagenses comiti et missos decurrentes, quam antea fuissent.*
50. Council of Rheims, c. xxxvi and xxxvii, of Mainz, c. vi, of Chalon-sur-Saône, c. vi, vii and xiv, of Tours, c. li, *Concordia episcoporum*, Aachen, c. iii and iv; MGH *Concilia aevi carolini*, I, nos 35–8 and Appendix B.
51. I do not consider the periods spent hunting in the neighbouring Ardennes as interruptions to Charlemagne's residence at Aachen.
52. MGH *Cap.*, I, nos 33 (802), c. xv, xxiv, xxx, xxxi, xxxii, xxxiii, xxxiv, xxxvi, xxxvii, xxxix; 34 (802), c. xix; 40 (803), c. iv, xiii, xviii; 44 (805–6), c. viii, xii, xiii, xv; 50 (808), c. v; 56 (803–13), c. i; 58 (801–14), c. v; 64 (810), c. xiii; 77 (802–13), c. ii, xii.
53. The effects of this congestion are evident in the following capitularies: The first *capitulare missorum* of Aachen, 810 (MGH *Cap.*, I, no. 64), c. i: *De clamatoribus qui magnum impedimentum faciunt in palatio ad aures domini imperatoris.* In the same capitulary, c. xiii, the king orders all accusations of desertion (*berisliz*) to be sent to the palace, but in the following year (capitulary issued at Boulogne, 811; *ibid.*, no. 74, c. iv) he attributes competence in this matter to the *missi* and the counts. The *Capitulare de iustitiis faciendis* of 811, c. ii (*ibid.*, no. 80), lays down a rule distinguishing between the competence of the emperor and the count of the palace in the palace tribunal, because of the prevailing congestion there.
54. A solution which would have been in keeping with the spirit of the *Divisio regnorum*, c. iv and v, if not with the letter.
55. F. Lot takes this view, *loc. cit.*, 418.
56. Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici*, xxi (MGH *SS*, I, p. 618); Paschasius Radbertus, *Vita Adalhardi*, xxxii (MGH *SS* II, p. 527), *Epitaphium Arsenii* (= *Vita Wala*), I, i and vi (ed. E. Dümmler, *Abhandl. Preuss. Akad.*, Berlin, 1900, pp.

- 22, 28–9). See the other texts relating to Wala brought together by S. Abel and B. Simson, *Jahrbücher des Fränkischen Reiches unter Karl d. Grossen*, II (Leipzig, 1883), 466, n. 1.
57. Abel and Simson, *op. cit.*, II, 572; Kleinclausz, *Empire carolingien*, 266, 268, 280 ff.; J. Calmette, *L'effondrement d'un empire et la naissance d'une Europe* (Paris, 1941), 28–30.
58. Here we are on much less certain ground. For Adalhard see Abel–Simson, *op. cit.*, II, 487–8, and Kleinclausz, *Empire carolingien*, 267. Einhard was the person who at the assembly of 813 proposed that Charlemagne should confer the imperial dignity on Louis, king of Aquitaine, to be operative from that moment: Ermoldus Nigellus, *In honorem Hludowici*, II, v. 682 ff., (ed. E. Faral, p. 54), Fridugis is known to have been in regular contact with the court (see for example his letter printed MGH *Epist.*, IV, 552–3, and his subscription of Charlemagne's will in 811, Einhard, *FK.*, xxxiii); he later became chancellor to Louis the Pious, in the heyday of 'imperialism'.
59. This paper was read on 1 October 1948 at the Neuchâtel meeting of the Société Générale Suisse d'Histoire. Some of the problems discussed were investigated by the author in his seminar of medieval history at the University of Ghent during the academic year 1947–8. In these researches MM. W. Roels and A. H. Bredero played an active part.