In any discussion of the outlook of early medieval lay intellectuals the life and the writings of Einhard can supply crucial evidence. But to label Einhard a layman is over-simple. For his younger contemporary, the biographer of Louis the Pious whom we can only call the Astronomer, Einhard was ‘the most prudent man of his time, inspired by holy devotion’. And every Christian layman should have been inspired by such devotion. But for the Carolingian author of the *Lives of the Abbots of Fontanelle* he was ‘Abbot Einhard, the most learned of men’. As lay-abbot of St Bavo and St Peter at Ghent, St Servatius at Maastricht, of Fontanelle and of his own foundations at Michelstadt and Seligenstadt, Einhard was apparently not a cleric; even though he had not risen in ecclesiastical orders, he had been granted the estate at Michelstadt on which he built a church soon after the accession of Louis the Pious. In his verses for Seligenstadt, Hrabanus Maurus, abbot of Fulda and archbishop of Mainz, clearly distinguished between the status of ‘that excellent man Einhard’ and his successor as abbot of Seligenstadt ‘Ratleig the priest’. As we shall see, Einhard was an abbot but not a cleric: he blurs those categories which we use to distinguish identities. Not only did he fight, he could also pray.

Einhard is one of the few Carolingian authors who names himself in a wide range of different texts. While it is easy to find instances in which contemporaries characterise one another, personal statements such as those of Einhard or Dhuoda are much less common. Are they more revealing, or

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4. On Einhard’s career, Dutton’s introduction to *Charlemagne’s Courtier* gives references to all previous discussions.
do they merely satisfy our own search for the emerging individual? Like most important lay figures Einhard attested charters. He witnessed as Abbot Einhard, and even as ‘venerable abbot in Christ’, a standard epithet for an abbot witness, but not what we might expect from a lay abbot. The frequency of standard formulae in witness lists is but one instance of the nature of early medieval Latinity: words and phrases are borrowed so often that we may doubt how strictly they were being used.

Modern readers expect originality and a developed sense of personal identity – most Carolingians thought of themselves as members of groups, unhappy with notions of the individual or the private.

In addition to the charters we have a collection of some of Einhard’s letters, assembled at the monastery of St Bavo at Ghent some thirty years after his death, probably to provide a model for the monks to write letters. Here again we see Einhard through the formulae of his chancery. (Some letters may have been written by his notary, the priest Ratleig, others seem to have been written by Einhard on behalf of Louis the Pious.) The letters open with a standard greeting formula such as ‘Einhard wishes salvation in the Lord to the holy and justly venerable lord Bishop N.’ or ‘Einhard in the name of Christ to his deputy N.’ (The letter N. is used by the scribe of the collection in place of the name which Einhard had used in his original letter, though in some of the letters the name of a recipient is preserved, or can be deduced.) This letter collection is a remarkable insight into the concerns of a lay magnate, dealing with vassals, runaway serfs and food supplies.

But in letters written to thirteen abbots and bishops Einhard used a very different epithet. He called himself Peccator or Sinner. He used the same term at the start of his account of the translation of the relics of Marcellinus and Peter from Rome to Michelstadt and Seligenstadt. ‘To the true worshippers and genuine lovers of the true God, of our Lord Jesus Christ

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7 Matthew Innes, State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley 400–1000 (Cambridge, 2000), p. 15, has written of ‘the mind-numbingly formulaic tradition of the documents’.


9 For a good account in English, see Innes, State and Society, esp. pp. 80–147. I am preparing a new study of the manuscript.
Einhardus Peccator

and of his saints, Einhard, a sinner.' And on the arch-reliquary, which he gave to St Servatius at Maastricht, he set up a monumental inscription: 'Einhard, a sinner, strove to set up and dedicate to God this arch to support the cross of eternal victory.' This consistent usage is hard to parallel: we do not see Carolingian writers signposting their own sins. No one is called a sinner in the lists of names of those joined in prayer in Carolingian confraternity books. What did it mean, in the first half of the ninth century, to call yourself a sinner?

Of course we cannot answer this question with any certainty. What Einhard may have meant may not have been what those who received his letters understood. The scribe of the only surviving manuscript of those letters abbreviated Einhardus Peccator to E. P. It was a formula, an expression of humility used when asking a favour or addressing a spiritual superior. But Einhard used it in the Translatio and on the arch, neither settings where such formulae were standard. The Carolingian reader encountered the name of Einhard, on the page or on the shrine, with a clear label emphasizing Einhard's fallen condition.

Einhard might have called himself a sinner because it was a conventional formula, because he felt himself guilty of specific or of general sins, because all men are born in sin or even because as he says in the Translatio he wanted, like other Christian writers, 'to inspire the spirits of all people to emend their evil ways and to sing the praises of God's omnipotence'. The arch was to support a relic of the Cross, the emblem of Christ's redemption of human sin. Each of the texts which Einhard composed was a moment of self-definition, in a world in which the terminology of identity depended on the vocabulary of Bible and liturgy, a world defined by clerics as the temporal sphere in which men stray away from God. What is surprising is that Einhard so often echoed the same definition.

Isidore, in his Etymologiae x, 228, set out the etymology of Peccator. 'Peccator a pelice, id est meretrice vocatus, quasi pelicator; quod nomen apud antiques tantum flagitosum significabat, postea transiit hoc vocabulum in appellationem omnium iniquorum.' It had been a legal term, and later became a Christian one, the bond of all the unrighteous. It is used very frequently in the Psalms, where it sometimes becomes an individual

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11 'Sinner comes from skin, that is, from a prostitute, like pelicator (concubine). The ancients used this name for any kind of criminal and the word later was used to describe all sorts of wicked men.'
statement of sin rather than a condemnation of the unrighteous. The standard Carolingian prayer ascribed to Bede focused on sin and redemption: ‘Liberator of the souls of the world, Redeemer Jesus Christ, Eternal God, immortal king, I a sinner beg for your great clemency.’ At death, prayers were said asking for God’s forgiveness even for those unable to speak so as to do penance. A series of votive masses for those who confessed their sins includes the prayer, ‘Omnipotent and merciful God who would rather correct each penitent soul confessing than lose it, look with favour on this your servant N. and by these sacraments of which we have partaken turn from him the anger of your wrath and forgive him all his sins.’ ‘Omnipotent Lord and Father who art truly holy and protector of all the saints, we offer you pious Lord with devout minds sacrifices of praise, and in commemoration of the faithful saints we humbly pray you for your servant, that you grant him forgiveness for all his sins, and keep him lest he return to a will to sin.’ ‘Free us Lord from all our sins we beg, that having received the pardon of sinners we may serve you with free minds.’ Prayers to the Cross asked for freedom from sin. Christ’s persecution and crucifixion were the holy punishments which enabled him to free man from the punishments for sin.

After the Bible and the liturgy the most celebrated literary usage of ‘peccator’ is by Patrick in his Confessio, which begins ‘Ego Patricius peccator, rusticorum et minimus.’ This echoes the words of Peter to Christ in Luke’s Gospel at the miraculous draught of fishes, ‘Depart from me for I am a sinful man O Lord’, and the words of the publican in the parable, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner’ (Luke 18: 13). Patrick’s terminology is echoed by Cummian, who calls himself supplex peccator. This Hiberno-Latin usage is not to be equated with the stock epithet used in letters: it is rather a measure of the writer’s distance from divine grace. Carolingian usage may draw on this tradition: peccator was always a word astride categories, for it entailed the possibility of looking at the world through God’s eyes, and seeing into men’s hearts. Of early medieval authors only Rather of Verona ever used peccator to confess to specific sins.

Psalm 9, 27, 36, 118, and 139.

13 Orationes tres, oratio prima, PL 94, 529 and used by Smaragdus, Collectiones in Epistolas et Evangelia, PL 102, 493.


17 The Confessio has most recently been edited by David Howlett, Liber Epistolarum Sancti Patricii Episcopi (Dublin, 1994) with accounts of peccator in Patrick at pp. 26 and 52. I am grateful to Dr Howlett for discussions of Patrick’s style.
Bede on the Catholic Epistles quotes Augustine on the Epistle of John: 'No one says I am a sinner, but I am not wicked.' The awareness of sin as a defining category of fallen man is explicit in the prayers for forgiveness of sin in the Gregorian Sacramentary. But there it is a general category. For Einhard it has become a personal one. To evaluate how Einhard was using the term we must sketch its history.

It is first used as a characterisation of the writer in Christian letters by Paulinus of Nola, writing to Augustine and to Sulpicius Severus. Paulinus seems to use it only in letters to spiritual superiors, as a way of highlighting his own lesser status. When St Germanus of Paris wrote to Queen Brunhild in 575 he began his letter, 'To the daughter of the church, Queen Brunhild, Germanus the sinner.' In the extensive register of his papal letters Gregory the Great only called himself peccator twice, in each case in letters to the Emperor Maurice. Again it defines status: sinner was not used in letters to a subordinate. But in Gaul there seems to be a more widespread use of the term by ecclesiastics. Sixth-century Merovingian bishops sometimes attested the acts of Church councils using the term peccator and also witnessed charters using the word peccator. The term is frequent in the important early seventh-century Merovingian episcopal letter-collection of Bishop Desiderius of Cahors, with many bishops using peccator in their opening salutation formula. But this epistolary practice was much less common in the Carolingian age. The only instance I have found is in the pastoral letter to the clergy of his diocese composed by Archbishop Wulfad of Bourges which opens 'Wulfad though unworthy and a sinner ... bishop.'

In departing from standard Carolingian practice Einhard set himself in a world of redemption, achieved both by the prayers of the living and the intercession of the saints in heaven. Sinners needed prayers. Einhard asked...
for such prayers in a letter which we can set in a clear context of letters of confraternity. It was common practice in the early Middle Ages for religious houses to maintain records of the names of those whom they wished to remember in their prayers. The lists of names organized in the form of a Liber memorialis, an earthly counterpart to the celestial Book of Life, would be brought to the altar during mass, and some of the names might be read out during the celebration. Boniface and Alcuin had been the first to write asking to be included in such lists and to receive special prayers from devout congregations. Einhard’s letter to the monks of Seligenstadt is the clearest of the Einhardus peccator letters in setting out the spiritual economy of prayer exchange. The text in the St Bavo manuscript is damaged, but the fragmentary text asks the monks ‘to undertake to remember me carefully, as you promised, in the presence of the holy martyrs, our patrons, whom you are known to serve daily. In this way the pious Lord may allow me to find you safe through their intercession. I beg you therefore, with a father’s concern, my dearest ones, to remain mindful of your promise and that you are daily commending yourselves to the Lord and his saints ... and that you are always anxiously on guard lest the ancient enemy may not be able to deceive and seduce you with any trickery ... Let this letter of mine be devoutly read out in the presence of all the brothers, and let it be obeyed.

Einhard writes from a position of power: he had founded and endowed the monastery at Seligenstadt. He wants the older monks to set a model of salvation to the younger ones, he sees worship at the altar as the means to gain the eternal kingdom. But that reward cannot be won without the intercession of the saints. Daily commendation to Christ is the only security, and Einhard’s monks are asked especially to pray for him. In the exchange of letters with Lupus of Ferrières after the death of Einhard’s wife Imma he reveals his own anguish at the apparent breakdown of this spiritual reciprocity. ‘For what human being full of reason and sound in mind would not weep over his fate and count himself unhappy and the most pitiful of humans, when, overcome by troubles, he learns that the one he had believed would support him in prayers had turned against him and was unmoved?’ Einhard is here confronting the reality of

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26 S. D. Keynes, The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile xxvi (Copenhagen, 1996), pp. 49–58.
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predestination and grace, the issue which was to divide the Carolingian Church in the mid-century. For Carolingian religious practice encouraged a belief in divine intercession, in the presence of ‘invisible companions’ who could ‘bind their fellow men even closer to God than could the angels’.

Yet Carolingian religious experience might cause the hope of such intercession to grow dim. The invisible network of prayer, stretching across the Christian world, linking the living and the dead, offered the most certain hope of that release from the bondage of sin and death which Christ had promised to his elect. But the moment of release was not in this world, and the only certainty, as Einhard wrote to Emperor Louis the Pious was that ‘by being penitent and calling upon the mercy of God they may work towards avoiding future danger’.

As the demon Wiggo told Einhard, ‘There are many other, almost an endless number of, sins committed every day both by the people themselves and by their rulers.’ It was the shared sense of being a community of sinners deserving of divine punishment which both explained Viking invasions and exposed the fragility of any human hope. Einhard was profoundly concerned with his relations with God. In a telling quotation ascribed to the Jewish writer Philo, Einhard says: ‘ask for divine assistance, since human assistance fails’. ‘Brevis est ista vita, et incertum est tempus mortis, quid aliut agendum est, nisi ut semper parati simus. Cogitemus quam terribiliter est incidere in manu Dei.’

We must hope for God’s compassion, that our daily sins be redeemed by confession and penance. ‘Humanum est peccare, angelicum est emendare, diabolica est perseverare in peccato.’ Priests were to preach with all diligence for what crimes people would be sent with the devil into eternal punishment.

Theodulf reminded the sinner that every day we must confess our sins in our prayers to God, once, twice or as often as we can. The confession of sins to God helps us to rid ourselves of the stain of sin, for as often as we remember our sins, so

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30 The vocabulary is that of Peter Brown, The Cult of the Saints (Chicago, IL, 1981), p. 61.
34 Missi eiuidam admonitio, MGH Capit. 1, ed. A. Boretius (Hanover, 1883), no. 121, pp. 238-40, at 240. The source of this admonition was very probably Charlemagne himself. See next note.
36 Admonitio generalis, MGH Capit. 1, no. 22, c. 82, p. 61.
often does the Lord forget them, but as often as we forget them, the Lord remembers them.37

The vision of a certain pious priest of the land of the English, revealed to him after Christmas while he was transported out of his body was sent to Louis the Pious by King Æthelwulf and the text is preserved in the Annals of St. Bertin for 839. It includes the prophecy that for three days and nights a very dense fog will spread over their land and then all of a sudden pagan men will lay waste with fire and sword most of the people and land of the Christians. But instead, if they are willing to do true penance immediately and carefully atone for their sins according to the Lord’s command with fasting, prayer and alms-giving, then they may still escape those punishments and disasters through the intercession of the saints.38

In the account of the Translation of the Relics of Marcellinus and Peter, Einhard recounted miracles which showed how the saints might intervene to help the living. ‘I gave praise and thanks for the mercy of the almighty God, because he had deigned to help and console us in our time of need because of the merits of his saints.’ The process of intercession was carefully regulated. In a letter to Lupus, written in 836, dealing with the worship of the Cross, Einhard notes: ‘When we entreat God, seeking to gain something other than that which is laid out in the Lord’s Prayer, then the attainment of that request remains in doubt because we are praying not for what He commanded but for what pleases us.’

The tension between worldly values and sanctity was well expressed in the preface to the Life of the lay saint Gerald of Aurillac: ‘Some men, trying to excuse their own sins, cry him up, saying that Gerald was powerful and rich, lived very well and yet is a saint.’41 The values of the lay aristocracy are seldom presented without this sort of ecclesiastical filter. Their secular culture was characterised by fighting, hunting, feasting, family and office. A remarkable document from Le Mans tells of a young noble named Rigrannus, raised in a monastery after his father’s death, who

37 MGH Capitula Episcoporum, ed. P. Brommer (Hanover, 1984), 1, Theodulfi Capitula 1, c. 30, pp. 127–8.
40 De adoranda cruci as translated by Dutton, ibid., pp. 171–4. The text was most recently edited by K. Hauck Einhard beantwortet 836 Lupus von Ferrières dessen Questio de adoranda cruci, in Das Einhardskreuz (Göttingen, 1974), pp. 211–16.
41 Odo of Cluny, Vita sancti Geraldii, preface, PL 133, col. 639.
wished to become a monk, as his father had intended. ‘The Holy Church strives daily to induce not only those who scorn the world, but also, what is a far greater task, those whom worldly activity makes prosperous, to seek the lot of the elect and the beatitude of eternal life. Rigrannus’ uncle wanted him to become a priest and ‘other relations took it badly that the boy was lost to the world and acquired for God.’ His uncle angrily addressed him:

What have you done, wretch? Why have you chosen one small loaf of bread rather than a hundred, and a little wine rather than goblets to be drained in abundance. Why do you want to be satisfied with a pig-like life of beans and vegetables? Where will be the pleasures of the meats that you have rejected, the sweetness of drinks, the enjoyment of dogs and hawks, the voluptuous touch of women? Why do you want to dishonour us? Our family had no business with poor men and beggars. The world has prospered for us; quantities of gold and silver and precious stones were ours. For us shining arms gleamed, horses preened themselves with gilded bridles and arched necks.

These were the values which most wealthy laymen were assumed to have adopted. But it was not always quite so clear-cut. Rigrannus was assured that he could share in these values as a priest and canon. Einhard knew that laymen had to live in a Christian world.

To use Einhard as a source for the views of lay intellectuals in the early Middle Ages also entails an investigation of the ideology of his own account of a lay intellectual in the *Vita Karoli*. The work has long been regarded as a secular biography, adapting the language of Sulpicius Severus’ *Vita Martini* to praise a figure whose acts were not a model, like those of Martin, but were explicitly characterised as ‘scarcely able to be imitated’. In describing the characteristics of such figures Carolingian authors approached personality in terms of the attributes of persons. Both Alcuin, and Paschasius Radbertus, abbot of Corbie, in his *Life* of Charlemagne’s cousin Adalhard, follow this scheme, though their lists of attributes are slightly different. The eloquence of rhetorical art can tackle personality, for according to that art persons have many attributes, namely:

\[ \text{Si figuram nobilitatis ejus a puero describere voluero, quae Graece } \chi\omega\rho\alpha\kappa\omega\kappa\rho\iota\nu\rho\iota\psi\delta \text{ dicitur, ero inefficae, quia, est secundum rhetoricae artis facundiam ipsius persona consideretur, positore laudis idonea comprobari. ... Personae quippe iuxta prefataam artis peritiam plurima sunt attributa, ex quibus optime dignoscatur. Consideratur} \]

Alcuin discusses the *attributa personarum* in Chapter 24 of his *Rhetoric*. They are *Nomen*, *Natura*, *Victus*, *Fortuna*, *Habitus*, *Affectio*, *Studia*, *Consilia*, *Facta*, *Casus*, *Orationes* (name, nature, way of life (*victus*), condition, custom, feelings, tastes, intentions, conduct, fortune, words spoken). This scheme derives from Cicero, *De inventione* 1, xxiv, 34, a section on the attributes of persons. Einhard used a Suetonian scheme of rubrics (*species*) to cover many of the same features. This was how secular biography was written.

Einhard’s account of the debt which he owed to his friend and patron, set in the preface to the *Vita Karoli*, is an important secularisation of Christian terminology. Einhard praises Charles as his *nutritor*, his patron. Isidore had defined *nutritor* as *quasi nutu eruditio*, someone who teaches with a nod. Augustine had used the term when describing Ambrose, and Bede used it of Coelfrid *nutritor* and tutor of his monks in his *History of the Abbots* of Wearmouth-Jarrow. The only instance I have found before Einhard of *nutritor* used of a secular ruler is in Paul the Deacon’s *Historia Langobardorum*, where King Liutprand is called *nutritor gentis*.

But Charlemagne was not only commemorated because of Einhard’s loyalty to his patron and friend, the ruler at whose court he had been educated. Isidore affirms that the heroic dead had attained their own immortality. *Heroicum enim carmen dictum, quod eo virorum fortium res et facta narrantur. Nam heroes appellantur viri quasi aerii et caelo digni propter sapientiam et fortitudinem ... Quo nomine appellat alicuius meriti animas*

43 ‘If I wished to describe the figure of his nobility from boyhood, which is called *characterismos* in Greek, I would be incapable, for even if the person is considered according to the eloquence of the art of rhetoric it could not furnish fitting praise ... According to the skill of that art there are many attributes of a person from which he may be best discerned. According to orators, the quality of a perfect man should be considered in his name, his nation, his family, his worth, his fortune, his body, his rank, his way of life, his food, if he administered his property well, how he ran his household, his affection, his mind, his skill, his status, his dress, his face, his gait, his speech, his feelings’, Paschasius, *Vita Adalhardi* c. 55, PL 120, col. 1536, cf. Paschasius, in Ps. 44 XLIV, iii, Prologus, PL 120, col. 1039. See A. Cizek, ‘Der Charakterisrnos in der Vita Adalhardi des Radberr von Corbie’, *Rhetorica* 7 (1989), pp. 185-204.


45 Isidore, *Etymologiae* x, 189.


defunctorum, quasi ἄνεμων, id est viros aerios et caelo dignos propter sapientiam et fortituddinem. If Charlemagne is regarded as such a hero, then his biography has even stronger parallels with the lives of the saints. The commemoration of a layman belongs in a tradition of epics for heroes.

In investigating the picture Einhard presents of a lay subject it is necessary to assess his attitude to Charlemagne's Christianity. Einhard's hero was an explicitly Christian ruler, concerned to protect Christians throughout the world, and to worship God in a fitting way. His victory over the Saxons depended on his condition that the Saxons abandon the cult of demons and their native rites to take up the sacraments of Christian faith and worship. Throughout the biography Christian values are implicit: the pope made Pippin king and Charles and Carlomann succeed him by God's will, Charles is granted symbolic authority over the Holy Places in Palestine and he restored the churches throughout his kingdoms. He had been brought up a Christian from his youth and he went to church morning and evening and for the night office. He was concerned with the splendour of the church at Aachen and with the church of St Peter's. And at the end of his life his decision to make Louis co-emperor seemed divinely inspired. Heinz Löwe suggested that Einhard's account of Charles as protector of the church and of Rome may reveal an awareness of the implications of the Donation of Constantine. But while we may recognise such subtle nuances in Einhard's text, that text is not the exemplary biography of a Christian ruler that Thegan and the Astronomer provided in their lives of Charlemagne's son. It is Thegan, not Einhard, who describes the dying Charlemagne correcting the Gospels. It is the Astronomer who reminds us that Charlemagne died as the most pious emperor.

It is the account of Charlemagne's private life which has attracted readers to Einhard's biography. The thick neck, the bulging belly, the weak voice for so large a man, even the limp can all be found as details in the

48 For verse is called "heroic" when the deeds and achievements of courageous men are told of therein. For men who are, as it were, "airy", and worthy of heaven, are called "heroes", because of their wisdom and courage ... People call the souls of dead men who had merit of some kind by the name of "airy", signifying worthy of heaven, because of their wisdom and courage', Isidore, Etymologiae 1, xxxix, 9; viii, xi, 98. These passages were discussed by R. E. Kaske, 'Sapientia et Fortitudo as the Controlling Theme in Beowulf', Studies in Philology 55 (1958), pp. 423-56, and by F. Robinson, The Tomb of Beowulf (Oxford, 1993), pp. 3-19.


50 Thegan, Gesta Hludowici c. 7, p. 186.

51 Astronomer c. 20, p. 344, and note the frequent scriptural quotations about kingship in both the Astronomer and Thegan.
descriptions of Suetonian Caesars, but they were not the stuff of medieval biography. It is the measure of Charlemagne’s greatness that these details do not damage him. And they are enhanced by Einhard’s care to make his hero another intellectual; enjoying the City of God, educating his children in the liberal arts as well as the Frankish ones, learning grammar and astronomy and even trying to write with his tablets kept under his pillow. The ‘leisure and learning’ which Einhard found in Cicero and exhorted his readers not to abuse had become the hallmark of the civilised rule of his hero. Tiberius had also most diligently cultivated the liberal arts, and Einhard probably found the word *dicaculus* (talkative), which he uses to praise Charles’ eloquence, in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae.*

But he was reporting on the court life in which he had shared, where poets were prized and courtiers discussed comets. This revival of learning was admired by Walahfrid and Lupus: it has become Charlemagne’s undisputed legacy.

Earthly society was distinguished from the world of the saints by military achievement and by marriage. Stuart Airlie has characterised the ways in which the *Vita Karoli* ‘features most of the items on our checklist of aristocratic qualities. Charlemagne’s ancestors, their lands, wealth and office are all celebrated. Much space is devoted to the king’s family life and notably, Charlemagne’s union with concubines is neither glossed over nor apologised for. War too has a crucial place in Einhard’s picture and for Einhard the success of Charlemagne’s aggressive campaigning was sufficient justification: Charlemagne doubled the size of his kingdom. Hunting and feasting are also highlighted facets of Einhard’s portrait.

The lay ethos of the biography is best conveyed in Einhard’s account of how Charlemagne’s children were educated: ‘He believed that his children, both his daughters and his sons, should be educated, first in the liberal arts which he himself had studied. Then he saw to it that when the boys had reached the right age they were trained to ride in the Frankish fashion, to fight and to hunt. But he ordered his daughters to learn how to work with wool, how to spin and weave it, so that they might not grow dull from inactivity and learn to value work and virtuous activity (*ad omnem honestatem erudiri*).’

The pride in Frankish values, including Frankish royal acclamation and Frankish dress, is a constant feature of the *Vita Karoli.*

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52 *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Vita Hadriani* 20.8.1, ed. J. P. Callu (Paris, 1992), pp. 40–1. The word is very rare, as Gottschalk noted, and is not in Cicero or Suetonius.


54 Ibid., pp. 381–2.

55 *VX* c. 19, p. 23.
We get closest to Einhard’s explanatory scheme in an aside in the account of the Saxon war: ‘Charlemagne was able to endure and to bear anything, not yielding in adversity nor assenting to a false smiling fortune in prosperity.’ Einhard may have found his false smiling Fortune in Boethius, but not in any Christian source. The suggestion that humans can be deceived by Fortune set a distance between human endeavour and human understanding of God’s purposes. It is a part of Einhard’s classical vocabulary, and may derive from Suetonius’ Life of Nero. For Regino of Prüm, at the end of the ninth century, Fortune was the best means of explaining the vicissitudes of history. Einhard wrote a great biography of a lay intellectual, and in the preface to that biography he presents himself to his readers. And here again we can detect the voice of the layman, expressing a sense of a new kind of writing. ‘But to write and account for such a life (scribendae atque explicandae) what was required was Ciceronian eloquence, not my feeble talent, which is poor and small (exile et parvum) and indeed almost non-existent. There is nothing in it that you should admire but his accomplishments, except perhaps that I, a barbarian with little training in the language of Rome, should have imagined that I could write something correct and even eloquent in Latin.’ The language here is also borrowed, the feeble talent comes from Jerome, who frequently used the word ingeniolum and who was echoed by Alcuin. Einhard’s feeble talent is characterised as exile et parvum, a combination found in Pliny, Letters, Book 11, 14, 1. It may seem an excessive protestation of modesty, but it is a measure of Einhard’s desire to be judged by classical standards. He is a homo barbarus, which must imply a German speaker, and his term for training derives ultimately from Cicero. Einhard never names himself in the preface. He has established himself as a friend of Charlemagne, a courtier, a truthful witness, a Frank, but he effaces Einhard: the preface is not about the particularity of who he is. Instead it establishes a cultural identity, that of the untrained barbarian whose every word is redolent of the culture he is adopting. The unabashed Ciceronianism is stunning, everything is staked on the possibility of creating a fitting memorial. But the values of the Vita Karoli are heroic values, the only hint of a more overreaching ethos is when Einhard supplies the text of Charlemagne’s will and lists the portents which foretell his death. The portents reveal to everyone, even to Charlemagne, that the end

57 VK preface, p. 2.
is near. Glory will fade, just as the letters of Charlemagne’s inscription *Karolus Princeps* became so faint that they were almost invisible. In the will there is reference to Christian practice, and the remarkable suggestion that Charlemagne might abandon the world (*aut voluntarium saecularium rerum carentiam*). And that retreat from the world of the court was accomplished by Einhard, it was perhaps a part of his master’s legacy to him.

If we look for a statement of Einhard’s literary aims, the clearest testimony is at the very beginning of the *Translatio*.

Those who have set down in writing and recorded the lives and deeds of the just and of people living according to divine commands, seem to me to have wanted to accomplish nothing but to inspire by means of examples of this sort the spirits of all people to emend their evil ways and to sing the praises of God’s omnipotence. These writers did this, not only because they lacked envy, but because they were completely full of charity, which seeks the improvement of all. Since their praiseworthy intention was so obviously to accomplish nothing other than those goals I described, I do not see why their plan should not be imitated by many other writers.

By 830 moral reform and divine praise had become Einhard’s goals, and in a letter written to Louis the Pious to explain the significance of the comet which had appeared in June 837 he again places them at the centre of his world-view: ‘I suspect that this comet supplies us with fitting signs of our just deserts and announces an approaching disaster that we deserve. For what does it matter whether humans are forewarned of impending anger by a human, by an angel, or by a star announcing it? Only this is necessary to understand that the appearance of the star was not without meaning, but warned humans that by being penitent and calling upon the mercy of God they may work towards avoiding future danger.’ In a world of impending danger, a world in which the divine opinions were not being followed, the consciousness of sin and the appeal to God’s mercy was the last measure of the unity of fallen man.

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