

For most of his career as 'archbishop of the Gauls', therefore, Wilchar was without a diocesan see of his own. In this respect his position was identical with that of archbishop Boniface before October 745<sup>30</sup>); and indeed, although Boniface is never called *archiepiscopus (provinciae) Galliarum* in any surviving text, it was over the *provincia Galliarum* that Pope Zacharias (following an earlier decision of Karloman) extended his archiepiscopal powers at the end of 744<sup>31</sup>). By the 780s the existence in Francia of an archbishop without a see must already have seemed a serious anomaly: the notion of metropolitan archbishop was at last becoming firmly established after the abortive attempt of 744 to give the title of *archiepiscopus* to the bishops of Rheims and Sens as well as of Rouen<sup>32</sup>) and after the (as we now see) equally temporary revival of the archiepiscopal title for a bishop of Sens in or shortly before 769. The diocesans of Rheims, Trier and ?Tarentaise were recognised as metropolitans — and subsequently adopted the archiepiscopal title — shortly before 780; the diocesans of Mainz were metropolitan archbishops from c. 781<sup>33</sup>). The final recognition of Sens as an archiepiscopal see belongs to the same decade and perhaps specifically to 786—7: the contrast between the *episcopus* Gunbert and the *archiepiscopi* Magnus (succeeded a. 802)<sup>34</sup>) and Jeremy in the diploma of 826 seems deliberate; and the reference to Beornred in Echternach documents first as *episcopus* and only subsequently as *archiepiscopus* is not necessarily accidental<sup>35</sup>). Indeed, it is tempting to suppose that it was only after Wilchar's death (which would then have happened 786—7) that it was felt possible to give the archiepiscopal title once more to the diocesan of Sens.

If this reading of the evidence is correct, new and unexpected light is thrown on Charles' policy towards the Church and its hierarchy in the 770s and 780s. Bishops and archbishops unattached to any see had been under attack for several decades: but simultaneously with the establishment of permanent metropolitan sees in the Frankish church, Charles was prepared to maintain exceptions where they were of advantage to his authority; and in the early 780s, apparently in order to extend Frankish influence, he did not hesitate to send a 'missionary bishop' into regions that had their own established hierarchy still in touch with Rome. The scheme failed as completely as his earlier military expedition across the Pyrenees — perhaps because Charles had chosen a wholly unsuitable man as his instrument. The Pope might have felt a rueful satisfaction that the choice of Egila had proved such an unfortunate one<sup>36</sup>) but

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*Galliarum* and not, as was later supposed, the bishop of Sion who as bishop of Vienne had earlier received a pallium: compare Lesne p. 60 and n. 2 with Duchesne, *Fastes* 1, 247. Was Wilchar's loss of Sens connected with these political changes?

<sup>30</sup>) Lesne p. 40 et seq.; W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the eighth century* (1946) p. 72—4, 86—7; T. Schieffer, *Winfrid-Bonifatius* (1954) p. 156—9, 204—7.

<sup>31</sup>) Bonifatii et Lulli Epist. ed. Tangl (MG. Epp. sel. 1, 1916) p. 108.

<sup>32</sup>) Bonifatii ... Epist. nos. 57—8; Lesne p. 41 et seq.; Schieffer, *Winfrid-Bonifatius* p. 222, 228.

<sup>33</sup>) Levison p. 234—5; Schieffer, *Angelsachsen u. Franken* (Mainzer Abh., Geistes- u. Sozialwiss. Kl., 1950, no. 20, 1951) p. 45 et seq. and esp. p. 95 et seq.

<sup>34</sup>) *Capitularia* 1, 100: *Magnus archiepiscopus*.

<sup>35</sup>) References above, nn. 24, 26, 27. But the occasional use of *episcopus* in the later texts means that this cannot be pressed.

<sup>36</sup>) Assuming, that is, that no. 95 is the last letter in the group. If Hauck were right in treating it as the first, the other two letters show the Pope trying to make the best of a situation which clearly gave him no pleasure.