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PROJECTING IMPERIAL POWER: THE SYNODS OF AACHEN (816-819)

by

Clifford Greco

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Advisory Committee:

Joel Anderson, Assistant Professor of History, Advisor

Michael Grillo, Associate Professor of History of Art

Sarah Harlan-Haughey, Associate Professor of English

Samantha Jones, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Art, Honors Preceptor

Timothy Waring, Associate Professor of Social-Ecological Systems Modeling

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ABSTRACT

An important stage in Christian monastic reforms occurred in Aachen during the synods from 816-819 A.D. These meetings were brought about to bring uniformity and centralization to monastic practices within the Frankish realm of Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious (d. 840). The reforms were initiated by the emperor of the Carolingian Empire and guided by the reformist monk Benedict of Aniane (d. 821). Monastic dogma that was agreed upon included a drastic reinterpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict. Benedict of Aniane's influence was evident within the synods. His monastic reforms were directed towards establishing stringent asceticism and Christian zeal. But it is also important to recognize the reforms regarding imperial oversight of monasteries, which invested the emperor with near unquestionable authority. This led to mixed reactions from monasteries and the Roman Papacy. Many monastic communities embraced the benefits of security and dogmatic consistency offered by the empire. The papacy greatly feared these reforms. Many in Rome believed that Louis the Pious was attempting to imitate the absolutist rule of the Byzantine Empire. Each actor within this situation committed distinct actions. Every action committed by either the imperial court, monastic communities, or the Roman Papacy demonstrated the intentions and consequences of the synods. This moment in the development of religious monasticism was significant as some of the reforms enacted were controversial. Still, the changes at the conclusion of the Synods of Aachen, were revolutionary to Western Christian monastic tradition as it placed monasticism within the influence of the emperor.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family whose love and support continue to inspire me. I would not be the person I am today without them and I am truly grateful. Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

The Carolingian Empire spanned across most of Western Europe during the early ninth century.¹ It comprised much of modern-day France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux Countries. Notable figures like Charlemagne (r. 774-813 A.D) and Louis the Pious (r. 813-840 A.D) ruled this vast domain. This empire was a unifying presence within a region that contained a myriad of distinct cultures. To control these regions, a complex series of traditions and bureaucracies were developed out of realm-wide conferences. Each meeting had a distinct motive. Synods, for example, involved Christian leaders within the empire meeting to discuss potential religious reforms. Reforms and centralization were common motives of the emperors and remained a constant justification for such meetings. The Carolingian Empire would continue to last until 887 A.D and was the last empire to completely rule over this region for multiple generations.²

The Synod of Aachen was composed of a series of meetings that spanned from 816 A.D to 819 A.D.³ Louis the Pious and Benedict of Aniane (d. 821) first began the meetings in August of 816.⁴ Participants included members of the Carolingian Imperial court, as well as notable figures within the monastic and clerical community. The congregations were led by Benedict of Aniane who himself was overseen by Louis. Historians argue that the Synod of 816 was the most widespread in its reforms. Changes

¹ Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London and New York: Longman, 1983).

² McKitterick, 267.

³ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 1st ed. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1983). 230

⁴ Wallace-Hadrill. 264

regarding many different aspects of monastic life were addressed. Interpretations of the Rule of St. Benedict, a form of monastic observance that was based on the writings of St. Benedict of Nursia (d. 547 A.D), were standardized during this meeting.⁵ Many of the reforms regarding monastic observance and imperial oversight were also enacted that year and were quickly enforced. The 816 synod was also considered to be the most idealistic. Many problems that opponents complained about originated from this first meeting. Later on, more synods reconvened back at Aachen between 817-819 A.D. These subsequent meetings would revise some of the reforms approved earlier in 816 A.D as well as confirm others.⁶ Revisions included lessening requirements the monastic communities were forced to undertake for the empire. The agendas of the later synods were also meant to fill out the bureaucratic changes that were involved from the reforms. Important contemporary documents described the reception of the reforms by monastic communities.⁷ This helped ensure that the reforms derived from the synod were enshrined into monastic tradition. The Synods of Aachen would continue to meet intermittently until 819 A.D. Over the span of three years, significant changes to the monastic community occurred. While the Synods of Aachen brought forth necessary changes for the monastic communities, it did not last.⁸ Political chaos during the latter part of Louis the Pious' reign caused many of the reforms to be undone. Overall, the

⁵ C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1984). 26

⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*. 264

⁷ Kristina Maria Hosoe, "Regulae and Reform in Carolingian Monastic Hagiography" (Ph.D., United States -- Connecticut, Yale University, 2014), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1541891327/abstract/3D63F345648D40EBPQ/1>.

⁸ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 82

Synods of Aachen stood as a promising series of reforms that did not have enough time to develop and achieve its purpose.

General Historiography

Interpretation of Louis the Pious' reign has been a subject of ambiguity amongst historians. According to many historians from the period, Louis' actions could never compare to the greatness of his father Charlemagne. As the name suggests, Charlemagne was depicted within medieval chronicles as this nearly perfect ruler who reunified Western Europe. To his medieval contemporaries, he was a wise and just ruler who could not err. Within the Catholic Church, he is revered as a saint and is given a dedicated feast day. Louis, on the other hand, was seen as the reason why the Carolingian Empire broke apart. Roger Collins in *Early Medieval Europe 300-1000* explains that "Some of the criticisms that have been made against Louis are probably unjustified, but as will be suggested, his own weaknesses may have exacerbated political difficulties... However, it is at least possible to doubt the value of some of the older accusations levelled against him."⁹ The empire was large and wealthy. Europe was unified around a Frankish emperor. It was evident that at this moment the empire was ready for greatness. Charlemagne had created an effective apparatus for ruling this diverse region. Louis could not, in the end, properly control this empire. Eventually, Louis lost his throne to his sons through civil war. The empire was torn apart by his three sons. There would never be another lasting empire that unified this region of Europe. This collapse stood as justification that it was Louis' faults that made the empire collapse. Medieval historians proceeded to characterize Louis as inept and being personally focused on his religious

⁹ Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Europe 300-1000* (New York, Ny: St. Martin's Press, 1999). 337-338

zeal instead of the empire. It has only been through recent scholarship that a new perception has been introduced about Louis. Many contemporary historians argue that Louis was a capable ruler. They look at moments, including multiple hunting events, imperial reforms, and the subjugation of rebellious factions as evidence that the empire was soundly run.¹⁰ During the early part of his reign Louis led the Carolingian Empire through a period of stability and prosperity. He also worked to ensure that the empire could remain stable after his passing. This was done by naming successors for his empire after only five years into his rule. He hoped that in the event of an unexpected death, the empire would be able to undertake a seamless transition of power. It was during the latter part of his reign, that problems began to arise. A series of political disasters diminished Louis' power. In this moment of weakness, his sons waged a civil war which ended with Louis being defeated. In the end, the unified Carolingian Empire was split amongst the three sons. This political collapse should be partially attributed to Louis' ruling style, but it was not representative of his entire reign. Historians have begun to tear down this mischaracterization. Rosamond McKitterick, for instance, argues that "it is high time that Louis received a full scale and thorough reassessment."¹¹ A revision to the years of misinterpretation has recently begun. This change has led to the revitalization of research towards important moments in Louis' reign, including the Synods of Aachen.

Scholarship over the Synods of Aachen is not as developed as some other subjects in Carolingian historiography. This is because the changes enacted at Synods of Aachen were never completed. The balkanization of the Carolingian Empire led to the undoing of

¹⁰ Eric J. Goldberg, "Louis the Pious and the Hunt," *Speculum* 88, no. 3 (2013): 613–43.

¹¹ McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*. 124

most of its reforms. As a result, historians have tried to place the synods as a precursor to greater movements. Historiographical research has primarily focused on the effects the synods had upon particular entities within the empire. For example, C.H. Lawrence discusses in *Medieval Monasticism* the Synods of Aachen as one step within the development of monastic institutions like the Cluniac Reforms.¹² J.M. Wallace-Hadrill in *The Frankish Church* examines the development of the Frankish Church.¹³ He argues that the Synods of Aachen were part of a greater agenda of the Carolingian emperors to Christianize their realm. There is no research that directly addresses the synod and how it was conducted. Rather, most look at its consequences. Such consequences are important to recognize. Even so, the limited amount of scholarly resources offers some understanding of the synods themselves. In general, research has depicted the Synods of Aachen as a stepping stone to a greater goal. This thesis will build off this depiction and show that the synods' purpose was placing monastic communities within the direct oversight of the emperor, effectively making them representations of Louis. The Synods of Aachen were a pivotal moment for the Carolingian Empire and Christian development.

Methodology

This paper seeks to determine whether the Synods of Aachen were a deliberate attempt by Louis to enact centralizing reforms on the Carolingian Empire. Other scholarly works examine the effects of the reforms. The focus of this paper is to consider whether the reforms themselves were meant to expand the power of the Carolingian Emperor. This power specifically permitted Louis to project his authority over the affairs of the empire's monastic communities. To justify this argument, this paper compares the

¹² Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*.

¹³ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*.

two sides of this situation, the creators and the recipients. The creators were Louis the Pious and his imperial court. Since there are no primary sources that directly address their personal agenda during the Synods of Aachen, it will be important to look at their actions and traditions to determine their purpose. Every participant of the Synods of Aachen had a desired outcome. For example, Louis the Pious and Benedict of Aniane were the catalyst for the Synods of Aachen. They wanted the meeting to happen and controlled what reforms were to be discussed.¹⁴ As a result, it can be understood that the reforms that resulted from the Synods of Aachen were representative of Louis and Benedict of Aniane's opinions. It is also important to examine the backgrounds of important figures. This will primarily be through contemporary texts like the *Vita Hludovici* and the *Vita Benedictus Anianensis*. These works are chronicles of the lives of significant figures that were written. Louis was the successor to a beloved leader. He grew up within a ruling tradition that had existed for generations. Consequently, he wanted to continue this tradition. The actions of Louis and his court allowed imperial authority to continue. Their broadened authority was employed after the conclusion of the Synods of Aachen. A new social hierarchy was confirmed from these meetings, and it was one that seriously benefitted the imperial court. Louis the Pious and retinue members like St. Benedict of Aniane had an agenda and the consequences of their actions is evidence to their personal agenda.

The recipients of the Synods of Aachen confirm conclusions derived from the actions of Louis and his court. Monasteries were directly affected by the Synod of

¹⁴ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 78

Aachen. The synod's reforms were meant mainly for them.¹⁵ Their reactions provide a diverse set of opinions about the synod's reforms. Opinions spanned from blind loyalty towards the empire to the complete rejection of the reforms.¹⁶ Both sides reflect a different understanding of how a monastic community functioned. They recognized the rising influence of the emperor, and each had an opinion to address it. The monasteries were not alone in their reaction to the Synods of Aachen. The Papal States held significant influence in Christian monasticism and carefully observed the synods. They were the most important entity in Western Europe outside of the emperor and his court. Within western Christianity, the pope stood as a beacon of guidance. The Papal States was fearful of the implications of the Synods of Aachen. As a result, the pope maintained constant communication with Louis during Louis' reign. Papal representatives, including the pope himself, personally met with Louis the Pious during the synods.¹⁷ Most importantly, the Papal States have been subject to a plethora of academic research. Books and journals depicting the development of the Papal States give context to its opinions and actions. Primary sources also are employed. This can span from writings about the lives of popes to treaties created during this period. Their situation was directly influenced by the actions of Louis the Pious. The papacy had a serious fear that the reforms meant a return to imperial subservience. As a result, their reactions to Louis are important to analyze. Overall, monastic communities as well as the Roman Papacy serve

¹⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*. 230

¹⁶ Corinna J. Prior, "Beyond the Boundaries of the Carolingian Cloister: An Examination of Monastic Interaction during the Early Ninth Century" (M.A., Canada, Carleton University (Canada), 2009), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/250895579/abstract/29B86447A8F4E6EPQ/1>.

¹⁷ Thomas F. X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984).

as an indication to the purpose of the Synods of Aachen. Their reactions and opinions stand as a testament to how each unique situation determined the direction of the reforms.

Louis the Pious wanted to centralize his empire around the emperor. His predecessors had begun a series of transitions that expanded the authority of the emperor. The Synods of Aachen were convened for this same purpose. Through these changes, Louis was hoping to bring uniformity and authority to the monasteries of the realm. Responses to this attempt were observed and mostly receptive. There was some opposition to the changes, but generally it was approved. Centralization around Louis was an important agenda and it was made evident by the traditions and actions of Louis during this period. Chapter One will look at Louis and his court. They started the synods and from their actions we can understand the purpose of them. Chapter Two looks at the monastic and papal responses to the Synods of Aachen. Both entities reacted to the changes differently, but through that action an understanding to what the recipients understood as the purpose of the Synods of Aachen. From these two perspectives, a common understanding can be made about the intent and impact of the synods.

CHAPTER 1

LOUIS THE PIOUS: IMPERATOR AUGUSTUS

The Synods of Aachen were a distinct moment in the development of the Carolingian Empire during the reign Louis the Pious (r. 813-840). The effects from the Synods of Aachen helped expand the influence of Emperor Louis across the realm. Louis' decision to conduct the Synods happened as part of a general initiative by the emperor for internal reform. This reform was significant in the development of Louis the Pious' reign. His opinions and beliefs differed from his predecessors, but he continued to build on their legacies. Louis's monastic reforms enacted at the Synod of Aachen were an extension of a generational initiative to centralize the empire. This had been a traditional pursuit of Carolingian kings but with a different perspective. New revisions that would derive from the Synods of Aachen would lead to significant changes in the influence the Imperial court had on monastic communities. These policies enforced a uniform interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict that remained under the careful attention of Louis. Specific requirements like establishing a centralized form of dogma dissemination within the Empire were created. This would essentially make one location as the only official place for monks to receive instruction on the correct interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict. The direct consequence of the Synods of Aachen was improved oversight over monastic affairs by Louis and his court. At the same time, it also established a simple yet significant form of monastic hierarchy that emplaced Emperor Louis the Pious at the top.

A Reformist Tradition

The rulers of the Franks that preceded Louis had made centralization the primary focus of the empire. This was meant to ensure stability for the kingdom while also permitting future kings the ability to undertake long-term military campaigns. Francia was arranged and delegated in a way to offer the King of the Franks the necessary infrastructure to wage long-term campaigns. Between 714 A.D to the death of Charlemagne in 814 A.D, there had only been seven years when the kingdom was not involved in some military conflict.¹⁸ The ability to conduct near constant warfare could not happen without the Carolingian rulers' preference to centralize their domains. Border expansion and wealth acquisition helped the Frankish kingdom manage a significant swath of land. New found wealth would continue to expand the power of the king, as Carolingian rulers of Frankish lands from Charles Martel to Charlemagne dedicated themselves to expanding the realm.

Charlemagne was a pious and decorated ruler whose actions inspired many future leaders. He was the son of Pippin III who was crowned the first Carolingian King of the Franks after deposing the previous ruler and imposing himself (with the support of the pope) as the king. Pippin was a religious but ambitious ruler who added significant territories to his kingdom. Territories like Lombardy and Gascony were subject of fruitful campaigns that spanned most of his time as king. The plunder and prestige earned from these campaigns helped solidify the control of Pippin's kingdom. At the same time Pippin earned the support of the papacy through actions like his famous "Donation of Pippin." This event involved Pippin giving lands in Italy to the Roman Papacy. This cemented a

¹⁸ Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London and New York: Longman, 1983). 78

strong relationship that would exist between the Church and Pippin's descendants. Many of the conquests and invasions undertaken by the Frankish king would help establish the kingdom as the preeminent power of Western Europe.¹⁹ Pippin eventually died while on campaign and separated his kingdom between his two sons Carloman and Charlemagne, according to traditional Frankish custom. The division of the kingdom between the two brothers would be temporary as the untimely death of Carloman would leave Charlemagne as the sole ruler of the Kingdom of Francia. Charlemagne would continue the tradition of conquest and spend much of his life engrossed in warfare. He would also seek to bring stability to his kingdom through reform. His actions extended the growth of the Kingdom of the Franks and contributed to the transition of the kingdom into an empire.

The administration of the empire went through changes that were initiated by Charlemagne. Struggles over controlling his expanding domain as well as a general distrust of his vassals led him to develop a system that could effectively police the actions of the nobility. In 802 A.D Charlemagne decided to expand the power of the *missi dominici*, who acted his representatives to different noble courts. They held significant power and would report directly to the emperor. The *missi* would be composed of trusted nobles that Charlemagne would embellish with honor and wealth. They, in turn, would travel to different regions of the empire where they were trusted to perform the duties of the emperor. For example, the *missi* had the jurisdiction to prescribe justice upon individuals and even raise armies. Over time the *missi* were able to help Charlemagne

¹⁹ Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Europe 300-1000* (New York, Ny: St. Martin's Press, 1999). 277

project his power over the empire and ensure that his rule would not be infringed.²⁰ This reform enacted by Charlemagne was one of many changes that he created to effectively rule his empire. He also developed this system so the empire could become centralized around its ruler.²¹

The Development of Louis

Charlemagne had multiple sons who were heirs to his immense empire. Frankish inheritance traditions from the period had directed Charlemagne to split his domain amongst his sons. This could potentially lead to the dissolution of the empire. As a result, he hoped to establish a series of kingdoms that each of his sons could rule while still being subservient to a greater emperor.²² Each son would act as a regional ruler that could develop a local connection to their territories while still having familial ties to the emperor. This permitted the empire to continue to exist as an entity while ensuring that all his sons had a share to their father's domain. He thus began to dole out his kingdoms to his sons. To his oldest, Charles the Younger, he gave the kingdoms that made up the Frankish Heartland. To his second son, Pippin, he gave the Kingdom of Lombardy in Northern Italy. Charlemagne gave the Kingdom of Aquitaine to Louis who was still only a child at the time. Aquitaine was a borderland region of the Empire whose cultural makeup was significantly different from the cores of the Carolingian Empire. Aspects like being closer in proximity to Rome as well as containing distinct ethnic groups, like Basques, made Aquitaine very different from Francia. This cultural contrast from the Frankish homeland caused Louis the Pious to develop into a leader whose personality and

²⁰ François L. Ganshof, "The Impact of Charlemagne on the Institutions of the Frankish Realm," *Speculum* 40, no. 1 (1965): 47–62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2856463>.

²¹ McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*. 78

²² Collins, *Early Medieval Europe 300-1000*. 337

opinions were strikingly different from his father. Primary texts describing Louis's rule over Aquitaine noted how he would wear clothing that was associated with the Basques when he held court²³. It was clear to many observers of the future emperor that his traditions were not entirely from a Frankish culture. Even Charlemagne was fearful that the connection Louis had with the region would have a harmful effect on the loyalty of his son.²⁴ Louis the Pious exhibited a more cosmopolitan character that would be shown through his desire to incorporate foreign interpretations of imperial rule into the Carolingian Empire.

While Louis was growing up in Aquitaine, he would conduct numerous campaigns that exposed him to many different cultures. He led numerous expeditions into the Iberian Peninsula against the Moors. One campaign he conducted involved a two-year siege of the city of Barcelona.²⁵ This military action led to the starvation of the city and soon the population surrendered to Louis. For his victorious entrance into the city, Louis decided to have priests lead his army and have the procession end at the city's church. This was not the only campaign that Louis conducted. He was tasked with fighting with his brother in the Italian Peninsula. From these experiences Louis's personality was revealed. The religious procession in Barcelona and the campaigning in Italy portrayed the devotion he had for Catholicism. In fact, Louis wished to visit Rome "to visit the thresholds of the prince of the Apostles and of the teacher of the Gentiles and to commend himself and his offspring to them."²⁶ The piety that exuded from Louis was

²³ Astronomus and Allen Cabaniss, *Son of Charlemagne: A Contemporary Life of Louis the Pious* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1961). 36

²⁴ Astronomus and Cabaniss.

²⁵ Astronomus and Cabaniss. 44; McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*. 108

²⁶ Astronomus and Cabaniss, *Son of Charlemagne: A Contemporary Life of Louis the Pious*. 34

evident, but also his conquests in Southern Europe led to the development of characteristics that were different than his father.

Disaster struck Charlemagne during the latter half of his rule. Two of his three sons died before his own death in 814 A.D. This made Louis, a man who grew up outside of Francia, as the sole heir to the Carolingian Empire. Charlemagne then brought Louis back to his side and had him crowned as co-emperor. This was done to ensure a safe transition of rule. The *Vita Hludovici* discussed how both Charlemagne and Louis reacted to the situation. Charlemagne in particular “advised him (Louis) how the kingdom should be nurtured, governed, and arranged, and how what had been arranged should be maintained.”²⁷ The Carolingian Empire had grown because of the leadership of its wise rulers and Charlemagne wanted to ensure that his son could continue this legacy. It is certain that this moment left an important imprint upon Louis and during this period as the presumptive heir he would continuously be praised for his wisdom in rule according to contemporary sources. With the death of Charlemagne, Louis assumed the position of Emperor of the Carolingian Empire. While his reign was questioned by many, his authority was solidified over time by his active attempts to follow the legacy and plans of his father.²⁸

A new perspective from Louis was be the incorporation of a zealous Christian perspective to the whole Empire. His seriousness towards his Catholic faith was monkish. The first indication of Louis’s piety was when he arrived at the imperial court at Aachen and proceeded to remove members and idols that did not conform with Christian

²⁷ Astronomus and Cabaniss. 53

²⁸ Eric J. Goldberg, “Louis the Pious and the Hunt,” *Speculum* 88, no. 3 (2013): 613–43. 624

ideology. For example, Louis decided to banish his sisters to monastic communities partially because of their promiscuity. The sisters of Louis the Pious were notorious for their promiscuous affairs. This livelihood was condoned by Charlemagne because he wanted to prevent his daughters from marrying and bearing any new legitimate claimants to the imperial throne outside of his own sons. As a result, he allowed his daughters to pursue personal relationships, with the stipulation that any children of theirs would remain illegitimate. Over time, Charlemagne's daughters would earn a moribund reputation by members of the court as well as within the empire's nobility. This especially did not sit well with Louis who saw his sisters' actions as sinful and tainting the religious role of the emperor. To make up for their debauchery, Louis saw it adequate to "admit" them to a religious community that could rectify their sinful ways.²⁹ It was not only members of the court that earned the ire of the emperor. Louis also destroyed many pagan idols that had been collected by Charlemagne. These idols were collected through Charlemagne's conquest. He viewed these more as trophies, because he was still a devout Christian. Still, to Louis and his followers the simple possession of these idols was considered blasphemous. Louis even forbade the singing of traditional Germanic folk songs within the Imperial Court.³⁰ In order for the Imperial Court to be a suitable place for a Christian emperor, Louis believed that the court must embody Christian principles. As a result, Louis the Pious created a court that followed an ascetic lifestyle that displayed piety. The physical actions of Louis the Pious were also an indication of the religious zeal that he possessed. Numerous churches and abbeys were constructed

²⁹ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 1983. 229

³⁰ Rutger Kramer, "Framing the Carolingian Reforms: The Early Years of Louis the Pious," in *Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire* (Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 31–58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvd1c74c.6>. 57

because of financial endowment from the emperor. Aspects regarding religious theology were often discussed within the court and many of its members were accomplished members of the clergy. Both actions followed Louis's belief that his empire was to represent Christianity and his divine duty was to protect its inhabitants.³¹ Louis would dedicate significant amounts of time to prayer and penance. At one point, Louis even undertook a public penance where he loudly shouted out his sins to the pope and to the rest of the court.³² This display of sorrow was a risky maneuver for any public figure as it portrayed themselves as being fallible. Still, this action was an indication of how serious Louis the Pious was towards his faith and how his faith affected his rule.

Louis followed his father's desire for reform by establishing a clerical court that was primarily focused on consolidating the empire.³³ The administrative aspects of Charlemagne's court were a specialized and effective aspect of his governance. While his father primarily dedicated his life to conquest and administrative reform, Louis the Pious wanted to resolve specific problems within the empire. As a result, Louis would retain part of Charlemagne's court but would also bring in accomplished individuals from the farthest reaches of the realm.³⁴ All participants were focused on reforming the empire in order to make it more uniform and united.³⁵ Artists and thinkers were also brought in from the empire's holdings in Italy that brought forth "Greek" tastes³⁶ that angered traditional Frankish members of the court. Louis also was visited multiple times by

³¹ Thomas F. X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*, 1984. 301

³² De Jong, Mayke. 2009. *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press. 36

³³ Kramer, "Framing the Carolingian Reforms."

³⁴ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*. 229

³⁵ Kramer, "Framing the Carolingian Reforms." 16

³⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*. 227

representatives of the Byzantine Empire. These visits were meant to strengthen the connections between the two empires.³⁷ This diplomatic connection led to the empires coordinating with each other in aspects of military maneuvers. Charlemagne's relationship with the Byzantines was more complex, as he had conducted military campaigns against the empire. Louis' relationship with the Byzantines was strong and friendly. It was only the internal chaos that happened during the latter half of Louis reign that jettisoned any further opportunities for a greater unity between the two entities.³⁸ It was evident that Louis appreciated his ties with the Byzantine Empire. Even coinage developed during the period reflected Louis becoming more receptive to foreign customs. The way that Louis composed his court as well as what entities that he associated with showed that he did not rule his domain like his father Charlemagne.

Connections between the imperial court and the monastic community were not always in the best terms. The Synods of Aachen was rife with verbal exchanges between the court and the monastic representatives. An example of this happened during the synods when a certain series of proposals gained the ire of abbots attending the meeting. The council was determining a new rule that would cause all monasteries to remove their secular schools and restrict meals with laymen. These rules were proposed by Louis and his courtier, Benedict of Aniane who wanted to establish a monastic practice that was completely dedicated to religious devotion.³⁹ Abbots did not like this rule change. Most

³⁷ Cabaniss, *Son of Charlemagne*. 57

³⁸ Michael McCormick, "Byzantium and the West, 700–900," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume 2: C. 700–c. 900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, vol. 2, *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 349–80, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521362924.017>. 368

³⁹ C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 1984. 81

monastic communities were integral parts of their localities as they offered services like schooling to the populace. They also wielded significant regional power. An abbot from a monastery within the empire even wrote “I wish to avail myself of the authority of the Rule, which is not to be prejudiced by any new constitution.”⁴⁰ Monks feared that by creating an isolated society, it would lead to the monasteries being deprived of power and access to the laypeople. This was a significant clash that existed between the Imperial court and the clergy of the Carolingian Empire. It is evidence of a deep contrast in the politics and perception held by each group.

Imposing Change on the Empire

Benedict of Aniane was a Benedictine monk who was a significant member of the court of Louis the Pious. He positioned himself as a leader during the Synods of Aachen and had significant influence over its reforms. Benedict grew up in Aquitaine and was the son of a local noble. Originally, he served in the court of Charlemagne but then transitioned to religious life after having a near death experience. After residing within multiple monastic communities, he established his own on the River Aniane in 782 A.D. This location would become a successful community and attract many to become monks.⁴¹ Benedict’s reputation grew rapidly from this. Soon Louis personally met Benedict while acting as the King of Aquitaine. Benedict was tasked by Louis to reform the monasteries within his domain.⁴² Through this opportunity he would become a trusted member of Louis’s retinue. Benedict became a member of the imperial court when Louis

⁴⁰ Lawrence. 79

⁴¹ James B. Williams, “Working for Reform:: Acedia, Benedict of Aniane and the Transformation of Working Culture in Carolingian Monasticism,” in *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Richard G. Newhauser and Susan J. Ridyard, NED-New edition, The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins (Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 19–42, <https://doi.org/10.7722/j.ctt1bh49dm.8>.

⁴² Kramer, *Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire*. 185

succeeded his father. He wielded enormous power during this time. Events like the Synods of Aachen were coordinated through his actions. The Synods were only the beginning of his reforms as he continued to develop new books that pushed for greater monastic reform. His goal was to enact a new sense of standardization to Europe's monasteries. This ambition had existed since he had first studied the Rule of St Benedict. There were numerous moments when his fellow monks were aggravated at attempts by Benedict to correct or scold them into following the Rule according to his interpretation.⁴³ Still, to Benedict, achieving this goal could finally rid the empire of monasteries that did not practice their faith with enough zeal. Over time he continued to be invested with significant duties involving the monastic tradition and interpretation. C.H Lawrence in his book *Medieval Monasticism* wrote that "Benedict was given the authority of abbot-general over the monasteries of Francia."⁴⁴ During his height of power, he effectively directed all the monastic communities in the Carolingian Empire. Under his watchful eye monastic practices within the empire began to transition towards a uniform interpretation. Benedict of Aniane had a reputation for being a religious zealot whose actions caused friction amongst other monastics. His actions and writings are an indication of such. One time, before he met Louis, he was thrown out of a monastery. He was the abbot there but because of his strictness his flock demanded that he leave. After this exchange Benedict pursued many different passions including becoming a hermit. Benedict died in 827 A.D and this loss led to a reduction of monastic oversight.⁴⁵ Still,

⁴³ Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head, *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). 220

⁴⁴ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*. 78

⁴⁵ Lawrence. 82

many of his contemporaries recognized the significance of his actions and he was canonized by the Catholic Church.

To ensure that all monasteries understood the preferred interpretation of the Benedictine Rule, one monastic community was decreed to act as a learning center. In 814 A.D Louis created a Benedictine Monastery in the town of Inden (Later it was named Kornelimunster).⁴⁶ The monastery was built in close proximity to Louis's palace at Aachen. This community was headed by Louis's friend Benedict of Aniane.⁴⁷ The community would become the personal monastery of the emperor as well as becoming an important location of document production and transmission. It was here where an official interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict would be developed and reviewed by Benedict of Aniane. Monasteries across the Empire were required to send two monks to the monastery for instruction.⁴⁸ The monks were then expected to completely memorize the Rule of St. Benedict and its observances. They were then sent back to their communities where they would share what they had learned at Kornelimunster. C.H. Lawrence called this new monastic community an "ascetic staff college."⁴⁹ This nickname was perfect for Kornelimunster as this monastery worked as the only knowledge center in the Empire. Monks could travel to Kornelimunster and receive instruction in the interpretation of the Rule. This model of information control would be reproduced by future monastic traditions like the Cistercians that stressed the importance of coordination amongst its monasteries. Benedict of Aniane from the beginning of the Synods of Aachen portrayed the reforms as bringing standardization to the empire's

⁴⁶ Lawrence. 78

⁴⁷ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*. 230

⁴⁸ Wallace-Hadrill. 230

⁴⁹ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*. 81

monasteries.⁵⁰ At Kornelimunster, he was able to determine the preferred application of the Rule of St. Benedict and ensure that each monastic community within the empire understood its interpretation.

An example of the influence of Kornelimunster was the creation of *The Plan of St. Gall*. Its purpose was to educate a monastic community on the Rule of St. Benedict. The work was created as a result of the synods reforms and was made in the early ninth century. *The Plan of St. Gall* is a copy of the Rule and architectural plans that were originally formulated by two monks. They were studying the Rule of St. Benedict at Kornelimunster.⁵¹ Eventually *The Plan of St. Gall* found its way to the Monastery of St. Gall. The written document also described a series of buildings that were considered important for the ideal monastic community. Structural modifications included adding a guest chamber for secular officials and closing off the monk's cloister. Adding a guest chamber for potential visits from secular authority was an indication that Louis the Pious or his *missi* were willing to visit monastic communities. Closing off the monk's cloister followed the synods' desire for greater monastic isolation. While the plan never came into fruition, the details within the plan help portray which aspects of monastic life were important for the period. Overall, the creation of the *Plan of St. Gall* showed how the Imperial Court, acting through its personal monastery in Kornelimunster, could control how monasteries interpreted St. Benedict's Rule in the Carolingian empire.⁵²

It was not only through indoctrination that the imperial court ensured that monastic communities of the Empire followed official dogma. *Missi*, the same type of

⁵⁰ Lawrence. 81

⁵¹ McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*. 120

⁵² McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians*. 120

envoys that had assisted Charlemagne in running his empire, were employed. The Synods of Aachen had empowered Louis to use imperial power to enforce the reforms. He could not personally visit every monastic community in his realm, so he tasked the *missi* with this duty. These secular authorities would record whether or not the monasteries they visited were correctly following the Rule.⁵³ *Missi* could enact changes to monastic communities and report the changes to Louis. The authority of the *missi* over monasteries began immediately after the conclusion of the first synod in 816 A.D. Monastic communities, like the Monastery of St. Gall in 821 A.D, had issues settled by *missi*.⁵⁴ Reports of them conducting reviews of monastic communities continue until at least 830 A.D when a report of the monastic communities in Italy was recorded.⁵⁵ By employing individuals who were not clerics as supervisors over the monasteries of the empire, Louis was able to influence ascetic life in his domain. Overall, the incorporation of the *missi* into maintaining the ideological purity of the realm was indicative of a greater centralization of the realm around Louis and his court.

In 816 A.D, one month after the conclusion of the first synod, the pope personally met with Louis the Pious. The ecclesiastical reforms had changed the status of Christian entities within the empire. The Roman Papacy was a Christian organization and wanted to determine their status. Relations between Louis the Pious and the Roman Papacy were strong. A landmark treaty was determined, during this meeting in 816 A.D, that rectified ambiguities that had been around since the rule of Louis' father. Initially, Charlemagne was King of the Franks and had very little influence over the affairs of the Papal States.

⁵³ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*. 81

⁵⁴ McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians*. 127

⁵⁵ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*. 82

This changed when he was crowned Emperor of the Romans by the pope in 800 A.D. By being crowned emperor, Charlemagne was entering into a political conundrum over the extent of the authority he could wield.⁵⁶ There was never a definition of how the position functioned and in some ways was never truly codified during Charlemagne's reign. For example, Charlemagne had an informal agreement with the pope regarding fugitive deportation. The agreement between the two had consisted of letters addressed to each other.⁵⁷ Once Charlemagne died; the authenticity of this informal agreement was questioned. This was one of the numerous aspects in the relationship between the empire and the papacy that lacked definition. Louis, as well as the papacy, hoped to affirm the character of their Papal-Imperial relationship through a pact called the *Pactum Ludovicianum*. This treaty was meant to appease both sides. According to Thomas Noble in *The Republic of St. Peter*, the *Pactum Ludovicianum* was initially assumed to be exceedingly liberal in giving privileges to the pope.⁵⁸ Dispensations of the treaty included a stipulation preventing Louis from conducting campaigns in the Papal States unless receiving the explicit approval of the pope. Fugitives from the papacy that escape to imperial territory also would have to be turned over to the pope. Still, Noble argues that the *Pactum Ludovicianum* was beneficial to Louis the Pious because it effectively established the papacy as a vassal of the emperor.⁵⁹ Louis did not want absolute control over the Papal States. He was focused on consolidating his own realm. Thus, territory that composed the Papal States was to be "conceded" by Louis to the pope.⁶⁰ This meant

⁵⁶ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*. 291

⁵⁷ Noble. 305

⁵⁸ Noble. 300

⁵⁹ Noble. 307

⁶⁰ Noble. 304

that Louis was vesting the Papal States with territory that was part of the empire. Certain aspects of the treaty contained wording that followed the judicial immunity clauses that Louis would give to churches and monastic communities in his Empire. The significance of granting the papacy this immunity served as an indication that Louis perceived this relationship as being similar to a lord and his (albeit near-independent) vassal. Overall, the *Pactum Ludovicianum* was an indication of desire for the incorporation of the Roman Papal States into the Carolingian Empire. In fact, Louis himself likely perceived the relationship as such.⁶¹ Imperial influences within the Papal States were not significant, but the diplomatic actions taken by Louis towards the Papal States show a situation where he granted political privilege onto them. This showed to Louis that the Papal States was part of his empire and thus subservient to imperial authority.

The reforms of the Synods of Aachen gave Louis the Pious the ability to influence monastic rule and project his power over the communities. This development was the culmination of a multi-generational process done by the Carolingian rulers.⁶² Louis's father and grandfather pursued centralization of their domain. This made their power more effective. Charlemagne's imperial reforms established a complex system meant to solidify his rule. Representatives of royal rule, like the *missi*, were successful at helping Charlemagne project his influence. Louis the Pious was originally meant to be a sub-king within the empire. Thus, he was sent to a far away border region and grew up in a culture that was very different from his father's. A series of unfortunate disasters struck Charlemagne's family and left Louis as the sole heir to the empire. With the death of

⁶¹ F. L. GANSHOF, "LOUIS THE PIOUS RECONSIDERED," *History* 42, no. 146 (1957): 171–80. 175

⁶² Kramer, "Framing the Carolingian Reforms." 53

Charlemagne, an emperor with a “foreign” mindset rose to power. Louis reverence towards his Catholic faith was evident since the beginning of his reign. Still, he retained a desire to continue centralizing the Empire and brought with him capable reformers. The changes brought forth by the Synods of Aachen was an example of this. Requirements to the monastic communities and the development of an officially sanctioned monastic doctrine created a uniform model for monastic communities. This uniformity was enacted by the Imperial Court and overseen by a trusted friend of Louis. Imperial legates were then periodically sent to inspect the monastic communities within the empire. Even the diplomatic relations between the Louis and the Papal States solidified the idea that Louis ranked above the pope. From the point of view of the Carolingian Empire, the reforms brought by the Synods of Aachen was another step in the centralization of the empire. The encroachment of their authority into monastic ideology was planned. Louis sought to place himself as overlord of the monastic communities and the Roman Papacy. It was through the Synods of Aachen that Louis tried to attain this goal.

CHAPTER 2

A MEASURE OF IMPERIAL PRESSURE

The changes enacted by the Synod of Aachen were done to address a series of problems afflicting monastic communities within the Carolingian Empire. Monasteries were important to medieval Europe, but before the Synods of Aachen (816 A.D) they lacked uniformity. Differing interpretations and a mixing of customs angered some monastic leaders. They viewed this monastic discord as dangerous to the salvation of the monks. It was not only from within the Carolingian Empire that the current situation was considered untenable. The Papal States, home of the Roman Papacy, had long existed as an autonomous entity. With the crowning of Charlemagne in 800 A.D, it was assumed by the imperial court and many nobles that the pope was now a subject to a greater empire. This assumption, if true, meant that any reforms were enacted within empire applied to the Papal States. For the pope, the changes that happened at the Synods of Aachen had a significant impact on his authority. Overall, The Synod of Aachen was a necessary meeting that attempted to bring regularity to the monastic traditions of the empire. The popularity of the reforms had a mixed reception. Adoption of the changes was not universal. This was evident through realm-wide surveys that tracked the number monastic communities in the empire followed the reforms. Varying changes within the structure of certain monastic communities indicated that the approval of the synods was not consistent. The Papal States were an important entity during this period and their reaction to the synods provide confirmed contemporary opinions of the Synods of Aachen. have meant for the power of the emperor. The pope, immediately after the conclusion of the first synod, met with Louis the Pious to delineate the domain of the Papal States.

Negotiations between the two led to the creation of the *Pactum Ludovicianum*. This treaty guaranteed the autonomy of the Papal States. The Synods of Aachen caused many distinct actions to be taken by monastic communities and the Papal States. Their actions act as confirmation to the common belief that imperial authority was rising as a direct result of the Synods of Aachen.

Christianity's Monastic Conundrum

By the ninth century, Christian monasticism had existed within Europe for centuries. Originally the custom of monasticism was based upon ascetic communities that lived in the deserts of the Middle East.⁶³ Individuals would dedicate their lives to being completely engrossed within a life of prayer and work. Over time, this form of Christian devotion would become formalized into many distinct forms of worship. Perhaps the most famous form of this worship was Benedictine monasticism. This monastic custom was founded by St. Benedict of Nursia (480-550 A.D) in the monastery of Monte Cassino.⁶⁴ He became a monk at a young age, living the life of an ascetic for some years. St. Benedict had grown up during a period of political chaos and had sought to bring stability to his life. As a result, he chose to live as a monk in order to detach himself from the world. Later he moved to Monte Cassino, where he developed a following that grew into a large community. Eventually he codified his monastic style and it would spread across the continent. The popularity of his work generated hundreds of similar monastic communities. These locations would become important repositories for prayer and

⁶³ C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1984). 1

⁶⁴ Lawrence. 26

knowledge. From their position, the monasteries of Western Europe were religious and cultural beacons to the regions they served.

Monastic societies, at the beginning of Louis' reign, were unorganized and fragmented into many different interpretations of the Benedictine Rule. They lacked any form of coordination and hierarchy. Often, they were at odds with other communities in determining what interpretation of the Rule was best. Benedict of Aniane, before founding his own monastery in 782 A.D, was kicked out of his first community because they did not agree with his application of the rule of St. Benedict. They saw it as too stringent.⁶⁵ At the same time, other monasteries within the empire were criticized for not placing enough emphasis upon prayer and instead subjecting the monks to slave-like conditions. It was a problem that many notable members of the monastic community complained about. Within the *Vita Benedictus Anianensis*, a biography of the life of Benedict of Aniane, he is described to harbor deep disgust to the “weak” livelihoods of his fellow monks.⁶⁶ His displeasure towards their traditions happened during his time as a novice monk. Benedict's writer depicts how Benedict believed that the application of St. Benedict's Rule was so “weak”, that he considered subscribing to other monastic customs that could fulfill the level of challenge he desired.⁶⁷ Only a more stringent monastic rule could satisfy the demands of religiousness dedication that he longed. Such a drastic change in belief meant that disillusionment was developing within the current situation.

⁶⁵ Lawrence. 77

⁶⁶ Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head, *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). 220

⁶⁷ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 77

Clearly, Benedict of Aniane believed that dogmatic unification or reformation was necessary.

The situation in Western Europe was a steep contrast from the monastic communities with the Byzantine Empire. First and foremost, monasteries and the monks in the east were already an important contributor to the civic functions of the empire.⁶⁸ Monks would often participate within the administration of the government, as well as competing with other political entities for power. The influence of monasteries within the empire was significant but this could only exist through the assent of the Byzantine Emperor.⁶⁹ Communities that were within the boundaries of the empire existed within many different environments and followed many distinct forms of monasticism. This meant that many monastic communities relied upon imperial support to survive.⁷⁰ Any form of dissent against the Byzantine Emperor meant the withdrawal of imperial patronage or the potential dissolution of monastic communities.⁷¹ Monasteries were directly influenced by the emperor, and this stood in contrast to the situation that existed within the Carolingian Empire.

The Rule of St. Benedict was not entirely suited for the lands of Europe. For example, the Benedictine Rule decreed that food could not be cooked in animal fat.⁷² This was fine for the Italian St. Benedict (480-547 A.D) who lived in a region that cultivated olives that could be made into oil. For Northern Europe, this was impossible

⁶⁸ Rubenson, Samuel. "Asceticism and Monasticism, I: Eastern." Chapter. In *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, edited by Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris, 2:637–68. Cambridge History of Christianity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521812443.029. 664

⁶⁹ Rubenson. 664

⁷⁰ Rubenson. 664

⁷¹ Rubenson. 662

⁷² Lawrence. 79

since olive trees could not handle harsh winters. These minor problems stunted the spread of monastic communities throughout the continent and left open the possibility for competing monastic traditions to take hold. Monastic communities could simply not pursue what St. Benedict had prescribed. In fact, this vacuum led to the arrival of different monastic traditions from the British Isles. Columbian monasticism was able to transplant itself across the English Channel through the arrival of Irish missionaries.⁷³ At the same time, individuals from the British Isles were able to find themselves with significant positions of power. One English theologian, Alcuin, was recognized by Charlemagne as an intellectual and was invited to be part of his court. He later became the abbot of numerous monasteries.⁷⁴ St. Columbanus, the founder of the Columbian Rule, was able to establish numerous monastic communities in Francia.⁷⁵ Benedictine monastic communities and the papacy in continental Europe generally did not like Columbian monasticism.⁷⁶ They saw this form of monasticism as simple and corrupting to the Rule of St. Benedict.⁷⁷ For example, Columbian Monasticism permitted monasteries with significant autonomy to their internal affairs.⁷⁸ This meant that neither bishops, clergymen, or lords could control the actions of monastic communities within their territories. As a result, monasteries could pursue their own directives and potentially modify monastic dogma. To some this could threaten the survival of the Benedictine

⁷³ Sarah D. Tatum, "Hagiography, Family and Columbanan Monasticism in Seventh-Century Francia" (Ph.D., England, The University of Manchester (United Kingdom), 2007), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2183911250/abstract/26FC405ADC62410EPQ/1>.

⁷⁴ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 76

⁷⁵ Tatum, "Hagiography, Family and Columbanan Monasticism in Seventh-Century Francia."

⁷⁶ Kristina Maria Hosoe, "Regulae and Reform in Carolingian Monastic Hagiography" (Ph.D., United States -- Connecticut, Yale University, 2014), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1541891327/abstract/3D63F345648D40EBPQ/1>. 9

⁷⁷ Hosoe. 14

⁷⁸ Sharon A. Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin :Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours /* (Ithaca :, 1991), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015021975449>. 189

Order. Charlemagne decreed in his *Admontito Generalis* that the Benedictine Rule was the preferred monastic tradition of the empire. His preference to advocating for a dogmatic norm was based upon countering the stipulation of autonomy. He too found that this spread could have a lasting impact on the function of monastic communities. This did not stop the influence of Columbian monasticism. In fact, some communities within the Carolingian Empire were mixing their Benedictine roots with Columbian concepts.⁷⁹ The two ideologies of monastic observance were beginning to compete against each other. These problems showed that reform was needed to the Rule of St. Benedict, to develop a unified interpretation of the Rule while addressing certain problems within it.

While western monasteries struggled to assemble some form of monastic uniformity, the Roman Papacy was beginning to go through its own transition. The papacy existed within a strange middle ground before the conclusions of the Synods of Aachen in 816-819 A.D.⁸⁰ For centuries Rome and most of Italy were under the domain of the Eastern Roman Empire. Popes were subservient to the emperor in Constantinople.⁸¹ The emperor had the power to authorize the deposition of popes and enact capital punishment upon the clergy. The Exarchate of Ravenna, a city about 175 miles away from Rome, was the residence of the Byzantine governor of Italy. This permitted the military of the emperor to reach Rome quickly.⁸² Byzantine rule strangled the power of the papacy as the emperor retained complete authority over the region. Even

⁷⁹ Tatum, "Hagiography, Family and Columbanan Monasticism in Seventh-Century Francia."

⁸⁰ Thomas F. X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984). 300

⁸¹ Michael McCormick, "Byzantium and the West, 700-900," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume 2: C. 700-c. 900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, vol. 2, *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 349-80, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521362924.017>.

⁸² Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*.

the culture of the city of Rome was considered “Greek” by visitors to the city. In 704 A.D, the pope was noted to converse and joke with his advisors in Greek.⁸³ Rome had existed as an outpost of the Byzantine Empire and this period of subjugation continued to affect the actions of the Papal States for the next two centuries.

When the influence of the Eastern Roman Empire waned in the Italian Peninsula in the eighth century, local powers placed great stress upon the popes. They had to act as an intermediary between the declining Byzantines and the growing Germanic kingdoms of Western Europe. Popes like Zachary I (d.732 A.D) assumed the position of a diplomatic mediator. He helped negotiate numerous peace deals between different regional powers.⁸⁴ Later on, connections established between the papacy and the Carolingian kings showed a transition in the preference of the papacy. The expansion of Charlemagne’s kingdom into the Italian Peninsula created a tough political situation for the Papal States.⁸⁵ Pope Hadrian I (700-795 A.D) was effective in remaining in good favor with both Charlemagne and the Byzantine Empire.⁸⁶ The situation of constant appeasement lasted until the crowning of Charlemagne as Emperor of the Romans in 800 A.D.⁸⁷ This moment was significant for the papacy and the Carolingians. Charlemagne was recognized as emperor and earned legitimacy within Christendom as the leader of western Christians. The pope effectively claimed independence from the Byzantine Emperor and threw his support behind the burgeoning Carolingian Empire. This new relationship was, according to the papacy, meant to solidify their connection to the

⁸³ McCormick, “Byzantium and the West, 700–900.” 362

⁸⁴ McCormick. 364

⁸⁵ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825.* 291

⁸⁶ McCormick, “Byzantium and the West, 700–900.” 366

⁸⁷ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825.* 291

Carolingians and affirm their abandonment of the Eastern Romans. Still, by subjecting themselves to the rule of another powerful emperor, some members of the Roman court feared they may return to a situation similar to what existed under the Byzantines. Overall, the Papal States did not have a determined relationship with its neighbors, and this ambiguity determined their future actions.

Reinterpreting Roles

Louis the Pious and his court invited many different members of the clergy for the Synods of Aachen. Monks and abbots were invited from their communities to offer their perspective on subsequent changes.⁸⁸ Revisions to many different aspects of monastic life were compiled from this meeting. Historians claim that the primary influence during this meeting was Benedict of Aniane. His purpose was to develop an interpretation that permitted monastic communities to become increasingly dedicated to prayer.⁸⁹ This change would include many different adaptations of the Rule of St. Benedict regarding both large and trivial problems. While Benedict's ideals were certainly applied, there was little opportunity for dissenters to voice their preferences. The product of the Synods of Aachen was a series of reforms that was the subject of strong personal opinions.

The Synods of Aachen effectively established the Rule of St. Benedict as the official monastic tradition in the empire.⁹⁰ Officially, monasteries were forced to accept this interpretation of the Rule.⁹¹ Still it was perceived by the monastic communities with

⁸⁸ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 1st ed. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1983).

⁸⁹ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 81

⁹⁰ Corinna J. Prior, "Beyond the Boundaries of the Carolingian Cloister: An Examination of Monastic Interaction during the Early Ninth Century" (M.A., Canada, Carleton University (Canada), 2009), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/250895579/abstract/29B86447A8F4E6EPQ/1>. 8

⁹¹ Alan G. Zola, "Radbertus's Monastic Voice: Ideas about Monasticism at Ninth-Century Corbie" (Ph.D., United States -- Illinois, Loyola University Chicago, 2008), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304558178/abstract/99A6D5386A204A4DPQ/1>. 128

mixed results. Many saw the reforms put forth as a return to the “original” interpretation of the Rule. Others were fearful of the changes being enacted. They saw these reforms as forcing the monastic communities to capitulate their independence and local connections. Not every monastic community was willing to accept the changes brought forth by the Synods of Aachen, but as a whole the changes brought forth were accepted. This was due to the synods being backed by the most powerful individual within the empire, Louis the Pious.

The court of Louis the Pious kept track of the different monastic communities that were willing to accept the rule through a document called the *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum*.⁹² It was created in 819 A.D as a listing of the many different monastic communities that existed within the realm. At this time, the final meeting of the Synods of Aachen had concluded and there was a desire amongst the court to track the changes. Monasteries would be listed only if they had subscribed to the reforms from the synod.⁹³ Every community, like that of Kornelimunster, had different service quotas placed upon them by the court after they had accepted the officially sanctioned Rule. Services like prayer requirements or a goods tax were enacted upon the communities.⁹⁴ These services would be offered to Louis and his imperial court. For example, a small monastic community may be tasked with offering a daily prayer for the wellbeing of the emperor.⁹⁵ An important characteristic of this document is that it is not complete. The *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum* lists 104 monastic communities within the empire, but that only shows some of the monastic communities in the realm and is concentrated in certain

⁹² Zola. 128

⁹³ Zola. 128

⁹⁴ Zola. 128

⁹⁵ Hosoe, “Regulae and Reform in Carolingian Monastic Hagiography.” 15

regions.⁹⁶ For example, the list only has about 14.4% of the monastic communities within the province of Burgundy, which composes modern day southwestern France.⁹⁷ This meant that at most only some of the monastic communities within the empire were willing to accept the reforms. Overall, it is necessary to recognize that the *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum*, it is incomplete in measuring monastic compliance within the entire empire. Still, this document exists as prove that the application of the synods' reforms was not universal.

An important aspect of the Synod of Aachen was the incorporation of a greater focus on prayer and theology. Monastic communities, especially Frankish ones, were completely dedicated towards serving God through their actions. Allowing the monastic communities to have time dedicated to pursuing important duties like manuscript production is something that many desired. As a result, monastic communities saw that by accepting the reforms they were permitted to pursue their holy tasks.⁹⁸ Looking back at the *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum* it was evident that many monastic communities within the Carolingian Empire wanted this change. Louis the Pious' original domain of Aquitaine had the greatest percentage of monasteries that accepted the monastic reforms.⁹⁹ This region was the home of reformist monks, like Benedict of Aniane, who had constantly complained of a need for dogmatic realignment.¹⁰⁰ The eventual reforms brought forth were, expectedly, popular within the region that advocated for such.

⁹⁶ Zola, "Radbertus's Monastic Voice." 129

⁹⁷ Zola. 129

⁹⁸ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 81

⁹⁹ Zola, "Radbertus's Monastic Voice." 129

¹⁰⁰ Noble and Head, *Soldiers of Christ*. 219

Some monastic communities did not like the reforms. They saw the changes as being too restrictive or taking away their local traditions. The mixing of the Columbian and Benedictine Rules was enjoyed by some communities.¹⁰¹ Abbots of other monastic communities sometimes personally did not want their monasteries to change either due to personal wealth or ideology. Either way, this led to actions by monasteries to avoid the pressures put upon them by the imperial court. One common action to resist was transitioning the monastic community into a canonical school. This happened with the Abbey of St. Martin of Tours. Before the Synods of Aachen, St. Martin of Tours was a large abbey near the town of Tours in modern day France.¹⁰² It had many notable abbots and was an important center of learning. Charlemagne would visit the monastic community in 800 A.D. But it had over the past hundred years become lax with its willingness to observe the Rule of St. Benedict. Alcuin wrote, while he was the Abbot of St. Martin of Tours, that it was easier to incorporate the Rule of St. Benedict in a priory that was inferior to St. Martin of Tours than to apply it to the abbey itself. The Abbey of St. Martin of Tours simply did not want any changes to its situation. In the 810s the monastic community chose to transition into a canonical community. This was in response to the reforms that affected their autonomy.¹⁰³ A canonical community differed from monastic ones in that they had the rights to own private property and were not under the same restrictions as monastic communities. This made sense for wealthy monastic orders like the one at Tours because they could retain their wealth for themselves. While

¹⁰¹ Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin :Legend and Ritual in Medieval*. 189

¹⁰² Farmer.

¹⁰³ Farmer.

this maneuver was very radical, it was a viable option for some communities within the Carolingian Empire that did not like the reforms.

Other actions that monastic communities took included lying that they were following the Rule of St. Benedict. One new requirement from the Synods of Aachen included limits to what texts could be learned by the monks. In particular, the reforms banned the transcription of pagan texts like Cicero. Benedict of Aniane believed that a monk's energy should instead be dedicated to understanding Christian works.¹⁰⁴ This was not liked by the learned members of monastic communities. Instead of following through with imperial command, they continued to permit their flock to read and disseminate classical texts albeit at a lesser frequency. This led to some monasteries developing a greater appreciation and thirst for pagan texts.¹⁰⁵ C.H. Lawrence described in monastic libraries in communities like the Abbey of St. Gall "Virgil, Horace, Juvenal, and Cicero rubbed shoulders with the weightier tomes of the Fathers."¹⁰⁶ This partial rejection of the reforms demonstrated how some monastic communities retained partial autonomy over their abbeys. Complete observance of the synod's reforms were impossible to oversee, and monasteries used this opportunity to discreetly challenge certain aspects of the Rule.

While there were many notable examples of monastic communities defying the reforms of Aachen, most monasteries were receptive to the changes. One reform was particularly appealing to some monastic communities. This was the rule that new abbots had to receive the assent of the emperor in order to govern their monastic communities.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 81

¹⁰⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*. 304-307

¹⁰⁶ Lawrence. 81

¹⁰⁷ Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*. 264-265

Fulda was a monastic community in eastern Francia. Its monks had long desired for their abbot to be replaced. This community lived in a state of constant labor. The abbot of the community, Ratger, had desired to build a large church for the monastery.¹⁰⁸ Initially only a small number of monks were tasked with building the church, but construction took longer than expected. Ratger became obsessed with finishing the project.¹⁰⁹ More monks were tasked with building the church. The abbot also brought more monks into the fold by relaxing admission requirements. Eventually monks were being taken from important jobs, like prayer and transcription, and ordered to assist in building the church. Ratger shortened days of prayer and converted them to workdays. This situation became untenable for the monks residing at the monastery. An epidemic in 807 A.D killed many of the monks. This community could tolerate no more.¹¹⁰ They composed and sent a formal request to the emperor to have Ratger replaced. This document became the *Supplex Libellus*. It was initially denied by Charlemagne after a successful plea by Ratger, but the issue remained controversial.¹¹¹ Many more requests followed over the next ten years. The abbot was forced to stop the construction and was removed by a decree from Louis the Pious in 817 A.D.¹¹² This action could only have happened through the changes of the Synods of Aachen, which permitted the emperor to manage monastic positions.¹¹³ Louis the Pious wanted to ensure that the monasteries had competent abbots. He once mentioned to his missi, “pay particular attention to specific things: Examine the canonical flock... How do they live? Dress?... What works of piety

¹⁰⁸ Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London and New York: Longman, 1983). 117

¹⁰⁹ McKitterick. 117

¹¹⁰ McKitterick. 118

¹¹¹ McKitterick. 117

¹¹² McKitterick. 118

¹¹³ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 78

do they perform? Does harmony join the flock to the pastor? Does the flock love the pastor?"¹¹⁴ Through the missi, Louis could ensure that every monastic community was under good leadership. The previous situation could not escape the oversight the missi were expected to perform.¹¹⁵ This led to the eventual removal of Ratger, much to the pleasure of his former flock. Establishing a uniform interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict and a form of imperial oversight was an appealing offer to monks stuck in difficult situations. The monks at Fulda, were the most visible beneficiary from this change.

Desire for religious uniformity and imperial oversight were not the only reasons for monasteries to transition to the reforms of the Synod of Aachen. This decision also included a political responsibility that seriously changed the duties of a monastic community. Monasteries were to be tasked with becoming a local representation of imperial rule. While on campaign, Louis would receive visits from abbots of nearby monastic communities. The Abbot of Landevannec visited the emperor while he was in Brittany.¹¹⁶ This meeting consisted of the abbot recanting the traditions of monastic communities in the region. After this conversation, Louis wrote to the local bishop. He explained how the locals had based their traditions from Irish monasticism. He also writes that he:

ascertained that (the Breton Monastic customs) were traditions received from the Scots, and since the order of all the holy, apostolic and Roman church is very different, we thought it good that those committed to our charge, by the dispensation of God, should agree with the customs of the Universal Church, both in their rule and their tonsure; we have therefore ordered that they should live according to the rule of the holy father Benedict(of Nursia).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Hosoe, "Regulae and Reform in Carolingian Monastic Hagiography." 32

¹¹⁵ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 78

¹¹⁶ Hosoe, "Regulae and Reform in Carolingian Monastic Hagiography." 6

¹¹⁷ Hosoe. 7

This order to change in monastic customs was fulfilled by the end of the year. The swiftness of the change was indicative of a desire to join a greater community. It was evident to many monastic communities that accepting the changes from the Synods of Aachen ensured a close connection with the imperial court. As a result, the changes that the monastic communities went through meant that they were accepting the rule and Frankish authority. Rutger Kramer best explains the duty of monastic communities in his book *Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia: Comparative Approaches*. He explains that “Monasteries, in return, were expected to support the empire, sometimes materially, but mostly by liturgical means or by acting as outposts of Carolingian culture in recently conquered areas.”¹¹⁸ Eventually, Brittany was subjugated by Louis, as a result these monasteries fulfilled the role of a cultural outpost.¹¹⁹ Overall this story of the transition of the Breton monastic communities shows how there were political reasons for monasteries to accept the reforms. In fact, some monastic communities saw this as an opportunity to earn the protection of the emperor.

By accepting the reforms, the monasteries within the Empire were able to receive protection. Before this change, local lords would use these monastic centers as a political tool. Sometimes the community would have its wealth confiscated by the lord or other times the monastery would be employed as a political prison. This prevented the monastic community from partaking in important duties regarding theology. Louis’ promise of immunity freed the monastic communities from the influence of local bishops and lords. It also included a form of inventory tracking that protected them from robbery.

¹¹⁸ Rutger Kramer, “Teaching Emperors:,” in *Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia*, ed. Eirik Hovden, Christina Lutter, and Walter Pohl, Comparative Approaches (Brill, 2016), 309–37, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctt1w76w6c.18. 312

¹¹⁹ Hosoe, “Regulae and Reform in Carolingian Monastic Hagiography.” 16

Their actions were only responsible to the emperor. As a result, monasteries would not have to worry about temporal burdens placed upon them and instead focus upon spiritual matters.

Papal Diplomacy

The Synods of Aachen were meant to reform the monastic communities within the Carolingian Empire.¹²⁰ Theoretically the Papal States would not have been affected by the reforms. Still, the position of the papacy during the beginning of Louis the Pious reign was not clearly defined. Were they a sovereign entity or a substate of the Carolingian Empire? Their role as an independent diplomatic intermediary between two major Christian nations had been supplanted with the coronation of Charlemagne. This transitioned the papacy directly within the sphere of the Carolingian Empire. Reforms from the Synods of Aachen certainly earned the attention of the pope and his subjects. The Synods of Aachen greatly expanded the role of the emperor. This growth in authority could cause Louis to further incorporate the Papal States into the empire. Many nobles and clerics within the city of Rome were afraid that they were returning back to the same situation they had as a subject of the Byzantine Empire.¹²¹ Papal fear was justified Louis was an ambitious emperor that styled himself with the Roman title of *Imperator Augustus*.¹²² This implied to many that Louis sought to reform the empire into an imitation of the Roman Empire.¹²³ Pope Stephen IV (d.817 A.D) traveled north to meet with Louis the Pious. This meeting happened in 816 A.D near the city of Reims. The

¹²⁰ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 77

¹²¹ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*. 306

¹²² Karl F. Morrison, "The Gold Medallions of Louis the Pious and Lothaire I and the Synod of Paris (825)," *Speculum* 36, no. 4 (1961): 592–99, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2856786>. 592

¹²³ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*. 307

pope arrived there with a specific set of demands for the emperor regarding the treatment the Papal States received from Louis.¹²⁴ In return for his acceptance Pope Stephen IV crowned Louis the Pious as Emperor of the Romans. Negotiations between the two groups took several days. Eventually an agreement was made, and Louis was crowned in Reims. The *Papal Vita* written at the time of his death in 817 A.D, claims that he received all the demands he made. Historians like Thomas Noble and Raymond Davis note that most likely the agreement was made after some form of negotiation. Pope Stephen IV later crowned Louis as emperor and began his journey back to Rome. Unfortunately, the reign of Pope Stephen IV lasted only seven months. The newly elected Pope Paschal I (d. 824 A.D) sent an emissary back to Louis the Pious where the previous agreement was confirmed.¹²⁵ This pact would be known as the *Pactum Ludovicianum*.

An analysis of the physical text provides context to what stipulations were important to Pope Stephan IV and his negotiators. The problem is that the *Pactum Ludovicianum* does not physically exist anymore.¹²⁶ It was lost sometime during the twelfth and thirteenth century. Instead, historians use a treaty that was made between Emperor Otto the Great and Pope John XII in 962 A.D.¹²⁷ This is because it was noted to be very similar to the treaty signed by Louis in 817 A.D.¹²⁸ The treaty begins with a list of places that would be given by the emperor to the pope. Regions including Campania and Lazio were listed as being entrusted to the papacy. This listing was significant as it

¹²⁴ Noble. 307

¹²⁵ Raymond Davis, ed., *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from AD 715 to AD817*, Translated Texts for Historians, v. 13 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992). 231

¹²⁶ Davis. 231

¹²⁷ Walter Ullmann, "The Origins of the Ottonianum," *The Cambridge Historical Journal* 11, no. 1 (1953): 114–28.

¹²⁸ Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis)*. 231

helped determine what was ruled by the papacy and what was not. Another important modification with the treaty is the promise made between Louis and the pope regarding Papal authority. Louis, in the *Pactum Ludovicianum*, agreed that he would not have any influence in the Papal elections.¹²⁹ This was a significant capitulation made by the emperor as it ensured the Papal States' independence from his influence. Pope Stephen IV had wanted to ensure that this relationship would not mean a return to a similar situation they had with the Byzantines. The papacy had acted simply as an extension of the Byzantine Emperor a century ago. The position and influence of the pope was constantly checked by the Byzantine Emperor and sometimes led to popes being physically tortured and killed.¹³⁰ Their demand for Louis to not infringe upon their elections made sense. If they could prevent the emperor from choosing the next pope, then the Papal States were protected from imperial political domination. Overall, the *Pactum Ludovicianum* was a treaty meant as a form of guarantee towards the autonomy of the Papal States.

Subservience to the Emperor

Monastic communities, within Louis the Pious' realm, lacked any form of dogmatic uniformity at the onset of his reign in 813 A.D. The mixing of different traditions caused monastic scholars to claim that monasteries had become lackadaisical with their faith. Monks like Benedict of Aniane were known to verbally explain their displeasure with their contemporary interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict. Competing monastic ideologies exacerbated the problems that Frankish monasteries were facing. Customs deriving from Irish monasticism were incorporated within many monasteries in

¹²⁹ Davis. 233

¹³⁰ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*. 13

Francia. These new ideologies were considered to “pollute” the sanctity of monasteries. Many now demanded for a general synod that could effectively return Frankish monasticism to strict devotion to prayer and theology. The Synods of Aachen is accepted by historians as being strongly influenced by reformist monks. Benedict of Aniane was in fact the leader of this reformist faction and was the only second to the emperor in controlling the synod.¹³¹ Eventually a new set of reforms and regulations were established and disseminated to the realm’s monastic communities. Acceptance the changes was mandatory. Still, the reforms received a diverse set of opinions. The return to a focus on prayer as well as greater oversight gave monastic communities a greater sense of security.¹³² In return for applying the reforms, monastic communities saw themselves become bridgeheads of the imperial influence.¹³³ Total acceptance by some was followed by complete rejection by others. This reluctance made some monasteries give up their monastic status. The monastery of St. Martin of Tours, a significant monastic community, transitioned from being a monastery.¹³⁴ Imperial influence grew because of the Synods of Aachen, and from it monasteries chose whether to become a representation of the imperial court or remove themselves from a greater Benedictine monastic society.

There were similarities between the Byzantine form of monastic rule and Louis’s role after the Synods of Aachen. Monastic communities within the Byzantine Empire were important components to the infrastructure of their empire.¹³⁵ They provided an

¹³¹ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 77

¹³² McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*. 118

¹³³ Kramer, “Teaching Emperors?”. 32

¹³⁴ Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*. 189

¹³⁵ Rubenson, “Asceticism and Monasticism, I: Eastern.”. 664

immeasurable number of benefits to the emperor and his administration. Still monasteries relied on his personal support and were subject to reforms approved by him. This backing commonly involved monetary patronage.¹³⁶ While the monastic communities in the Byzantine Empire were never directly ruled by the emperor, they had to accept any of his decrees. Monasteries within the Byzantine Empire were political pawns within the empire. Any form of resistance potentially led to repercussions that included having funds taken away to being forcefully censured by the emperor's military.¹³⁷ This form of rule was comparable to the role of Louis after the Synods of Aachen. Louis was noted to be very generous in the donations he made to churches and monasteries during his reign.¹³⁸ From his patronage many new communities were formed. His rule over monastic communities was more direct than the Byzantine form, but both placed monasteries as an important cog within the imperial machine. For Louis, monasteries were meant to provide tribute to him. These contributions whether physical or spiritual were meant to assist with his rule. Actions by monastic communities that went against the changes instituted at the synods could potentially be punished by Louis. A notable example of this punishment was the removal of the abbot of the monastery in Fulda. The homogeneity that existed between how Louis ruled over monastic communities and the Byzantine form of rule is striking it is important to note this correlation, potentially, as Louis imitating the Byzantine Empire.

Papal reactions to the Synods of Aachen were evidence for a legitimate fear of imperial domination. The papacy had experience dealing with impressive empires. Still

¹³⁶ Rubenson. 642

¹³⁷ Rubenson.

¹³⁸ McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*. 118

the transition that happened from 685-800 A.D was tumultuous. From being a subject to the Byzantine Empire to acting as a diplomatic intermediary, the pope's authority was not entirely stable. The crowning of Charlemagne firmly placed the theocracy into the Carolingian sphere of influence.¹³⁹ How this situation would function remained ambiguous. Were they independent or were they a vassal of Louis the Pious? Within Rome, many feared that this relationship would return them back to a Byzantine-like situation. The government centralizations and religious synods committed by Louis and his father certainly stoked such fears. As a result, the pope personally met with Louis the Pious to determine the situation of the papacy. The *Pactum Ludovicianum* was the result of such a meeting. Papal opinions of the work believed it to be a diplomatic victory.¹⁴⁰ It offered significant securities that ensured that the Papal States retained some sense of autonomy. Most importantly, it averted the chance for the complete political dominance by the emperor. The actions of the Roman Papacy during this time was important since they had experiences with Byzantine rule. They felt that their situation made it necessary to codify a relationship with Louis the Pious to ensure that this situation would not happen again.

Monastic communities and the Papal States were not uniform in their reaction to the Synod of Aachen. Monastic disunity was an impetus for the Synods of Aachen. Papal ambiguity towards its autonomy led to it being very sensitive to any reforms within the empire. The Synods of Aachen established reforms that had a mixed reception. Monastic opinions ranged from seeing it as completely necessary to others arguing it infringed

¹³⁹ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*. 291

¹⁴⁰ Noble. 306

upon each monastery's distinct custom. Immediately after the conclusion of the first synod, the papacy sought to establish a physical treaty with Louis the Pious. Papal fears of imperial dominance instigated this action. The resulting treaty helped affirm the validity of such fears. Stipulations like the guarantee of no imperial influence in papal elections assured the pope and his subjects that their lands would remain autonomous from the rest of the Carolingian Empire. Every entity that was affected by the synods of Aachen saw these changes as greatly increasing the power of Louis and his court. How they acted in response to the reforms, is a representation to the myriad of feelings that were espoused.

CONCLUSION

Louis the Pious was the catalyst for the Synod of Aachen and he greatly benefitted from the reforms that came from the synod. An important question was whether the Synods of Aachen were an attempt by Louis to expand his role within the empire. The actions and reactions by Louis and the Church within this moment do provide validation to a connection. The synods themselves show that significant changes happened, and its oversight was tasked to Louis. He personally followed a tradition that sought to organize the government around him. This custom led to the development of a system that was similar to the Byzantine model. Connections between the Carolingian and Byzantine Empires did exist. Louis certainly had an understanding of the Byzantine Empire, and purposely retained strong diplomatic ties with the empire. Most monasteries wanted a realm-wide synod to be undertaken and they participated in the ones undertaken at Aachen. In general, the monastic communities saw these reforms as beneficial and were willing to accept the reforms.¹⁴¹ The Papal States were a different matter. They were not included within the decision making and their actions showed this. Eventual meetings and the development of a separate treaty codified their position and alleviated fears that they were to become politically dominated by the Carolingian Empire.¹⁴² The Synods of Aachen were instrumental for Louis' plans for dominance. Once undertaken, they provided Louis power that few political entities could wield.

¹⁴¹ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 81

¹⁴² Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*. 308

The centralization of the Carolingian Empire was a tradition that had spanned multiple generations of emperors, but Louis adapted this to his personal views. Louis the Pious wanted to continue the mission of his father and grandfather.¹⁴³ As a result, he sought to project his authority upon important functions that existed within his domain. Still, Louis was not his father. He was originally meant to become a vassal to his brother. Charlemagne wanted to ensure that his son, Louis, was a capable ruler. He endowed Louis with a personal kingdom outside of the Frankish homeland. This helped Louis understand the art of kingship, but consequently made Louis a completely different individual.¹⁴⁴ Culturally, Louis showed an inclination that was considered foreign to his nobles. Louis' brothers died in 810 and 811. Only Louis remained, and within three years he succeeded his father. Charlemagne and Louis were both personally unprepared for these events. Within a short period of time, Louis had gone from preparing to serve as a vassal to becoming the unquestioned leader of a burgeoning empire. Eventually, Louis assumed the mantle of Carolingian Emperor, but his distinct upbringing made him have priorities that were different from his ancestors. Before Louis, emperors like Charlemagne did not entirely embrace the Roman past. Instead, they saw themselves as Frankish emperors, ruling over a domain of diverse cultures. Louis was not the same as his father. It was evident that Louis wanted to embrace a connection to the past that his ancestors had only recognized. One form of imitation was the manufacture of coins that invoked roman titles like Emperor Augustus.¹⁴⁵ He also sought to cement a relationship

¹⁴³ McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987*.

¹⁴⁴ Astronomus and Allen Cabaniss, *Son of Charlemagne: A Contemporary Life of Louis the Pious* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1961),. 36

¹⁴⁵ Karl F. Morrison, "The Gold Medallions of Louis the Pious and Lothaire I and the Synod of Paris (825)," *Speculum* 36, no. 4 (1961): 592–99, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2856786>. 592

between him and the Byzantine Empire. This attempt at collaboration hoped for greater collaboration in aspects like military and theology.¹⁴⁶ Clearly, Louis had ambitions that were related to centralizing the empire. He planned to achieve this goal through a series of reforms and treaties that expanded his power.

Imperial power grew because of the reforms enacted at the Synods of Aachen (816-819 A.D). Regulations regarding the oversight of the monastic communities were centered around the Imperial bureaucracy. The imperial *missi*, initially used to watch over Louis' vassals, periodically visited the monasteries within the empire.¹⁴⁷ They reported to the emperor about the state of monastic communities while ensuring that they followed official dogmatic interpretation. This essentially meant that Louis could completely control how monastic communities functioned within the empire. Relations with the Papal States showed how Louis sought to ensure that the Church was under his watchful eye. The *Pactum Ludovicianum* was a treaty that has been subject to significant interpretation.¹⁴⁸ Scholars, like Noble, argue that Louis perceived this treaty as incorporating the Papal States into his empire.¹⁴⁹ This treaty included a series of dispensations given by Louis to the Pope. The simple act of investing the papacy with power, according to Louis, showed that the secular authority of the pope was drawn from him. Consequently, this meant that the Papal States existed as a vassal within a larger

¹⁴⁶ Michael McCormick, "Byzantium and the West, 700–900," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume 2: C.700–c.900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, vol. 2, *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 349–80, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521362924.017> . 368

¹⁴⁷ Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. 82

¹⁴⁸ Raymond Davis, ed., *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from AD 715 to AD817*, *Translated Texts for Historians*, v. 13 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992). 233

¹⁴⁹ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*. 308

Carolingian Empire. Overall, Louis was calculated in his actions and sought to bring western Christendom into his influence. For the early part of his rule he was successful in this endeavor. Louis maintained a sprawling system of information and bureaucratic insight regarding monastic dogma.

Monastic communities were the direct reason for the Synods of Aachen. Before the reforms, every monastery within the Carolingian Empire was distinct in its application of dogma. Leaders within the monastic community constantly criticized how the monasteries of Europe had strayed from the intended message of St. Benedict. They deemed it necessary to create a Christian synod that could rectify the situation. Benedict of Aniane and many other reformists would take part in the Synods of Aachen that was convened by Louis the Pious. The reforms that were agreed upon allowed monasteries to become more uniform with their dogmatic interpretation. These changes would then be enforced by the emperor himself. Most monasteries were welcome to the new reforms, but some communities were hesitant to accept them. Protections and oversight to prevent abuse from local lords or abbots were appealing. Instead of being forced to do the bidding of a lord, they would become the direct subject of the emperor whose demands upon them were mainly spiritual.¹⁵⁰ Many monastic communities liked the changes and thus were welcoming to be a part of a large community of like minded monasteries. Acts done in resistance to the changes varied from simple lying to ending their monastic tradition. They feared that the autonomy of monastic communities was being infringed upon.¹⁵¹ These acts demonstrated that the reforms were not accepted by everyone. Still, every

¹⁵⁰ Hosoe, "Regulae and Reform in Carolingian Monastic Hagiography." 15

¹⁵¹ Sharon A. Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin :Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours /* (Ithaca :, 1991), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015021975449>. 189

monastic community that was affected by the Synods of Aachen recognized that their position would become influenced by a larger power. They, through the Synods of Aachen, became an outpost of imperial power to their localities.¹⁵²

The Papal States had experience in being the subject of an empire. For centuries their overlord was the Byzantine Emperor. He wielded absolute control over the Papacy and was ruthless to any attempts to infringe on his rule. Regardless of this position, the Papal States were able to extricate themselves from the Byzantines and act with independence. This freedom was again in question once the Pope crowned Charlemagne as Emperor of the Romans. Was the Pope now a subject of a Carolingian Emperor? It was completely ambiguous and that was something the Pope wanted to amend. As a result, Pope Stephen IV personally traveled to Louis and negotiated a deal. This deal was the *Pactum Ludovicianum* and it provided the pope a series of concessions that protected their autonomy, but never went as far to recognize their independence.¹⁵³ It ensured that the papal elections would not be interfered with by Louis, but also ensured that Louis could assist the papacy in times of need. There was no reference towards making the Papal States an entity that was completely independent from the empire. That was not what it was intended to be.¹⁵⁴ This treaty was a guarantee by Louis for the Papal States. It prevented the development of a tyrannical overlord that had existed during Byzantine rule. Papal reactions to Louis' rule alleviated their fears of returning towards Byzantine-

¹⁵² Rutger Kramer, "Framing the Carolingian Reforms: The Early Years of Louis the Pious," in *Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire* (Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 31–58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvd1c74c.6>. 312

¹⁵³ Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis)*. 232

¹⁵⁴ Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825*. 307

like rule. The timing of the pact placed it immediately after the first Synod of Aachen. It was certain that the papacy acted in response to the synod.

The Synods of Aachen permitted Louis the Pious to project his influence onto the monastic communities of his realm while continuing to organize the empire around him. Similarities between his rule and the style that existed in the Byzantine Empire is strong. An expansion of imperial oversight over the religious affairs of the empire, certainly justifies this connection. Louis the Pious embraced the glories of the Roman Empire. Neither his father nor grandfather attempted such a maneuver due to diplomatic pressure and personal distaste. Papal opinions of the period were fearful that Louis would attempt to incorporate them into a Byzantine system. The Papal States had lived for centuries under a similar system and were quick to ensure that they would not repeat it. Monasteries recognized that the Synod of Aachen placed them as directly subservient to Louis. Still, many were receptive to this as they saw the changes associated with it as being beneficial. It was evident to everyone within this situation that the Synods of Aachen centralized monastic authority around Louis the Pious. This situation was Louis' attempt to imitate a centralized entity similar to the Byzantine Empire. The attitudes and actions of Louis were indicative of a personal desire for reform. Louis never explicitly states his intentions, but these reforms were meant to improve his imperial power. Papal opinions and monastic observances confirm this idea. The Papal States do make a connection between Louis and the Byzantines. The Synods of Aachen were commonly understood to reform the Carolingian Empire, and it was through these changes that Louis was able to project influence similar to the Byzantine Emperor.

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Clifford Greco was born on July 5, 1998 in Portland, Maine. He grew up in Greene and graduated high school from St. Dominic Academy in 2016. Cliff pursued his interests in history and economics at the University of Maine. After graduating from the University of Maine, Cliff will continue his education by attending law school.