



I, Claudius. Self-styling in early medieval debate

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Historians often have difficulties understanding contrary figures who deviated from mainstream practices and beliefs. In the case of Claudius of Turin, who because of his iconoclasm has been pictured as a proto-Protestant, this image of a solitary was partly his own creation. Claudius liked to present himself as a truth-teller, defending God's honour and the unity of the church against all kinds of evils. This article uses the case of Claudius and the response of Dungal, one of his learned opponents, like him connected to the royal court, to reflect on the role of self-styling in early medieval debate.

'In the present work, I swear by all the Gods,
I am my own mere secretary, and my own
official annalist . . .'¹

In 825 a small group of bishops gathered in Paris to discuss correct and incorrect forms of worship associated with images, the sign of the cross and the holy remains of the saints.² A letter of the Byzantine emperor about a renewal of iconoclasm in Byzantium (824) as well the provocative views of Claudius, bishop of Turin (c.816–c.827), had prompted Emperor Louis the Pious to summon some of his learned experts to investigate the matter.³ Claudius, a scholar and priest of presumably Spanish origin, was a member of Louis the Pious's inner circle.⁴ He had won his spurs through

¹ R. Graves, *I, Claudius. From the Autobiography of Tiberius Claudius, Emperor of the Romans, Born 10 B.C., Murdered and Deified A.D. 54* (Harmondsworth, repr. 1955), p. 9.

² *Concilium Parisiense*, 825, ed. A. Werminghoff, *MGH Conc.* 2.2 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1908), no. 44, pp. 473–551.

³ T.F.X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia, 2009), pp. 263–86; W. Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frankenreich und in Italien* (Paderborn, 1989), pp. 168–71.

⁴ M. Ferrari, 'Note su Claudio di Torino "episcopus ab ecclesia damnatus"', *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 16 (1973), pp. 291–308, at p. 291. On Claudius, see: P. Boulhol, *Claude de Turin. Un évêque iconoclaste dans l'Occident carolingien. Étude suivie de l'édition du Commentaire sur Josué* (Paris, 2002); J. Heil, 'Claudius von Turin – eine Fallstudie', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 45 (1997), pp. 389–412; C. Leonardi, 'Claudius von Turin', *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (1983), vol. 2, cols 2132–3.

biblical commentary, an expertise that was most appreciated by the Carolingian rulers, for whom the Bible offered an indispensable guide and a frame of reference to understand their role as Christian kings.⁵ Around 816 Louis the Pious entrusted Claudius with the bishopric of Turin. This arduous task, Claudius complained, brought him all kinds of troubles: violent raids of the Saracens and the defence of Liguria's coastline, but also Christians, whose devotional practices deviated from Claudius's norm.⁶ To his dismay, people in his diocese brought offerings (*anamethata*) to the images in the churches. So Claudius started to destroy them, he later explained, at the risk of his life.⁷ This was not the only reason why Claudius became the 'talk of the court'. The bishop also said pilgrimages to Rome were useless, and, according to some eyewitness reports, refused to celebrate the feast days of saints, to recite the litanies and to call the saints' names during the liturgy. Furthermore, he forbade the lighting of candles and lamps in churches during the daytime, as well as certain gestures such as prostration and the lowering of the eyes during prayer; he ordered the Christians in his diocese to raise their eyes towards heaven instead.⁸ Claudius had presumably also been invited to Paris, but 'he refused to take part in the bishops' meeting', so one of Claudius's opponents wrote, 'calling their synod as a donkeys' gathering'.⁹ It is this particular debate, and especially Claudius's part in it, that is the focus of this article.

In the past, scholars have presented Claudius as an atypical fanatic, the odd exception to the general consensus of the Christian church that valued its saints highly. In his *Histoire de l'hérésie des iconoclastes et de la translation de l'empire aux François*, the Jesuit Louis Maimbourg called Claudius 'the leader and first minister of the Protestants' ('le chef et le plus ancien Ministre des Protestants').¹⁰ Alternatively, recent literature treats Claudius as an isolated individual, who in the end caused little harm.¹¹ What I will demonstrate here is that to a considerable extent

⁵ M.B. de Jong, 'Old Law and New-found Power: Hrabanus Maurus and the Old Testament', in J.W. Drijvers and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Centres of Learning. Learning and Locations in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East* (Leiden, New York and Cologne, 1995), pp. 161–76; *eadem*, 'The Empire as Ecclesia: Hrabanus Maurus and Biblical Historia for Rulers', in Y. Hen and M. Innes (eds), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 191–226.

⁶ Claudius, *Epistolae*, ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae* 4 (Berlin, 1895), no. 6, p. 601.

⁷ Claudius, *Apologeticum atque rescriptum adversus Theutmirum abbatem*, ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae* 4 (Berlin, 1895), no. 12, pp. 610–13.

⁸ Dungal, *Responsa contra perversas Claudii Taurinensis episcopi sententias*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 105 (Paris, 1851), cols 463–530, at cols 528C–529A.

⁹ Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 529A: 'renuit ad conventum occurrere episcoporum, vocans illorum synodum congregationem asinorum'.

¹⁰ L. Maimbourg, *Histoire de l'hérésie des iconoclastes* (Paris, 1674), V, p. 490. See also: Boulhol, *Claude*, pp. 9–10, n. 2.

¹¹ M. van Uytendange, 'Le culte des saints et la prétendue "Aufklärung" carolingienne', in *Le culte des saints aux IXe–XIIIe siècles. Actes du colloque tenu à Poitiers les 15–16–17 septembre 1993* (Poitiers, 1995), pp. 151–66, at pp. 162–5; Noble, *Images*, p. 290.

we owe this image of a lone voice to Claudius himself. Using the model of the Old Testament prophet and the Christian apologist, Claudius created a particular picture of himself as a mouthpiece of God, a plain truth-teller. He did not necessarily wish to isolate himself from the centre of power by choosing the authorial posture of an exile or a foreigner (as did some of his colleague-bishops) in order to be able to speak the truth to his superiors.¹² Yet, Claudius's self-styled image and the associations it evoked in the end influenced how people remembered him: a solitary figure.

What follows is set up as a triptych. Starting with Claudius's motives in rejecting the veneration of images and relics, I will continue in so far as possible – only excerpts of his text have survived – with an analysis of the way Claudius presented himself in his work, focusing mostly on the prefaces to his biblical commentary and the treatise that he wrote to defend his position in the controversy over images and relics.¹³ The third part of this article is dedicated to the reply of one of Claudius's opponents: Dungal's *Response against the perverse opinions of Claudius Bishop of Turin*, written around 827.¹⁴ Dungal was frustrated that Emperor Louis the Pious and his eldest son Lothar, ruler of Italy and co-emperor from 817, had not acted against Claudius. Both rulers relied on the biblical expertise of scholars like Claudius to build their new Christian empire.¹⁵ Apparently, his skill and reputation had earned him a good deal of respect and trust. So Dungal strove to dismantle Claudius's self-proclaimed *persona*.¹⁶ Recently, stimulating work has been done to show the importance of literary strategies and models (classical, biblical and early Christian) for early medieval scholars connected to the court, who used these to position and define themselves in relation to their superiors and peers.¹⁷ Building on this work and using Claudius as a case study, I aim to show that self-styling was an important aspect of political life at the Carolingian court, including in the ways in which controversies were fought out. Both Claudius and Dungal were very much concerned with the content of their

¹² I. van Renswoude, *Licence to Speak. The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, forthcoming), ch. 9; S. Airlie, 'I, Agobard, Unworthy Bishop', in R. Corradini et al. (eds), *Ego Trouble. Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2010), pp. 175–83.

¹³ Claudius, *Apologeticum*, pp. 610–13. Only a little of Claudius's exegesis has been edited. See for an overview Boulhol, *Claude*, pp. 331–44.

¹⁴ Regarding other responses to the debate see Noble, *Images*, pp. 295–328.

¹⁵ See n. 6.

¹⁶ For a clear definition of *persona* see: W. Pohl, 'Introduction: Ego trouble?', in R. Corradini et al. (eds), *Ego Trouble. Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2010), pp. 9–21, at pp. 18–19.

¹⁷ Van Renswoude, *Licence to Speak*; M.B. de Jong, *The Penitential State. Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814–840* (Cambridge, 2009). Exemplary in this respect are also: Corradini et al. (eds), *Ego Trouble*; M. Garrison, 'The Social World of Alcuin: Nicknames at York and at the Carolingian Court', in L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Alcuin of York. Scholar at the Carolingian Court*, *Germania Latina* 3 (Groningen, 1998), pp. 59–79.

argument, the best way to worship God. However, to establish the truth, the authority of the *persona* who claimed to speak it was as much at stake as was his knowledge of Scripture and patristic learning.

Cause of conflict

Apart from Claudius's uncompromising focus on 'the regulations of the truth' ('ordo veritatis'), what in the end caused scandal at court was his controversial view regarding images and relics. To begin with, Claudius considered pilgrimage useless: 'it does not hurt anybody, nor is useful to anyone, nor benefits nor obstructs anyone'.¹⁸ A quotation from his original exposé, only transmitted through Dungal's *Responsa*, makes clear why Claudius believed this was the case. Claudius had apparently stated

that saints *after [their] death* [italics are mine] help no one, and cannot help anyone by interceding, because they know nothing of those things which happen on earth, and that nobody should pay respect to their relics, just as little as to the most vile animal bones, and remaining ordinary soil.¹⁹

The remark that saints 'know nothing of those things which happen on earth' is reminiscent of Augustine, who in *De cura pro mortuis geranda* wondered how it was possible for the souls of the saints to know what happened on earth and to hear the prayers of the living, without their bodies and thus the bodily senses to acquire this knowledge.²⁰ Claudius was indeed influenced by Augustine, on whom he relied more than on any other patristic source.²¹ Yet, while Augustine in the end believed that the saints were able to intervene in the lives of the faithful, Claudius did not. For him, the disjunction of body and soul at the moment of death seems to have been absolute, at least until the moment of resurrection. As a consequence, Claudius considered the remains of the saints as inanimate objects, 'lacking life, sense, and reason'.²²

Claudius not only considered relic piety useless because the souls of the saints were not in a position to intercede on behalf of the living.

¹⁸ Claudius, *Apologeticum*, p. 612.

¹⁹ Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 465D–466A: 'sanctos post obitum nullum adiuvare, nullique posse intecedendo succurrere, nihil eorum dumtaxat scientes, quae in terris geruntur, illorumque reliquias nullum alicuius reverentiae gratiam comitari, sicut nec ossa vilissima, quorum libet animalium, reliquamque terram communem'.

²⁰ Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis geranda*, cc. 16, 18 and 20, ed. G. Combès, *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, 12 vols (Paris, 1937), vol. 2, pp. 430–4, 436–8, 442.

²¹ See G. Italiani, *La tradizione esegetica nel commento ai Re di Claudio di Torino* (Florence, 1979), pp. 135–8. Also Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 498B, 502A.

²² Claudius, *Apologeticum*, p. 611: 'vita sensu et ratione carentem'.

He also claimed that relics distracted the attention of the faithful from the spiritual truth. According to Claudius the veneration of relics, just like the adoration of the Cross and images, erroneously directed the attention of believers to the material world, while God resided in heaven. Claudius admonished his audience to ‘seek God in the heights, so that you can be free from those things that are below’.²³ It was probably for the same reason that Claudius objected to gestures that were directed towards earth (bending, bowing, prostration), while at the same time refusing to acknowledge their meaning as worship.

He was convinced, moreover, that even more fundamentally, nobody should put their trust in the merits of saints or saintly intercessions. Every human being, he maintained, was only accountable for his own sins.²⁴ Referring to Ezekiel (XIV.14 and 16) – ‘Noah, Daniel and Job will not free any of their sons and daughters’ – the bishop argued that humankind should not trust in the saints to achieve salvation. Instead the faithful should work hard to live righteously, following the example set by the saints while they were still alive.²⁵

Claudius’s view regarding saintly intercession had enormous repercussions for the well-oiled prayer machine formed by the religious communities of the Frankish realm and sustained by the Carolingian elite.²⁶ It brought down the theology behind the cult of relics, many of which were kept in the same monastic houses that acted as intermediaries between the faithful and God. Nonetheless, Claudius’s ideas were not completely out of step with contemporary views. Not everyone accepted relics with open arms. Alcuin, for example, disapproved of Christians who committed adultery with relics around their neck, believing that this offered instant forgiveness for sins.²⁷ In a letter to Archbishop Aethelhard, Alcuin wrote: ‘it is better to imitate the examples of the saints in the heart, than to carry about their bones in little bags; to have their evangelical

²³ Claudius, *Apologeticum*, p. 611: ‘in supernis Deum quaere, ut carere inferis possis’.

²⁴ Claudius, *Apologeticum*, p. 613.

²⁵ Claudius discussed the same idea in both his commentary on Kings and Paul’s letter to the Galatians: *XXX quaestiones super libros Regum*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 104 (Paris, 1851), cols 826B–827B; *Enarratio in epistolam d. Pauli ad Galatas*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 104 (Paris, 1851), cols 905D–906A. See E.A. Matter, ‘Theological Freedom in the Carolingian Age: The Case of Claudius of Turin’, in *The Concept of Freedom in the Middle Ages: Islam, Byzantium and the West* (Paris, 1985), pp. 51–60, at p. 54; Boulhol, *Claude*, p. 121.

²⁶ M. de Jong, ‘Carolingian Monasticism: The Power of Prayer’, in R. McKitterick (ed.), *New Cambridge Medieval History II: c. 700 – c. 900* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 622–53; A. Angenendt, ‘*Missa specialis*. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Entstehung der Privatmessen’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 17 (1983), pp. 153–221; G. Constable, ‘The Commemoration of the Dead in the Early Middle Ages’, in J.M.H. Smith and D.A. Bullough (eds), *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald Bullough*, The Medieval Mediterranean 28 (Leiden and New York, 2000), pp. 169–95. The consequences were comparable to those of Gottschalk’s views on Predestination; see the article by Warren Pezé in this issue.

²⁷ Alcuin, *Epistolae*, ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae* 4 (Berlin, 1895), no. 291, p. 449.

admonitions written in the mind, than to carry them about on the neck, written on a slip of parchment'.²⁸ In a similar vein the council of Chalon (813) criticized clerics and laymen who lived negligently, thinking that a pilgrimage to a saint's shrine would free them from their sins.²⁹ Paschasius Radbertus emphasized that following the example set by the saints during life was to be much preferred to the veneration of their relics. Texts were superior to relics, as the stories of the deeds of the saints inspired the faithful to a virtuous and pious life, while relics were corruptible and temporal.³⁰ In addition, in the early medieval west there existed different traditions regarding the state of souls in the afterlife. Not all believed that the saints could act as intermediaries on behalf of those who prayed to them.³¹

Although some other scholars thus shared Claudius's disapproval of an undue preoccupation with physical objects, and although the state of the soul after death was debated at times in the Carolingian period, Claudius was exceptional in actually tearing down paintings.³² Expounding on the smashing of the copper snake by Hizkia (II Kings XVIII), Claudius explained in his biblical commentary that all that provokes superstition needs to be destroyed.³³ In this particular case Claudius was referring to texts of predecessors that incited false belief and error, but it also explains why he got rid of the images in Turin's churches; people worshipped them, while only God should be adored.³⁴ Yet, most Carolingian ecclesiastical leaders saw no harm in the existence of images and instead considered them useful as a means of Christian instruction. Additionally, they distinguished between different degrees of worship;

²⁸ Alcuin, *Epistolae*, no. 290, p. 448. I thank Jelle Visser for this reference. Regarding Alcuin's attitude to relics, see Visser's Ph.D. thesis, expected 2018.

²⁹ Council of Chalon, 813, ed. A. Werminghoff, *MGH Concilia* 2.1 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1906), pp. 282–3. See also G. Constable, 'Opposition to Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages', *Studia Gratiana* 19 (1976), pp. 123–46.

³⁰ Paschasius, *De passione sanctorum Rufini et Valerii*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 120 (Paris, 1852), cols 1489–508; D. Appleby, 'Beautiful on the Cross, Beautiful in his Torments: The Place of the Body in the Thought of Paschasius Radbertus', *Traditio* 60 (2005), pp. 1–46, at pp. 17–18; G. Heydemann, 'Relics and Texts: Hagiography and Authority in Ninth-Century Francia', in P. Sarris, M. dal Santo and P. Booth (eds), *An Age of Saints? Scepticism and the Authority of the Church in the Mediterranean Koine, AD 300–900* (Leiden and Boston, 2011), pp. 187–204, at p. 198.

³¹ J.-M. Sansterre, 'Les justifications du culte des reliques dans le haut Moyen Âge', in E. Bozóký and A.-M. Helvétius (eds), *Les reliques. Objets, cultes, symbols. Actes du colloque international de l'Université du Littoral-Côte d'Opale (Boulogne-sur-Mer) 4–6 septembre 1997* (Turnhout, 1999), pp. 81–93, at pp. 83–4; Van Uytanghe, 'Aufklärung carolingienne', pp. 151–66; M. Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2012).

³² Agobard of Lyons also considered worship focused in physical objects inferior: *De picturis et imaginibus*, ed. L. van Acker, *CCSL* 52 (Turnhout, 1981), pp. 151–81.

³³ Claudius, *XXX quaestiones super libros Regum*, cols 790D–791C.

³⁴ P. Hoogeveen, 'Populus prior. Het Joodse volk in Karolingische Bijbelcommentaren', Ph.D. thesis, Utrecht University (2016), chapter 4 'Claudius van Turijn', p. 155.

only God was due its highest form.³⁵ Claudius did not accept these subtle nuances and inferior levels of veneration. God commanded that only He was to be adored, He had prohibited the creation of likenesses (*similitudines*) of all creatures in heaven and on earth, and all Christians should obey His laws.³⁶

Protagonist of truth

To some extent Claudius's stance diverged from the *communis opinio*, but he was not unique. His widespread reputation as an outcast was partly the work of his opponents, who aimed to prove that Claudius deviated from agreed norms, but it also emanated from the image that he himself had projected over the years: that of a truth-teller and a defender of orthodoxy who regularly faced opposition and criticism. In the introduction to one of his early works, his commentary on Genesis, finished in 811, Claudius justified the composition by referring to the need to defend God's truth against impudent slander and sacrilege. 'If their insane blasphemy and hateful foolishness were directed at me', he explained, 'I would bear it somewhat calmly, but I cannot tolerate this against God, and it seemed right to bark on behalf of my God.'³⁷ So the author pictured himself as a direct spokesman for God, who took upon himself the arduous task of battling evil in all its disguises, a watchdog who dutifully drove away 'swarming frogs' and 'mad wolves'.

Not all of Claudius's biblical commentary arose from polemic and a need to defend God's truth. However, a theme that regularly recurs in the prefaces to his exegesis is his anxiety over being judged by those for whom he wrote his commentaries, including the high-ranking prelates and also the emperor, the primary recipient of biblical commentary and its most influential judge. Claudius frequently referred to the *rusticitas* of his writing and reminded his readers that love of truth was superior to love of words, begging them not to judge (*diiudicare*) his poor Latin, but instead to emend his sentences when necessary.³⁸ To some extent, this authorial humility and fear of the opinion of others and were established topoi amongst Carolingian scholars who vied for imperial patronage. In their works they hovered between prophetic meekness

³⁵ Noble, *Images*, pp. 333–8.

³⁶ Claudius, *Apologeticum*, p. 611.

³⁷ Claudius, *Epistolae*, no. 1, p. 590: 'Quo[rum] insana blasphemia et detestanda illorum stultitia, [. . .] si contrarie esset [. . .] ferrem, sed adversus Deum sustinere non valens, visus sum contra scaturientes ranas vel insanientes lupos pro Deo meo quos valui dare latratus adversus eos, qui 'nimis aversi sunt a veritate et letali morbo impietatis insaniunt.' Tr. by M. Gorman, 'The Commentary on Genesis of Claudius of Turin and Biblical Studies under Louis the Pious', *Speculum* 72.2 (1997), pp. 279–329, at p. 287.

³⁸ Claudius, *Epistolae*, no. 4, p. 598.

and rhetorical fireworks in order to please the ear of an emperor who valued proper language as much as biblical virtues.³⁹ But in the case of Claudius this reference to *rusticitas* was not just a pose. Claudius indeed seemed to have lacked a thorough, classical training in the *artes liberales*, as his opponents declared, although he was well-versed in biblical learning, having studied with the great exegetical expert Leidrad of Lyons.⁴⁰ Interestingly, Claudius did not conceal this deficiency behind bluff, nor did he attempt to amend it. Instead, he owned up to the shortcoming, and thereby contributed, consciously or unconsciously, to his reputation as a truth-teller. Rhetorical skill did not hinder his pen, Claudius seems to have claimed: his speech was unpolished, and his focus was on God's truth only, as it was revealed in Scripture.⁴¹

Once made bishop, Claudius regularly complained about the administrative and military responsibilities that came with the office and that distracted him from the study of the Bible.⁴² In a letter to his former pupil, Abbot Theutmirus of Psalmodi, Claudius described his position in Turin as a banishment, comparable to the exile of the prophet Ezekiel, who was sent by God to the people of Israel after they had rebelled against their Lord and broken the rules of the covenant, their faces hard, their hearts stubborn.⁴³ Claudius encountered similar misbehaviour and opposition. His world, like that of Ezekiel, was populated by scorpions, his task was similarly burdensome, and likewise it was entrusted to him by God.⁴⁴

Claudius elaborated on this picture of hardship in his *Apologeticum*, written between 824 and 827, in response to a letter from Theutmirus, who had heard about the bishop's iconoclasm and wished to confront his former master.⁴⁵ As far as we can see, once more Claudius created an image of himself as a brave opponent of impious foolishness, fighting the forces of evil. This time he did so without an (indirect) reference to Ezekiel, but styled himself more as an apologist who through polemic and contradiction proved himself a champion of orthodoxy. 'It is not I

³⁹ See for example Hrabanus Maurus, *Epistolae*, ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae* 5 (Berlin, 1899), no. 39, p. 477, r. 31–3. Also: I. van Renswoude, 'The Word Once Sent Forth Can Never Come Back: Trust In Writing And The Danger Of Publication', in Petra Schulte *et al.* (eds), *Strategies of Writing. Studies on Text and Trust in the Middle Ages*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 13 (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 393–413.

⁴⁰ Claudius, *Epistolae*, no. 7, p. 603; Boulhol, *Claude*, pp. 50–4, 62–3.

⁴¹ See for a careful analysis of the history of the Christian discourse of free speech and the influence of asceticism on the early medieval model of a truth-teller, Van Renswoude, *Licence to Speak*.

⁴² Claudius, *Epistolae*, nos. 6 and 7, pp. 601–2.

⁴³ Regarding Theutmirus, see: Boulhol, *Claude*, pp. 56–8; Heil, 'Claudius von Turin', pp. 394–401. Also Claudius, *XXX Quaestiones super libros Regum*, cols 623–34.

⁴⁴ Ezekiel II. Hoogeveen, 'Populus prior', pp. 140–1.

⁴⁵ Gorman, 'Commentary on Genesis', pp. 283–4.

who teach a sect, [but] I who keep the unity and proclaim the truth', he wrote.⁴⁶ Claudius described the circumstances in which he exercised his office as bishop as arduous, referring to the 'burden' (*sarcina*) of pastoral duty, the words of abuse and threat of violence he had endured while removing the paintings in Turin's churches, and now also the false accusation of heresy that Theutmirus confronted him with. The title under which Claudius published his work – according to Dungal Claudius called it *Defence written against the abbot Theutmirus* – also indicates that Claudius placed himself deliberately in the tradition of the early Christian apologists who fearlessly proclaimed the truth despite the risks of persecution and martyrdom.⁴⁷ The possible threat of maltreatment only contributed to this self-fashioned position as God's mouthpiece, and enhanced Claudius's authority.⁴⁸

As far as we can tell on the basis of this problematic evidence, Claudius structured the *Apologeticum* in the form of a dialogue, a conversation between himself and some 'adherents of false religion and superstition' ('isti falsae religionis atque superstitiones'), following the polemical dialogues of late antique Christian literature.⁴⁹ Occasionally he turned to Theutmirus and responded directly to his allegations. Claudius replied to the arguments of his adversaries who defended the devotional practices to which he himself was opposed, by turning his opponents into objects of ridicule: 'Against the fools we are forced to put forward foolish things, and against stony hearts [we are forced] to throw not arrows of the word and opinions, but stony blows.'⁵⁰ Claudius lashed out maliciously at all of them – the interlocutors, Theutmirus, even the carrier of Theutmirus's letter got the full blast.⁵¹

The way in which Claudius attacked his opponents and mocked the people who believed in the power of tangible things echoes the polemical style of the early Christian apologists. Although Claudius mostly supported his argument with biblical quotations – a deliberate choice, I believe, to show that he alone was faithful to God's word – he occasionally cited patristic sources.⁵² Among them is Cyprian of Carthage's letter to

⁴⁶ *Apologeticum*, p. 610: 'Ego enim non sectam doceo, qui unitatem teneo et veritatem proclamo.'

⁴⁷ Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 467C: 'de libro quem ille Apologeticum vocat, adversus Theutmirum scripto abbatem'.

⁴⁸ Van Renswoude, *Licence to Speak*; R. Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Inveective* (New York, 2013), chapter 1.

⁴⁹ See Robin Whelan's contribution to this volume.

⁵⁰ *Apologeticum*, p. 612: 'Cogimurque contra stultos stulta praeponere, et contra lapidea corda non verbi sagittas vel sententias, sed lapideos proicere ictus.'

⁵¹ *Apologeticum*, p. 610.

⁵² Regarding Claudius's reliance on the Bible see also T.F.X. Noble, 'The Varying Roles of Biblical Testimonies in the Carolingian Image Controversies', in E. Cohen and M. de Jong (eds), *Medieval Transformations. Texts, Power and Gifts in Context* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 101–19, at pp. 114–15; Italiani, *La tradizione esegetica*.

Demetrian, an influential man in Carthage, who blamed the Christians for recent disasters. Cyprian (d. 258) relied on harsh words and biblical quotations to refute his opponent's allegations, and claimed that it was those who venerated idols instead of the Christian God who were responsible for drought and pestilence, not the Christians: 'Why do you shame [yourself] and bow to false gods? [. . .] Seek God in the heights, so that you can be free from those things that are below.'⁵³ Claudius cited this very same passage, but changed 'false gods' ('falsos deos') into 'false images' ('falsas imagines'), thereby linking up the contemporary veneration of images with the Roman veneration of idols.⁵⁴ The way Claudius ridiculed his enemies, moreover, echoes the satirical scorn of the martyrs in the *acta*, who during their interrogations and tortures mocked Roman religious practices as idolatry.

Claudius was so convincing in his self-styled portrait that later scholars believed he had indeed stood alone. In the end, Claudius's position at court came under attack and the threat of exclusion became real, but at an earlier stage this stance as staunch defender of orthodoxy, who put the regulations of truth first and his own safety second, seems to have gained Claudius great prestige and credibility, as well as a bishopric. In the early 820s Claudius could still rely on considerable support at Louis's court, as he wrote pointedly to Theutmirus. Abbot Theutmirus, who increasingly turned away from his former master, had sent a recent exegetical work by Claudius to the palace in Aachen to be judged by the bishops and magnates (*dampnandum ad eundem*). But, as Claudius was eager to point out to his former pupil, his work was received not only with respect, but also amiably (*non solum humiliter, sed etiam amabiliter*).⁵⁵ In his *Responsa*, moreover, Dungal presented the controversy as a public affair that affected the whole Frankish church.⁵⁶ His Claudius was not an isolated figure, but the leader of a larger faction. It is to this text to which I will now turn. What I aim to show is that one of the reasons for Dungal to write the *Response* in the way he did, was to undermine Claudius's self-image as God's prophet and chosen representative. Backed by biblical expertise, this persona had been so powerful that for too long nobody had dared to stand up to Claudius.

⁵³ Cyprian of Carthage, *Liber ad Demetrianum*, c. 16, ed. W. von Hartel, CSEL 3 (Vienna, 1868), p. 362: 'Quid te ad falsos deos humilias et inclinas? [. . .] in supernis Deum quaere, ut carere inferis possis.'

⁵⁴ Claudius, *Apologeticum*, p. 611. Another opponent of Claudius, Jonas of Orléans, recognized the citation and lectured Claudius for adapting the text. *De cultu imaginum libri tres*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PL* 106 (Paris, 1851), col. 331A–B.

⁵⁵ Claudius, *Epistolae*, no. 10, p. 609; Ferrari, 'Note su Claudio di Torino', pp. 291–308.

⁵⁶ Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 465B–466A.

Dungal

Dungal, master of the school in Pavia, wrote the *Responsa* at the request of both Louis the Pious and Lothar.⁵⁷ The text is transmitted to us in two manuscripts, both dating to the first half of the ninth century and probably copied under the supervision of Dungal himself.⁵⁸ It is a carefully composed treatise. Dungal drew on a range of literary and rhetorical techniques to structure the text, build his argument and attack his opponent. Some of them are reminiscent of the guidelines in classical rhetorical manuals, suggesting that Dungal was familiar with the classical teaching of oratory.⁵⁹ Dungal certainly knew the ropes through having studied the writings of ancient and Christian authors, who offered masterly examples of the possibilities of rhetorical and literary strategies.⁶⁰

The purpose of Dungal's *Responsa* was threefold. First, it aimed to show that by condemning the use of images and the symbol of the cross and questioning the value of pilgrimage, Claudius went against a well-established tradition that had long been honoured by emperors and bishops, and had been defended by the church Fathers (or so Dungal argued). He recalled the first relic translations orchestrated by the ruling elite, quoting Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome.⁶¹ Dungal thereby not only demonstrated that this venerable tradition was long standing, but also showed that this was what emperors and bishops did: secular and ecclesiastical leaders cherished the sacred ashes of the martyrs and paid tribute to their sacrifice by promulgating and embellishing their cults. Second, Dungal strove to prove that Claudius's claims were not only offensive, but also based on false testimonies (*falsa testimonia*).⁶² He attacked Claudius for blaming innocent people for crimes they had not committed, and also for sloppy argumentation: the bishop, Dungal maintained, contradicted himself and used *interpretationes* that were not consistent with his own proposition and intention (*propositum et intentio*).⁶³ Last but not least, Dungal set himself to destroy both Claudius's authority and his reputation as a defender of orthodoxy. As a bishop, Claudius was expected to uphold certain virtues and

⁵⁷ Regarding Dungal see M. Ferrari, 'Dungal', *Dizionario bibliografico degli Italiani*, vol. 42 (Rome, 1993), pp. 11–24; *eadem*, 'In Pavia convenient ad Dungalum', *Italia medieval e umanistica* 15 (1972), pp. 1–52; C. Leonardi, 'Dungal', *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (1986), vol. 3, cols 1456–58.

⁵⁸ For a detailed description of the manuscripts see Ferrari, 'In Pavia convenient ad Dungalum', pp. 12–15.

⁵⁹ In the introduction to his edition of the text Paolo Zanna claims it is a *controversia*: *Responsa contra Claudium. A Controversy on Holy Images* (Florence, 2002), pp. CV–CVI. Dungal himself, however, does not call it such, and I am not sure if it actually concerns a *controversia*.

⁶⁰ Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 472C–474A, 477A–C.

⁶¹ Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 469B, 474B.

⁶² Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 481B.

⁶³ Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 471C.

responsibilities, but according to Dungal he brought shame upon his office instead. For example, he had refused to accept the invitation to participate in a meeting of fellow bishops, a grave offence in Dungal's eyes, and had brought down not only himself, but also the Christians whom he was supposed to guide to safer pastures.⁶⁴ How could a bishop fulfil the sacraments – of baptism, confirmation, and Mass – and give blessings without acknowledging the power of the sign of the cross?⁶⁵ According to Dungal, Claudius had failed to live up to the model of a good bishop, and in fact could not even be called a Christian.⁶⁶ Even so, no one had put the slightest obstacle in his way.

Dungal wrote his text mainly for the same rulers who had ordered its composition, namely Louis the Pious and Lothar: he had no intention of convincing Claudius by his arguments. Instead, his goal was to demonstrate Claudius's crimes and the consequences of his immorality to the two emperors who for so long had protected the bishop, or at least had refrained from action, and thereby had put the well-being of their empire on the line. Besides the Frankish rulers, Dungal also addressed Claudius's fellow bishops, in particular those who had attended the meeting of 825. They had shown too much patience and forbearance by not taking measures against Claudius's misbehaviour.⁶⁷

Dungal made sure he spoke in guarded terms, addressing the rulers with words of praise, while simultaneously exposing their failure. He turned to Christian authorities to reinforce his words, and cleverly wove into the introduction a citation of the Gospel of John (VII.12) and Augustine's explanation of it, to explain why Claudius had been left to his own devices for so long. At first the people had not known Claudius for what he was, but now it had become clear, so Dungal stated, that Claudius was like the rotten tree that needs to be cut down and burnt. Portraying their glorious ancestor, Charlemagne, as a most fervent and watchful *tutor* and defender of the Catholic faith who had crushed the heresy of Adoptionism, Dungal praised Louis and Lothar's pedigree while at the same time impressing on them the right course of action: to kill the serpent that is tearing the church to pieces.⁶⁸

In a letter to Theutmirus, Claudius had also used this passage from John's Gospel about Jesus's encounter with the Jews. Claudius had explained to his former pupil that he feared the judgement of others, in

⁶⁴ Compare with, for example, the Astronomer's negative portrait of Agobard, who refused to show up at the councils that were called to judge the bishops who had rebelled against Louis the Pious. Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici*, ed. E. Tremp, *MGH SRG* 64 (Hanover, 1995), cc. 54 and 57, pp. 502, 516–17; De Jong, *The Penitential State*, p. 252.

⁶⁵ Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 528B–C.

⁶⁶ Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 582A.

⁶⁷ Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 529A–530A.

⁶⁸ Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 466A–C and 467C.

particular those who judge ‘according to the appearance’, and not righteously.⁶⁹ Citing Christ’s answer to the Jews, who were not sure what to make of Jesus and were amazed by his knowledge of the Scriptures, Claudius portrayed himself in a similar vein; as someone who did not speak for himself, for his own glory, but on behalf of God, and who encountered similar incomprehension.⁷⁰ It was probably quite deliberate that Dungal chose this same passage to enlighten his audience about Claudius’s ‘real’ nature, and this reveals something about Dungal’s method of attack. Dungal elaborated on the image that Claudius had created of himself – of a prophet toiling hard in God’s defence – but he turned it against the bishop. Claudius was not a man of God, he was the devil in disguise, a bad tree that needed to be eliminated.

Dungal attacked both Claudius’s arguments and his reputation. With regard to the substance of the conflict, he classified Claudius’s errors into three *quaestiones* or *proposita*: the usage regarding paintings (*sancta pictura*), the role of the image of the cross in Christian devotion, and pilgrimage.⁷¹ In this respect, Dungal’s motto was ‘the more, the better’. He piled up quotations from Scripture and patristic writings to support his argument in favour of the significance of the Cross as a sign of redemption, the usefulness of images to instruct the illiterate, and the healing power of martyrs’ relics, making the abundance an argument in itself.⁷² Dungal maintained that although these arguments were so well known and obvious that they hardly needed any further demonstration, ‘one ought to add a few more for greater confirmation and proof’.⁷³ At the same time he presented himself as a successor to these church Fathers, who in their day had been confronted with similar questions and doubts. Likewise he made Claudius an heir of earlier enemies of the church, in particular Vigilantius and Eunomius.⁷⁴ This practice of labelling and associating adversaries with acknowledged heretics had been an important feature of Christological controversies in late antiquity, but was also a characteristic trait of religious disputes in the ninth century.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Claudius, *Epistolae*, no. 9, p. 607. Also Hoogeveen, ‘*Populus prior*’, p. 139. See above, n. 34. Claudius also cites this passage in *Epistolae*, no. 2, p. 594.

⁷⁰ Hrabanus Maurus used the same passage to defend himself against critics. See n. 39.

⁷¹ A reference to *quinto obiectio*, ‘the fifth objection’, suggests that Theutmirus had made Claudius several reproaches, not just the three to which Claudius responded. In other words, Dungal seems to have made his own arrangement instead of following the structure of Claudius’s treatise.

⁷² For example Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 483D ff.

⁷³ Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 485A: ‘In tantum ista trita et omnibus plene nota sunt, ut exemplis manifestari vel approbari parum egeant. Sed tamen pauca confirmationis et experientiae causa maioris sunt subicienda.’

⁷⁴ Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 527D.

⁷⁵ Flower, *Invective*, pp. 30–1. Jonas does the same with regard to Claudius, calling him Arius. In the manuscript, Dungal marked the quotations from Claudius’s *Apologeticum* by adding ‘ver her’, *verba heretici*, in the margin. See also the contributions of Warren Pezé and Robin Whelan to this issue, which deal with this practice of labelling.

Interestingly, Dungal turned to the authoritative Christian past to prove that Claudius was wrong. Taking the miracle stories recorded by Augustine, Paulinus of Nola, Prudentius and Venantius Fortunatus, he showed that these, often tiny relics – which according to Claudius were nothing more than dead bones, stones and dust – were in fact ‘seeds of life’, generating ‘great springs’ of divine grace.⁷⁶ Dungal could have turned to contemporary miracle stories, but apparently preferred the written accounts of past authorities, who were associated with the origin of the Christian church. This need for authoritative texts is characteristic of Carolingian epistemology, and is for example also visible in the work of Paschasius Radbertus, mentioned above, who not only preferred *vitae* over relics, but also relied on Eusebius-Rufinus’s *Church History* to provide the central figures of his story with an authoritative historical background.⁷⁷

To pull apart Claudius’s self-styled *persona*, Dungal also deployed the *ad hominem* attack. Dungal called Claudius lethargic, a profoundly crazy and insane fool, a false accuser and an enemy of the church. Claudius was someone whose grasp of Latin was poor and who was ignorant of the liberal arts.⁷⁸ Because Claudius had thus not learned the method (*ratio*) of the *artes liberales*, he ignored ‘the significations and properties of the letters’ and ‘does not know how to connect through a rational construction genders of nouns with [their] genders, numbers with numbers, cases with cases’.⁷⁹ The result was a *usurpatio verbum*.⁸⁰ Dungal kept harking back to this subject, for according to him here lay the origin of Claudius’s *perversitas*: not appreciating the difference between *adorare* and *colere*, Claudius did not understand the second commandment, and was not able to assess the value of Christian devotional practices regarding images and relics.⁸¹ So Dungal scolded Claudius for linguistic errors and thereby questioned the basis of Claudius’s claims.⁸²

Conclusion

Claudius was never condemned for his teachings and controversial acts. He was able to carry out his duties as bishop of Turin and continued

⁷⁶ Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 475B–C.

⁷⁷ Heydemann, ‘Hagiography and Authority’, pp. 195–6. See also: C. Gartner, R. McKitterick and S. Meeder (eds), *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2015).

⁷⁸ For example Dungal, *Responsa*, cols 471C, 437C, 477D–478D, 479D, 481B, 498B.

⁷⁹ Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 479D: ‘litterarum significaciones proprietatesque ignorans, verborum genera generibus, numeros numeris, casus casibus jungere rationabili nescit constructione’.

⁸⁰ Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 480B. Noble thinks the compiler of the excerpts deliberately left out a couple of sentences to make Claudius look stupid.

⁸¹ Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 486A.

⁸² Dungal, *Responsa*, col. 497C.

to publish biblical commentary until his death around 827.⁸³ Dungal finished his *Responsa* in the same year. Notwithstanding all this criticism, Claudius's biblical commentaries were read and copied throughout the ninth century, and appreciated for their learning.⁸⁴ Dungal's *Responsa* – the strategies chosen to attack Claudius, its firm reliance on patristic sources and imperial authority – shows that the debate was not clear-cut, neither to the emperors nor to Dungal, and that Claudius was not the lonely figure that in his *Apologeticum* he claimed himself to be. Instead of downplaying Claudius's influence, we could instead understand the relative peace in which he operated as an indication of the rather tolerant, yet highly competitive intellectual climate fostered by the Carolingian rulers, and of the success of the image he himself had created.

The work of those involved in the controversy shows the literary genres and range of strategies at the disposal of early medieval scholars. Claudius portrayed himself, in the face of malevolent opposition, as someone who defended the unity of the church and the *ordo veritatis* against 'the extravagant perversity of evil men'. Dungal on the other hand attempted to undermine Claudius's reputation by showing that he deviated from the venerable tradition of the early church that he claimed to defend, and that the image that Claudius had created of himself did not match reality.⁸⁵ On the contrary, by using the tools of exegesis, with which Claudius was so familiar himself, and through strategies such as labelling, Dungal uncovered what he believed was Claudius's true identity: a rotten tree, an enemy of the church. At the Carolingian court, one's *persona* was as much a part of polemic (both as a weapon and as the subject of discussion) as one's command of language and biblical expertise.

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⁸³ Gorman, 'The Commentary on Genesis of Claudius of Turin', p. 283, n. 23.

⁸⁴ Gorman, 'The Commentary on Genesis of Claudius of Turin', pp. 286 and 320–3.

⁸⁵ Claudius, *Epistolae*, no. 7, p. 602.