



For God, king and country: the personal and the public in the *Epitaphium Arsenii*

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Paschasius Radbertus's Epitaphium Arsenii is a lively and polemical dialogue that takes us straight into the controversies within the court-connected and competitive elite of the 850s. The latter's membership, ecclesiastical as well as secular, measured each other against the yardstick of public service, and used failure to live up to this as a means of attack. On the one hand, the Epitaphium is a highly personal text, aimed at a restricted audience; on the other, it addresses the shared values of the Carolingian political leadership. This was not a world dominated by 'the Church', but one in which many 'churches' (monasteries) and their abbots actively participated in the political arena.

The *Epitaphium Arsenii* is not for the fainthearted. It is a highly idiosyncratic and often polemical dialogue between three monks of Corbie, presented as a funeral oration (epitaph) for Charlemagne's cousin Wala, nicknamed 'Arsenius'.¹ Wala (d. 836) was a controversial

¹ Paschasius Radbertus, *Epitaphium Arsenii*, ed. E. Dümmler, *Abhandlungen der königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, Philosophische und historische Klasse 2 (Berlin, 1900), cited henceforth as *EA*; also available in *PL* 120 (Paris, 1852), cols 790–865. On this text: D. Ganz, 'The *Epitaphium Arsenii* and Opposition to Louis the Pious', in P. Godman and R. Collins (eds), *Charlemagne's Heir. New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 537–50; C. Verri, 'Il libro primo dell'*Epitaphium Arsenii* di Pascasio Radberto', *Bulletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 103 (2001/2), pp. 33–131; M. de Jong, *The Penitential State. Authority and Atonement in The Age of Louis the Pious (814–840)* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 102–11; C.M. Booker, *Past Convictions. The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians* (Philadelphia, 2009), pp. 42–50; M. de Jong, 'Becoming Jeremiah: Radbert on Wala, Himself and Others', in R. Corradini *et al.* (eds), *Ego Trouble: Authors and their Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 15 (Vienna, 2010), pp. 185–96; M. Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 196–206; M. de Jong, 'Jeremiah, Job, Terence and Paschasius Radbertus: Political Rhetoric and Biblical Authority in the *Epitaphium Arsenii*', in J.L. Nelson and D. Kempf (eds), *Reading the Bible in the Middle Ages* (London, 2015), pp. 57–76, 209–15; M. de Jong, 'Paschasius Radbertus and Pseudo-Isidore:

figure, who had played a leading role in the rebellion against Louis the Pious in 830, and also, albeit to a lesser extent, in the subsequent revolt of 833 that had led to Louis's notorious public penance. This would not only affect Wala's own reputation, but also that of his pupil, the monk of Corbie known as Paschasius Radbertus. A prolific and brilliant biblical commentator, Radbert became abbot of Corbie in 843/44, only to have to give up this office sometime between 849 and 853, most probably because of a conflict with Charles the Bald. To some extent, his life and Wala's ran a parallel course: both men incurred royal disfavour and were excluded from the charmed circle of the court.²

The *Epitaphium* presents an apparent paradox, which is central to my short contribution to this *EME* special issue on Carolingian dialogue, debate and disputation. On the one hand the *Epitaphium* is a highly personal attempt at political damage control, for the benefit of a deliberately restricted readership; on the other, its author attempts to achieve this aim by addressing eminently public issues and values that revolve around the common weal and order of the entire Carolingian realm. With only one extant manuscript produced in Corbie in the third quarter of the ninth century,³ and no significant reception outside this community, it seems a foregone conclusion that Radbert's dialogue was meant for an internal monastic audience.⁴ Although it is clear that this was not a text intended for a wider audience, I very much doubt that Radbert only wrote for Corbie and its 'daughter', Corvey. The *Epitaphium* may well have been started as such, for its first book concentrates on Wala's conduct as an abbot, and has much to say about the tension between Corbie and Corvey, after Louis the Pious

The Evidence of the *Epitaphium Arsenii*, in V.L. Garver and O.M. Phelan (eds), *Rome and Religion in the Medieval World. Studies in Honor of Thomas F.X. Noble* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 149–78; P. Breternitz, 'Ludwig der Fromme und die Entfremdung von Kirchengut: Beobachtungen zum Epitaphium Arsenii', in Karl Ubl and Daniel Ziemann (eds), *Fälschungen als Mittel der Politik? Pseudoisidor im Licht der neuen Forschung. Gedenkschrift für Klaus Zechiel-Eckes, MGH Studien und Texte 57* (Wiesbaden, 2015), pp. 187–206; M. de Jong, *Epitaph for an Era. Paschasius Radbertus and his Lament for Wala* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

² On Radbert's biography: L. Traube, *Prooemium*, *MGH Poetae* 3, pp. 39–40; H. Peltier, *Pascase Radbert, abbé de Corbie. Contribution à l'étude de la vie monastique et de la pensée chrétienne aux temps carolingiens* (Amiens, 1938); D. Ganz, *Corbie in the Carolingian Renaissance*, Beihefte der Francia 20 (Sigmaringen, 1990), pp. 29–33. On Wala, relying heavily on the *Epitaphium Arsenii*: L. Weinrich, *Wala: Graf, Mönch und Rebell. Die Biographie eines Karolingers* (Lübeck, 1963).

³ Paris, BN, Lat 13909; cf. F. Dolbeau, 'Anciens possesseurs des manuscrits hagiographiques latins conservés à la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris', *Revue d'histoire des textes* 9 (1979), 1980, pp. 183–238; Ganz, *Corbie*, p. 145; B. Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)*, 3 vols (Wiesbaden, 1998–2014), III, no. 4945, p. 213.

⁴ Ganz, 'The *Epitaphium Arsenii*', p. 558; Kempshall, *Rhetoric*, p. 204.

had separated the two communities in 833.⁵ Yet the outspoken second book, added in the mid-850s, emphatically appeals to the shared values of a court-connected political elite. By countering the allegation that Wala had lacked in loyalty (*fides*) to God, king and country, Radbert not only tried to restore his great master's reputation, but also to justify his own more recent conduct as abbot of Corbie.

In what follows, I shall argue that the *Epitaphium*, and especially its second book, takes us straight into the world of a competitive elite, ecclesiastical and secular, whose members measured each other against the yardstick of public service. This exclusive group, often referred to as *proceres* or *consiliarii*, included secular magnates, bishops and abbots. In this constellation, Wala had been a principal star; Radbert belonged as well, albeit not by birth, but by virtue of his association with his great master, and of his office as abbot of Corbie. Radbert's strategies of persuasion were directed at this small yet powerful upper echelon of the Carolingian elite, which included ecclesiastical leaders as well as secular magnates. Charged with so-called ministries (*ministeria*) by their ruler, they were bound to an exacting code of behaviour in which the word 'private' (*privatus*) had mainly negative connotations. A person who was *privatus* was not involved in public affairs and therefore lacked public authority (*fides publica*).⁶ As the Astronomer had it, there was disorder in young Louis's Aquitanian kingdom: 'Because each of the magnates concentrated on private affairs but neglecting public ones, they turned things upside down, turning public into private . . .'⁷ As abbot of Corbie, Radbert had become a political actor and public figure in his own right, who had defended the integrity of his community's property at a number of turbulent synods.⁸ Against this background of high office – the abbacy of Corbie – he positioned both Wala and himself as undeservedly exiled

⁵ Corbie lost a substantial amount of property in the process. The foundation of Corvey by Adalhard and Wala is central to the first book. See *EA* I.19, pp. 48–9, on the ensuing conflict. K.-H. Krüger, 'Zur Nachfolgereglung von 826 in den Klöstern Corbie und Corvey', in N. Kamp and Joachim Wollasch (eds), *Tradition als historische Kraft, Festschrift Karl Hauck* (Berlin and New York, 1982), pp. 181–96.

⁶ M. Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley 400–1000* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 257, citing the well-known passage from Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* (IX.4.36): 'Privati sunt extranei ab officiis publicis. Est enim nomen magistratum habenti contrarium; et dicti privati, quod sint ab officiis curiae absoluti.'

⁷ Astronomus, *Vita Hludovici imperatoris*, c. 6, ed. Ernst Tremp, *MGH SRM* 46 (Hanover, 1995), p. 303. On Carolingian public office and loyalty, see above all S. Airlie's collected articles, *Power and its Problems in Carolingian Europe* (Farnham, 2012); also M. de Jong, 'The Two Republics: Ecclesia and the Public Domain in the Carolingian World', in R. Balzaretto, J. Barrow and P. Skinner (eds), *Italy and Early Medieval Europe: Essays Presented to Chris Wickham*, Past and Present Book Series (Oxford, forthcoming).

⁸ Notably at a synod in Paris (846/7), which granted a privilege to Corbie that was drafted by Radbert himself, or at least under his supervision: ed. W. Hartmann, *MGH Concilia* III (Hanover, 1984), pp. 140–9; cf. De Jong, *Epitaph*, forthcoming.

outsiders who told a prophetic and Jeremiah-like truth, retrospectively. Because Wala's warnings had been scorned at the time, 'up to the present day, none of the rulers can show the commonwealth the way towards justice'.⁹

Radbert's lament about the loss of the *via recta* in his own day and age echoes the bleak fourth and last book of Nithard's *Histories*, a text also written after the death of Louis the Pious in 840, and partly in the wake of the traumatic battle of Fontenoy (25 June 841) when the bloodshed that was prevented in 833 did occur.¹⁰ With this on his mind, Radbert denounced the failure of public responsibility and the personal (lack of) fidelity of a divided leadership, depicting Wala as a paragon of lost public virtues. *Fides* is also a central concern in Dhuoda's book of advice for her son William, written in 841–3 for a son who had commended himself to Charles the Bald at the behest of his fickle father Bernard.¹¹ The latter figures in the *Epitaphium*'s second book as Wala's most perfidious enemy, yet there are similarities between this work and Dhuoda's *Liber manualis*, and also with Nithard's *Historiae*, for that matter. These were the personal voices of one-time insiders whose position had become precarious at the time of writing. They had personal interests to pursue, but their best chance of bolstering their own position was to remind a high-powered audience of public values they had once shared.¹² Such texts were not aimed at a wide audience, but at peers who were still in the charmed circle of royal patronage, and who would therefore be able to let others back in.

Dialogue for insiders

The medium of the literary dialogue allowed Radbert to open up this controversial topic for debate. Not only did he get across his own point

⁹ EA II.6, p. 66: 'Inde est quod adhuc hodie nemo principium explicare potest reipublicę vias ad iustitiam.'

¹⁰ Nithard, *Histories* IV.7, ed. Ph. Lauer, *Nithard: Histoire des fils de Louis le Pieux* (Paris, 1964), p. 144; on this passage, De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 99–100. On Nithard, see especially J.L. Nelson, 'Public Histories and Private History in the Work of Nithard', *Speculum* 60 (1985), pp. 251–93; S. Airlie, 'The World, the Text and the Carolingian Aristocratic and Masculine Identities in Nithard's *Histories*', in P. Wormald and J.L. Nelson (eds), *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 51–77.

¹¹ J.L. Nelson, 'Dhuoda', in Wormald and Nelson (eds), *Lay Intellectuals*, pp. 106–20; R. Le Jan, 'Dhuoda ou l'opportunité du discours féminin', in C. LaRocca (ed.), *Agire da donna. Modelli e pratiche di rappresentazione (secoli vi–x)*, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 3 (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 109–28. On Bernard: Ph. Depreux, 'Der karolingische Hof als Institution und Personenverband', in *Le corti nell'alto medioevo, Settimane* 62 (Spoleto, 2015), pp. 137–64.

¹² As signalled by J.L. Nelson, 'History-writing at the Courts of Louis the Pious and Charles the Bald', in G. Scheibelreiter and A. Scharer (eds), *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichischen Geschichtsforschung 32 (Vienna and Munich, 1994). On writing one's way back to the court, see De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 89–11; and also S. Patzold, 'Konsens und Konkurrenz. Überlegungen zu einem aktuellen Forschungskonzept der Mediävistik', in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 41 (2007), pp. 75–103, with reference to Hincmar's *De ordine palatii*.

of view, it also enabled him to articulate different views on Wala, including those of his enemies, and to voice sharp critique that could not be expressed directly. In both books, the narrator Pascasius, who is Radbert's alter ego, waxes eloquent on Arsenius/Wala's deeds and merits, in response to the questions and objections of two other monks of Corbie. With both classical and patristic dialogues at his fingertips, Radbert was mostly inspired by Sulpicius Severus's *Gallus*, a debate about Martin of Tours that also features three monastic discussion partners.¹³ In addition, the second book owes much to Jerome's combative dialogues. Nevertheless, literary sources do not explain everything, for the *Epitaphium* is also rooted in a tradition of monastic confabulation: small-scale and intimate discussions among learned and therefore privileged monks reflecting on Scripture and other sacred texts.¹⁴

As noted above, *Epitaphium Arsenii* was written in two stages. The first book, which dates to the years directly after Wala's death in 836, deals with the great man's life and deeds as a monk and abbot of Corbie, and covers the period until his return from Italy in 826. The second book was composed some two decades later, in the mid-850s, and is mostly about Wala's role in the two rebellions against Louis the Pious in the early 830s. Its main focus is on the first revolt of 830, for this led to Wala's disgraceful banishment from Louis's court. The *Epitaphium*'s first book opens with meditations on death and grief inspired by the two-book funeral oration written by Ambrose of Milan for his brother Satyricus, and the second ends in a similar vein, when Wala's death in Italy in 836 is discussed.¹⁵ This shows that the *Epitaphium* was intended and completed as one work, as also transpires from the manuscript, where one hand finished the first book and continued the second. Within the more conventional framework of the Ambrosian funeral oration, however, a daring discourse in defence of Wala unfolds. It is driven by prose that has been rightly identified as forensic rhetoric,¹⁶ yet as I shall explain, the switch to frank speech in the second book is an even more marked

¹³ A conclusion also reached by Verri, 'Il libro primo dell'*Epitaphium*'; Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus*, ed. Jacques Fontaine and Nicole Dupré, *Sulpice Sévère, Gallus. Dialogues sur les 'vertus' de saint Martin*, *Sources chrétiennes* 510 (Paris, 2006).

¹⁴ J. Leclercq, 'La récréation et le colloque dans la tradition monastique', *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 43 (1967), pp. 1–20, and J. Fontaine, 'Fins et moyens de l'enseignement ecclésiastique dans l'Espagne wisigothique', *La scuola nell'occidente latino dell'alto medioevo*, *Settimane* 19 (Spoleto, 1972), pp. 145–202, at pp. 182–3.

¹⁵ Ambrose, *De excessu fratris Satyri*, ed. Otto Faller, CSEL 73 (Vienna, 1955), pp. 207–325. For the impact of Ambrose's epitaph on Radbert's work, including the *Vita Adalhardi*, see Peter von Moos, *Consolatio. Studien zur mittellateinischen Trostliteratur über den Tod und zum Problem der christlichen Trauer*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 3, 4 vols (Munich, 1971–2), I, pp. 140–2 and II, pp. 100–1. Most of the references to *De excessu* occur in *EA* I, prologue and c. 5, pp. 21, 23 and 27–8, and then again in *EA* II.22–3, pp. 93–6.

¹⁶ Kempshall, *Rhetoric*, pp. 202–8.

characteristic of Radbert's commemoration of Arsenius. In fact, praise and lament served as a default option whenever the debate got too heated. Radbert relied on this several times, in both books, in order to make his text less controversial.

Already in the first book there is a constant tension between silence and speech, with the aged and grumpy monk Severus, Radbert's old friend Odilman, as the one who challenges the narrator to speak up: if Pascasius had lived in the time of the persecutions, he would not have owned up to knowing Christ! But Pascasius repeatedly warns that it is not yet opportune to speak out openly.¹⁷ When the second book was added, these 'raging silences'¹⁸ (*furibunda silentia*) were left in place and became an effective foil for a Wala who is now fully transformed into Jeremiah, the fearless prophet of doom who had risked his own safety for the well-being of his people. The perspective taken is that of a 'nowadays' (*hodie*) situated decades after the turbulent events of the 830s, when the retired abbot and narrator Pascasius has time for writing once more, after endless worries both in the monastery and in the outside world, and having suffered 'relentless oppression from all sides'.¹⁹ This sensation of chronological distance is further reinforced by a change of the cast of interlocutors at the beginning of the second book. Adeodatus, named after Augustine's son, is still there, urging Pascasius to resume his narrative, but meanwhile he has become older, sadder and wiser, and Severus, the most outspoken of the earlier threesome, has died. He is replaced by Theofrastus, a younger monk who is not only emphatically introduced as unafraid to speak his mind, but also as a discussant who would have been far too bold for the earlier confabulation.²⁰ Theofrastus enters upon the scene declaring that if Wala had been sufficiently courageous to expose the sins of the people, his pupils have no right to hold their tongues.²¹

Together with Wala in his guise as a latter-day Jeremiah, this new discussant helps to set a new tone of fearless truth-telling that pervades the entire second book.²² This makes it all the more unlikely that Radbert

¹⁷ *EA* I.9, p. 34. See also *EA* I.3, p. 25; I.8, p. 33. Shortly after 845 Radbert dedicated all five books of his commentary on Jeremiah to Odilman, calling his friend 'senus Odilmannus Severus'. See *Expositio in lamentationes Hieremie* I, ed. B. Paulus, CCCM 85 (Turnhout, 1988), p. 4.

¹⁸ *EA* I.3, p. 5, citing Statius.

¹⁹ *EA* II, prologue, p. 60: 'post indefessas omnium pressuras'.

²⁰ Theofrastus figures as an authority in Cicero, *Tusculanarum disputationes* I.45; III.21, 68; V.68, 85, 107, ed. Frank E. Rockwood (Norman, 1966); there is also a Theofrastus, the alleged author of a treatise against marriage, in Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum* I.47, *PL* 23, cols 288–91.

²¹ *EA* II.1, p. 61.

²² Cf. I. van Renswoude, 'Licence to Speak. The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages', Ph.D. thesis, Utrecht University (2011), and Janneke Raaijmaker's article in this issue.

added this sequel merely for internal consumption in Corbie, or as a private exercise in commemoration. He had axes to grind and accounts to settle in the highest quarters, not least concerning his own deposition as abbot, with an audience of insiders he hoped to persuade of both Wala's and his own loyalty towards Louis the Pious. Others, such as Empress Judith and above all Bernard of Septimana, Dhuoda's husband, were to blame for the disasters that had struck the realm since the rebellion of 830.

Yet this did not mean that Radbert wrote without restraint or strategy. His deliberate positioning of himself as a truth-telling outsider should be recognized by his readers for what it was, namely as a legitimate way of speaking truth to the powerful.²³ Furthermore, through the verbal exchange between three monks making themselves known only through their bynames, much could be said without having to resort to the first-person singular. These monastic bynames were not intended to hide identities, and the same held true for the (in)famous 'pseudonyms' for the political protagonists in the second book. These revealed and defined moral characters, but they could only be grasped by a readership that understood their significance.²⁴ Thus, Radbert never directly named or shamed any of his protagonists in a way that would make his accusations publicly offensive, and therefore scandalous. When he referred to Judith as 'Justina', it was clear, but only for those familiar with the late antique Christian past, that this was the evil empress who had persecuted Ambrose of Milan, just as the Empress Judith had been Wala's implacable enemy. While Louis's eldest son Lothar was called Honorius, signifying his close relationship with his mentor Arsenius/Wala, the old emperor himself was not allowed the obvious alias of Theodosius. Instead, he was named Justinian, after Justinian I who had a reputation as an oppressor of monasteries.²⁵ The arch-villain of the piece, Bernard of Septimania, figured as Naso, that is, the author Ovid, who had been exiled for adultery: 'Oh that miserable day, which was followed by an even more unhappy night, when the infamous (*sceleratus*) Naso was recalled from Spain...'²⁶

It is no coincidence that the second book was added only when Judith and Bernard were already safely dead, in 843 and 844 respectively. Charles the Bald, who was still very much alive, got some flak as well for his

²³ For an inspiring analysis, see above all Van Renswoude, 'Licence to Speak'.

²⁴ De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 109–10; De Jong, 'Becoming Jeremiah'.

²⁵ The bad reputation of Justinian as an oppressor of monasteries and their property is projected onto Louis; see A. Hasse-Ungeheuer, *Das Mönchtum in der Religionspolitik Kaiser Justinians I. Die Engel des Himmels und der Stellvertreter Gottes auf Erden* (Berlin and Boston, 2016). I am grateful to Stefan Esders for this reference.

²⁶ *EA* II.7, p. 67.

failure to keep up the good work of monastic reform. He was only referred to obliquely, as 'the king'.²⁷ Obviously Radbert did not write to ingratiate himself with this particular monarch, but neither did he feel the need to moderate his criticism of Judith and her reigning son. Positioning Wala and himself as truth-telling outsiders and refraining from naming and shaming the powerful explicitly went a long way towards making this possible.

Public values

You know very well, brother, that he was the one whom neither the terror of threats, nor the force of circumstance, nor the hope of what is present, nor the fear of what is in the future, nor the promise of riches, nor endless varieties of suffering, or any kind of authority could call him away from the love (*caritas*) of Christ, from the love (*dilectio*) of fatherland and people, from the love (*amor*) of the churches and the fidelity towards the emperor. It was for this reason that boldly, like another Jeremiah, he spoke many such words.²⁸

This is Pascasius speaking, in the first of a series of mantra-like pronouncements on the ideals that had motivated Wala's actions. Like the boldness of Jeremiah/Wala and Theofrastus, these repetitive declarations of 'what Wala stood for' contribute to the outspoken character of the second book. Needless to say, this was also what the author himself had subscribed to when, as abbot of Corbie, he was a public figure in his own right. The second book contains more than ten of such clarion calls, of which I can only give a few examples here.²⁹ In 830, Wala/Arsenius joined the rebels 'out of fidelity to ruler and realm, out of love for the fatherland and the people, for the religious life (*religio*) of the churches and the salvation of the inhabitants (*cives*), which were all more dear to him than his own life'.³⁰ Time and again Radbert assured his audience that Arsenius had wanted to save Louis from the designs of his adversaries, above all Bernard of Septimania, who from the moment he became chamberlain in August 829 had intended to lead the emperor 'like a lamb to slaughter'.³¹ Bernard/Naso, that wild boar always with his snout in the

²⁷ *EA* II.4, with reference to the reform synods of 843 and thereafter: 'although the king made a good start with these matters, in the end they [the monasteries] have been pervaded by spreading worldly evils'. The persistent use of *rex* in the previous chapters (Wala's speeches at the court in 828/9) shows Radbert had Charles the Bald in mind rather than Louis.

²⁸ *EA* II.5, pp. 65–6.

²⁹ *EA* II.5, p. 66 (twice); c. 8, pp. 69–70; c. 9, pp. 71–2; c. 10, pp. 73, 75, 76; c. 10, p. 78; c. 14, p. 81 (twice).

³⁰ *EA* II.8, p. 68.

³¹ *EA* II.9, p. 71.

dirt, had turned an orderly palace into a brothel; what he was really after was to kill the emperor and his elder sons, marry the empress and grab the throne. In 830 Arsenius tried to save everyone from this tremendous wickedness, acting ‘for the emperor and imperial rule, for the fatherland and for all the well-born, for fidelity towards and zeal for God, for the Christian religion and the salvation of the citizens (*cives*)’. But Wala himself, shortly thereafter, had been treated as if both human and divine law had been rescinded.³² All this was Pascasius speaking, which is no coincidence. Radbert himself was the one hammering home this message of God, king and fatherland. He then left it to Theofrastus to be astounded that in such a great realm with so many churches, so very few worthy prelates and magnates (*praesules et senatores*) could be found.³³

Clearly his classical and patristic reading furnished Radbert with a rich vocabulary for discussing public institutions: he used *senatus* for an assembly, *senatores* for lay magnates, *res publica* for the Carolingian polity, *cives* for its inhabitants, and *officium* rather than *ministerium* for public office. Yet his formulaic pronouncements about Wala’s shared values mostly derive from the same Carolingian Latin vocabulary of public authority that is found in the standard idiom of contemporary royal documents such as capitularies and privileges of immunity for monasteries. In this context, it is worth recalling Konrad Ewald’s argument that the celebrated Strasbourg oaths, long investigated in terms of the rise of vernacular languages and the birth of France and Germany, were in fact based on the contemporary Latin of capitularies and royal charters.³⁴ Many of these formulaic expressions found their way into the Oaths of Strasbourg; as one example I mention ‘pro deo amur et pro christian poblo et nostro commun saluament’ (‘For the love of God and the Christian people and our common salvation’). Ewald gathered many other instances of Latin phrases from capitularies echoed in the Strasbourg Oaths.³⁵ The familiar Latin terminology of Carolingian government and royal justice helped to stabilize the meaning of the unfamiliar and daring vernacular version of these oaths. Similarly,

³² EA II.10, p. 74.

³³ EA II.15, pp. 82–3.

³⁴ K. Ewald, ‘Formelhafte Wendungen in den Strassburger Eiden’, *Vox Romanica* 23 (1964), pp. 35–55. My thanks to Stefan Esders for calling this article to my attention. For a very informative discussion of more recent literature on the Strasbourg Oaths, see R. McKitterick, ‘The Oaths of Strasbourg (842) in the Light of Recent Scholarship’, in C. Zermatten and J. Sonntag, *Loyalty in the Middle Ages. Ideal and Practice of a Cross-Social Value* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 112–41; also F. Lo Monaco and C. Villa, *I giuramenti di strasburgo: Testi e tradizione* (Florence, 2009), a reference I owe to Rosamond McKitterick.

³⁵ See especially those connected with the triad *Deus/dominus/ecclesia, rex/regnum imperium* and *populus/fideles*: Ewald, ‘Formelhafte Wendungen’, pp. 39–40.

Radbert's declarations about Wala's principles rely on the familiarity of his audience with authoritative Latin royal documents. Radbert's 'mantras' about God, king and people are never entirely similar to set expressions in charters or capitularies, but his own creative mixture of phrases derived from such authoritative expressions. These were the appeals that were to prompt his supporters into action.

Querela

In the second book, the repetitive appeal to shared elite values was a crucial part of Radbert's strategy of persuasion. Who could be against the king and the country, and against fidelity to God and the ruler? At the same time, this formulaic language gets us closer to the dilemmas faced by Wala, Radbert and others within the turbulent arena of the 830s and 840s. Reputations were made and broken over the issue of *fides*, and over the question of whether the conduct of those holding public office matched their position. Had they behaved in a way that could only be called *privatus*, that is, without keeping the common weal (*res publica*) in mind?

This dilemma is also at the heart of one of the more intriguing parts of the second book, in which Radbert depicted a verbal confrontation between the old emperor and his three rebellious sons.³⁶ At first glance it seems to be a dialogue within this dialogue, but on second consideration, things are more complicated. The setting is the Field of Lies in June 833, prior to the moment when all of Louis the Pious's men voted with their feet and went over to the camp of Lothar and his rebellious two brothers, and the underlying argument is that they had legitimate reasons for their infidelity. With communication between the two camps ensured by messengers running back and forth, brief and blunt accusations formulated by Louis are answered elaborately, in elegant and elaborate prose, by the rebellious sons, with Lothar/Honorius as the main spokesman. The contrast between the sons' eloquence and their father's bluntness is striking. Against Louis's accusation that his eldest son had poached his vassals, Honorius elaborately and pointedly reminds his father of the fundamental values he has learned from him:

This I have always heard in your sacred counsel and in the senate of most illustrious men, this I have always observed in your deeds, this I have learned from you, this we read in the deeds of the ancients: that

³⁶ EA II.17, pp. 85–8.

strong and most pre-eminent and well-deserving men should be honoured and covered in glorious fame, rather than driven away...³⁷

Was this a way to make a fool of Louis, who appeared boorish, compared to his sons? Or was this a *disputatio*, with a schoolmaster setting a brief yet challenging series of propositions to his pupils, as Radbert had so often done himself? Alternatively, are we dealing with a justification on the part of the sons to their father, in the mode of a judicial session at the palace?³⁸ Here the ruler would act from a position of total authority, directing his formidable accusations at those summoned, who then went out of their way to exculpate themselves. All of the above could be referred to as a *querela* or *altercatio*, as Radbert called this curious exchange, although the fact that Louis's accusations against his sons are called *capitula* indicates that he envisaged a judicial setting, resorting to the weapons of forensic rhetoric.

Res publica

Radbert granted the rebellious sons the moral high ground: they, rather than their imperial father, are the defenders of the ideals Wala championed. Significantly, the *Epitaphium*'s discourse on the *res publica* only starts in the second book, in reaction not only to the revolts of the 830s but also to the more serious strife after Louis's death in 840. The second book of the *Epitaphium Arsenii* belongs to a modest but significant number of works that reflect on the rebellions against Louis and the divided political world that emerged after the emperor's death. Compared to a successful biography such as the Astronomer's *Life of Louis*, it had very little impact, yet the issues addressed are similar: a discourse on the nature of the public domain emerges, and a discussion about the nature of leadership within this context.

Although they had their own responsibilities and fought for control of their property, 'the churches', were very much part of this court-connected world of public offices and ministries. Radbert referred to what we still tend to call 'the Church' in the plural: as the *ecclesiae*. This archipelago of religious communities, centred upon Louis's imperial court, went

³⁷ EA II.17, p. 87: 'Hoc semper audiui in vestro sacro concilio, et in clarissimorum senatu virorum, hoc semper in vestris recognovi factis, hoc a vobis audiui, hoc legimus in gestis antiquorum, fortes viros et clarissimos, ac bene meritos honorari magis debere, et gloria illustrari quam depelli...'

³⁸ EA II.17, p. 85: 'the *capitula* should be recalled which the august father sent to his sons in the manner of a complaint (*querela*), to make known what were his accusations against [them]'. The expression *Quid contra requireret* refers to the satisfaction or admission of guilt Louis demanded from his sons; *requirere contra* means bringing legal action. Cf. J.F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden, New York and Cologne, 1993), p. 911.

into a state of confusion when they had to contend with three different rulers who might extend patronage. Radbert and Corbie were even more prone to this, given the burden of Wala's tainted reputation. It was at this stage, and with his own experience as an abbot in mind, that Radbert pictured Wala, declaring to both Louis and Lothar in 828 at the palace in Aachen, 'let the king have the public domain (*rempublicam*) to dispense freely for the benefit of his army (*militia*), and let Christ thus have the estates of the churches, like another public domain, entrusted to his faithful assistants for the use of the needy and his servants'.³⁹

In Radbert's view, it was the 'office' of the Carolingian ruler to oversee this delicate balance, like a new Solomon. In my view, it is the duty of modern historians to wonder why Radbert thought of the churches in terms of an alternative republic. To a large extent, religious institutions such as Corbie were part of a public domain that was defined as royal, but this was by no means the equivalent of a secular domain, for the ruler transcended and united the distinctive competencies of churchmen (*praesules*) and lay magnates (*saeculares*). In the course of ninth-century debates about the extent to which the property of the 'churches' should sustain the Carolingian polity, new conceptions of the *res publica* as a commonwealth were formulated. There was nothing theoretical about these discussions, as Radbert's *Epitaphium* shows. In Wala's case and his own, a fervent sense of public duty determined their personal fate.

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³⁹ *EA* II.2, p. 63: 'Habeat igitur rex rempublicam libere in usibus militiæ suæ libere ad dispensandum, habeat et Christus res ecclesiarum, quasi alteram rempublicam, omnium indigentium et sibi servientium usibus...'