



Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel  
*Via regia*

Introduction and Edition by Matthew Ponesse  
Translation and Notes by James Francis LePree

PEETERS

Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel  
*Via regia*

DALLAS MEDIEVAL TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

EDITORS

Kelly Gibson  
(University of Dallas)  
Philipp W. Rosemann  
(University of Kentucky)

EDITORIAL BOARD

Charles S. F. Burnett (Warburg Institute); Marcia L. Colish (Yale University);  
Kent Emery, Jr. (University of Notre Dame);  
Hugh Bernard Feiss, O.S.B. (Monastery of the Ascension);  
Donald J. Kagay (University of Dallas); Theresa Kenney (University of Dallas);  
James J. Lehrberger, O.Cist. (University of Dallas); James McEvoy (†);  
Bernard McGinn (University of Chicago); James J. Murphy (University of California, Davis);  
Jonathan J. Sanford (University of Dallas); Francis R. Swietek (University of Dallas);  
Baudouin van den Abeele (Université catholique de Louvain);  
Nancy van Deusen (Claremont Graduate University);  
Bonnie Wheeler (Southern Methodist University)

SPONSORED BY



DALLAS MEDIEVAL TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

30

Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel  
*Via regia*

INTRODUCTION AND EDITION

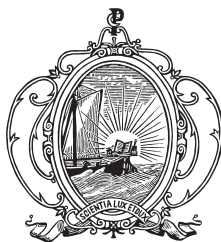
BY

Matthew Ponesse  
(Ohio Dominican University)

TRANSLATION AND NOTES

BY

James Francis LePree  
(City College of New York)



PEETERS  
LEUVEN - PARIS - BRISTOL, CT  
2023

Cover illustration: Image of David in the Golden Psalter (MS. St. Gall, *Stiftsbibliothek*, Cod. Sang. 22, p. 2). By kind permission of the *Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen*.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

© 2023 – Peeters – Bondgenotenlaan 153 – B-3000 Leuven – Belgium.

ISBN 978-90-429-5040-5

eISBN 978-90-429-5041-2

D/2023/0602/76

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.*

Dedicated to my beloved wife Myrna, for her constant patience, support, and encouragement. I would also like to dedicate this volume to the memory of Prof. Thomas Francis Head, who meticulously and patiently taught me to truly understand my profession.

~ James Francis LePre

To Katie, Luke, Michael, and Justin.

~ Matthew Ponesse

no depinximus; oscula melliflua. in  
corthis tabulis fortiter sculpsimus; nec  
ba usā. utpote regia. melliflua. dul  
cia & suaua uelut thesaurū immen  
tis tencm' archano; felices dicimus.  
illos qui uobiscū cortice uiuunt.  
felices. qui iugit' uobiscū morant'.  
vñ eni forma patient' & ornata. om  
nes letificat. om' exaltat & glori  
cat. omib' munera. dilectionē & amo  
rem ministrat. hunc nos regio dul  
ciq. amore p'moti. & regali munerē  
exortati. hunc parui paruuli libel  
lū digessim'. quē diuini testimo  
nii multipliciter confirmauimus.  
nomen illi una regia declin'. &  
tibi regi felicit' legendū dixim'.  
ut uelut p' regia currens teneat.  
ad regem regū. & ad regē felicit'  
puenias parui.

**INCIPIT LIBER QVI  
VOCATUR VIA REGIA.**

**D**s om'ns te clarissime rex  
quando uoluit. & ubi uo  
luit. de regali. nobilitate ge  
nerē nobilit' percipit. & misericor  
diē ad lauacriū regenerationis  
p'duxit; caput tuū sacri cris  
matis oleo linuit. & dignant'  
in filiū adoptauit; constituit te  
regem populi terrarū. & p'p'riū fili  
ū. in caelo fieri iussit heredem;  
his & tñ sacris donatus muneribus.  
sunt portat' diadema regis; Primū  
quia defensorē regū. regaliq. des  
cendit' p' sapia. decentes tibi conue  
nit. & bene. & multa regere regnā;  
So do. quia te regem esse. & sacri  
crismatis unctio. & fidei confessio.  
operisq. confirmat actio; Tercio.  
quia ut eternū cum xpō felicit'  
p'p'eres regnum. misericordit' ad  
huc te paruuli rex regū adopta  
uit in filiū; hec te p'p'icua cla  
ra q. inlicita. ab infantia regem cla  
mānt. regēq. confirmant; Sup  
est ut hec ipsa regalia quae per

Frontispiece: The *Via regia* in MS. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 956, fol. 162v. By kind permission of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

# Table of Contents

FOREWORD	ix
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xiii
ABBREVIATIONS	xv
INTRODUCTION	1
I. <i>Via regia</i> : Framework, Sources, and Scholarship	7
II. The Date and Recipient of the <i>Via regia</i> : A Situational Framework	10
III. The <i>Via regia</i> and Its Wider Audience	15
IV. The Present Edition	23
Critical Studies, Editions, and Translations	23
Manuscripts	24
Stemmatics and Textual Criticism	29
Editorial Principles	39
V. Translation Principles	40
Style	40
The Translation of Scripture	40
Endnotes	41
VI. Selected Bibliography	41
Primary Sources	41
Secondary Sources	44
<i>Via regia</i>	53
NOTES	219
APPENDICES	229
INDICES	235



## Foreword

The *Via regia*, the *Royal Way*, is a treatise on good rulership written by the monk Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel in the early ninth century. It is one of the first “mirrors of princes” in the Western tradition. Although the work offers very little detail about the day-to-day functioning of royal government, it highlights the moral element of rulership. The work’s thirty-four chapters focus on virtues and vices, and urge the cultivation of proper attitudes, behaviors, emotions, and relationships with God and other people, from judges and potential flatterers at court to slaves. It was probably intended for young Louis the Pious while he was still king of Aquitaine, before he had succeeded his father Charlemagne as emperor. The lack of a specific named recipient means that the text could have been relevant to a wider audience, offering advice suitable for all who held positions of authority, and applicable to all Christians. In this way it may share similarities with mirrors of the laity intended for counts, like Alcuin’s *De virtutibus et vitiis liber* and Jonas of Orléans’s *De institutione laicali*.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of its exact recipient, the *Via regia* sheds important light on ideas about power and leadership, and it illustrates how freely giving and willingly accepting advice were valued and expected traits for participants in Carolingian court culture.<sup>2</sup>

Smaragdus’s lessons are rooted in biblical examples. The *Via regia* shows the significant influence of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, on Carolingian concepts of kingship. Smaragdus’s use of the Bible, which provided the foundation for both lay and monastic spirituality, also gives the *Via regia* a monastic character. We see monastic influence on Smaragdus’s concept of rulership through his use of the Rule of St. Benedict and through the text’s similarities with the *Diadema monachorum* (*Crown of Monks*) and *Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict*, monastic works that Smaragdus wrote soon after the *Via regia*. Monastic ideas played a significant role in the style of Louis the Pious’s rulership and the culture of his court.<sup>3</sup> Even if

---

<sup>1</sup> Alcuin, *De virtutibus et vitiis liber*, trans. Rachel Stone, *The Heroic Age* 16 (2015), [www.heroicage.org/issues/16/stone.php](http://www.heroicage.org/issues/16/stone.php); Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali*, ed. and trans. Odile Dubreucq, in *Instruction des laïcs* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2012–2013).

<sup>2</sup> See Irene van Renswoude, *The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 186, on this work within the wider movement.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas F. X. Noble, “The Monastic Ideal as a Model for Empire: The Case of Louis the Pious,” *Revue bénédictine* 86 (1976): 235–50. For its influence on our understanding of Louis’s reign, see Rutger

we cannot definitively view Louis as the *Via regia*'s recipient, we can see how the work exemplifies ideas apparent in aspects of his reign.

Dr. James Francis LePree's notes to the translation demonstrate biblical and monastic influence and show Smaragdus's wide reading and indebtedness to works by Augustine, Cassiodorus, Cyprian of Carthage, Defensor of Ligugé, Isidore of Seville, John Cassian, and Taio of Saragossa. The notes also indicate how Smaragdus adapted his sources into lessons applicable for his target audience, whether monks or a wider range of power holders. We see how Smaragdus reworked and adapted his material, showing originality in his use of earlier works for a new purpose. This volume also contains a table noting similarities with the topics covered in Smaragdus's *Crown of Monks* and the *Sententiae* of Isidore of Seville and Taio of Saragossa. Even when Smaragdus addressed the same topics as in these other works, he organized his material differently and did not simply incorporate the content without change. This volume makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of Smaragdus's method, education, and influences. It also offers a comprehensive look at the life and work of an important scholar that is accessible to a wider audience, featuring an introduction that gives an overview of Smaragdus's career and an appendix that summarizes the chronology of Smaragdus's works and life.

In addition to offering insight into key areas of Carolingian studies—education, monasticism, reform, and rulership—the text is useful for the study of a variety of topics, including the history of emotions. Many of Smaragdus's chapters concern emotions, including love, fear, and anger. The extensive presence of emotion words indicate that emotions played a substantial role in Smaragdus's concept of good rulership, and the *Via regia* offers ample material for studying Smaragdus's view of these emotions and the sources that shaped his view.

This volume should become the edition of reference for future work on this text. Until now, scholars have had to use the edition in the *Patrologia Latina*, which was a reprint of Luc d'Achery's 1661 edition. Although this edition is valuable for preserving the text from the now-lost MS. Vatican City, *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Reg. lat. 190, its reliance on this manuscript caused some deficiencies that this new edition has remedied. Dr. Matthew Ponesse utilized this earlier edition alongside five surviving manuscripts: three with the complete text and two containing excerpts. This volume presents the first critical edition of the *Via regia*, including an apparatus noting all variants and giving a full view of the textual history. This new edition also offers insight into the biblical texts available to Smaragdus. The earlier edition's biblical quotations are conventional Vulgate readings. This edition gives the biblical

---

Kramer, *Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 51–53.

quotations as preserved in the manuscripts, with correspondences with the Vulgate italicized. Words not found in the Vulgate are not italicized, and endnotes provide discussion about Smaragdus's sources for these verses. This new edition also includes prefatory material found in the three surviving complete manuscripts, which was not included in the earlier edition but is important for the light that it sheds on Smaragdus's goals and intended recipient. The introduction contains details about the manuscripts, their relationship with each other, and the textual work and principles underlying the critical edition.

Another significant contribution, relevant to an even wider audience, is Dr. LePree's English translation based on the solid foundation of this new edition. This is the first translation of the entire *Via regia* into English. It will make the work accessible to new readers, who may have encountered Smaragdus through the translations of his other works, or who may have arrived at the text with expertise in another field and an interest in comparative approaches (for instance, a scholar of the mirrors of princes in the Islamic tradition). It also makes the text's insights into medieval history, politics, and religion available to undergraduate classrooms.

May this new edition provide a more secure path by which we can study the *Via regia*, and may this translation invite many more to participate in the journey.

Kelly Gibson  
July 18, 2022



## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge Kelly Gibson, who read this manuscript with great care, encouraged close attention to detail, and patiently answered questions concerning the introduction, critical text, and translation. Her assistance and recommendations have enhanced all aspects of this project, and for that we are very grateful. We would also like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this manuscript, whose suggestions have helped us to produce a text that is situated in current Carolingian scholarship but can be appreciated by general readers as well. In addition, we thank Rebecca Straple-Sovers for copyediting.

We are grateful to the directors of the *Real Biblioteca del Monasterio del Escorial* and the Image and Graphical Archive of the *Österreichische Nationalbibliothek* for assistance in securing copies of the manuscripts for the edition, and to Ohio Dominican University for a summer research grant and sabbatical awarded in support of this project. We also thank the *Österreichische Nationalbibliothek* and *Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen* for permission to use manuscript images for our frontispiece and cover, respectively.

Lastly, we would like to thank our respective colleagues for offering advice and encouragement along the way.



## Abbreviations

- DM* Smaragdus, *Diadema monachorum*, PL 102:593B–690A.  
*ER* Smaragdus, *Expositio in regulam sancti Benedicti*, ed. Alfred Spannagel and Pius Engelbert (Siegburg: Schmitt, 1974).



## Introduction

The *Via regia* (*Royal Way*) was composed in the early ninth century as an exhortation on proper leadership most likely intended for King Louis of Aquitaine and others associated with his court.<sup>1</sup> Considered one of the very first examples of political writing of the early European Middle Ages, the *Via regia* is divided into thirty-four chapters of Christian spirituality addressing such topics as the virtues and the vices, the necessity of peace, justice, and good judgment, the evils of captivity, and the sort of riches to be pursued in this world.

Details of the life and career of Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, the *Via regia*'s author, can be pieced together from assorted ninth-century legislation, letters, and his other extant works. Charter evidence places Smaragdus as abbot of Saint-Mihiel between the years 816 and 826, a period in which the monastery received confirmation of its immunity, the privilege to receive tithes from those who held lands in benefice, a tax exemption on transported goods, land for the building of a new monastery, and the right of monks to elect their own abbot.<sup>2</sup> The only other third-party record of Smaragdus comes in the form of two letters. The first was sent by Smaragdus and Bishop Frotharius of Toul to Louis the Pious, informing the emperor of an altercation that took place between the abbot of Moyennoutier and his monks.<sup>3</sup> The authors report that, on the death of Abbot Fortunatus of Moyennoutier, the goods

---

<sup>1</sup> On the audience of the *Via regia*, see below, pp. 10–23.

<sup>2</sup> The charters are reprinted in André Lesort, *Chronique et chartes de l'abbaye de Saint-Mihiel* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1912), 57–71. For a modern French translation, see “La Chronique de Saint-Mihiel (XI<sup>e</sup> siècle),” trans. Michèle Gaillard, Monique Goulet, and Anne Wagner, in *Retour aux sources. Textes, études et documents d'histoire médiévale offerts à Michel Parisse*, ed. Sylvain Gouguenheim, Monique Goulet, Pierre Monnet, and Laurent Morelle (Paris: Picard, 2004), 987–1013. The eleventh-century chronicle of Saint-Mihiel contains a description of Smaragdus based almost entirely on the charter evidence. The chronicler also includes Smaragdus's epitaph and a rationalization for moving the monastery one mile away from its original foundation: Lesort, *Chronique et chartes*, 7–10; *Chronicon sancti Michaelis monasterii in pago Viridunensi*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH, *Scriptores* 4 (Hanover: Hahn, 1841), 79–86.

<sup>3</sup> *Frotharii episcopi Tullenensis epistolae*, ed. Karl Hampe, MGH, *Epistolae* 3, *Epistolae Karolini aevi* 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1899), no. 21, p. 290. Saint-Mihiel and Moyennoutier were monasteries in the diocese of Toul, explaining the involvement of the bishop. For a modern French translation of these letters, see Michel Parisse, *La correspondance d'un évêque carolingien: Frothaire de Toul (ca. 813–847)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998), 92–94.

and property that had earlier been granted to this monastery by Smaragdus were abused by the new abbot, Isimund. The monks, deprived as they were of the necessities of life, brought this to the attention of both Frotharius and Smaragdus. It was the finding of these two that both parties were to blame: the monks through their negligence and Isimund through his dereliction. Although Isimund vowed to emend his ways, the monks feared that he would not keep to his promise unless ordered to do so by imperial decree. Consequently, Frotharius and Smaragdus gave the monks permission to bring this matter before the emperor. The second letter was composed by the same Frotharius, asking Hilduin, abbot of Saint-Denis and archchaplain of the royal court, to convey the petition of the monks of Moyenmoutier to Louis the Pious.<sup>4</sup> We have no knowledge of the outcome of this dispute, though from the silence of the sources one can perhaps infer that the matter was resolved and that Isimund restored to the community what was theirs by right.

The remaining details of Smaragdus's life must be pieced together from the works he left behind. During his career Smaragdus produced texts in association with the Carolingian court, participated in the reform of monasticism, and turned out a wealth of devotional writing on the monastic life. In the first decade of the ninth century, Smaragdus composed a commentary on the *Ars minor* of Donatus and exposition on the Psalms.<sup>5</sup> An examination of the content of both of these works, as well as their attribution to Smaragdus *presbyter*, make it likely that they were produced by Smaragdus as master of the monastic school.<sup>6</sup> In 809, Charlemagne directed Smaragdus to draft the official Carolingian response to the *Filioque* controversy, a dispute concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Frotharii episcopi Tullenensis epistolae*, no. 22, p. 291. Frotharius is the sole author of this letter, though he does name Smaragdus as his co-plaintiff.

<sup>5</sup> The preface of the *Expositio Psalmorum* is printed in PL 129:1021D–1024B. The text has yet to be made available in a modern critical edition. André Wilmart provides an excellent examination of Smaragdus's use of the Psalter in "Smaragde et le Psautier," *Revue biblique* 31 (1922): 350–59. For the critical edition, see Bengt Löfstedt, Louis Holtz, and Adele Kibre, eds., *Liber in partibus Donati* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986). On the Christian framework of this grammar, see Louis Holtz, "La tradition ancienne du *Liber in partibus Donati* de Smaragde de Saint-Mihiel," *Revue d'histoire des textes* 16 (1986): 171–211; Jean Leclercq, "Smaragdus et la grammaire chrétienne," *Revue du moyen âge* 4 (1948): 15–22.

<sup>6</sup> On the dating of these works, see Fidel Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd von Saint-Mihiel* (Munich: Fink, 1974), 13–21.

<sup>7</sup> Harald Willjung, *Das Konzil von Aachen 809*, MGH, Concilia 2, pt. 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1998), 303–12. Studies on this text include Harald Willjung, "Zur Überlieferung der *Epistola de processione spiritus sancti* Smaragds von Saint-Mihiel," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 47 (1991): 161–66; Peter Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse zwischen Ost- und Westkirche im Frühmittelalter* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 157–59, 371–72; A. Edward Siecienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 98–100; Rädle, *Studien*, 60–62.

It has been proposed that Smaragdus was likely an abbot when he composed this work, since only someone in a position of authority would have been asked to produce an official statement on behalf of the kingdom.<sup>8</sup> Even so, he is first identified as an abbot in the attribution of his *Liber comitis*, a compendium of patristic commentary that was produced no earlier than 812.<sup>9</sup> He composed the *Via regia* shortly thereafter.<sup>10</sup>

Smaragdus continued to provide educational texts for monks later in life. His commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict was composed soon after the Council of Aachen in 816 and reveals both an immediate response to legislation seeking to standardize the practice of monasticism, as well as a snapshot of local monastic practice and spirituality.<sup>11</sup> In the early ninth century, monastic reformers had attempted to impose a single rule and unified practice on Carolingian monasteries.<sup>12</sup> These efforts culminated in two reform councils that met at Aachen in 816 and 817, respectively, under the auspices of Emperor Louis the Pious and led by his advisor, Benedict of Aniane. In addition to establishing the Rule of St. Benedict as the definitive text governing all monks, reformers supplemented the Rule with various regulations in an attempt to correct abuses in monastic practice and return communities

---

<sup>8</sup> For this argument, see Louis Holtz's introduction to the *Liber in partibus*, xviii. Holtz argues that Smaragdus was nominated abbot in the years just before the Council of Aachen in 809 or in the first months of 810. See also Rädle, *Studien*, 21 n. 52.

<sup>9</sup> On the dating of the *Liber comitis*, see Rädle, *Studien*, 130–32. It is printed in PL 102:13C–552D.

<sup>10</sup> On the available editions and translations of the *Via regia*, see below, pp. 23–24. For the dating of this text, see pp. 10–12.

<sup>11</sup> *ER*. This edition replaces the text in PL 102:689A–932C.

<sup>12</sup> The regulation of monastic practice was likely directed at communities under royal patronage or whose regular status had been secured by charter. A list of such monasteries can be found in the *Notitia*, a document drafted in 818 at the request of Louis the Pious that enumerates monastic communities owing military, financial, and spiritual obligations to the empire: *Notitia de servitio monasteriorum*, ed. Petrus Becker, in *Initia consuetudinis Benedictinae: Consuetudines saeculi octavi et noni*, ed. Kassius Hallinger (Siegburg: Schmitt, 1963), 485–99. The monk Ardo describes this report in his *Life of Benedict of Aniane*, explaining that the document was produced to recognize and guarantee the regular status of these communities, thus protecting them from exploitation by the secular clergy: *Vita Benedicti abbatis Anianensis*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH, *Scriptores* 15, pt. 1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1887), chap. 39, p. 217. Émile Lesne, “Les ordonnances monastiques de Louis le Pieux et la *Notitia de servitio monasteriorum*,” *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 6 (1920): 449–93, at 470–88, determines that the report does not contain a complete list of regular monasteries, but only those that had adopted the reformed observance of monasticism in 818, as referenced in the capitulary of the same year. Other monasteries, Lesne states, may have been excluded from the list since they had not received royal status and service was not able to be demanded by the king. Lesne also reasons that monasteries whose regular abbots were resident bishops, or those that had already enjoyed these privileges before Benedict of Aniane's petition, would not have been enumerated in the report.

to more rigorous observance.<sup>13</sup> Smaragdus's commentary on the Rule is a document that brings together and attempts to reconcile two competing forces of monasticism: the ideal practice imposed by reformers and the daily observance of diverse communities of monks. In his commentary, Smaragdus confirms the general prescriptions of Benedictine monasticism while at the same time finding room for the various monastic customs that continued to develop at the local level.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The legislation promulgated at these reform councils has been edited by Josef Semmler in *Initia consuetudinis Benedictinae: Consuetudines saeculi octavi et noni*, ed. Kassius Hallinger (Siegburg: Schmitt, 1963), 451–68, 470–81. Semmler also provides an indispensable study of this legislation in “Benedictus II: Una regula—una consuetudo,” in *Benedictine Culture, 750–1050*, ed. W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1983), 1–49. Recent considerations of Benedict of Aniane's contribution to monastic reform include Fabio Cusimano, “Benedetto di Aniane e la legislazione monastica carolingia attraverso i capitularia,” in *Anselmo d'Aosta e il pensiero monastico medievale: Atti del XVIII Convegno internazionale di studi della Società Italiana per lo Studio del Pensiero Medievale (SISPM) (Cava de' Tirreni—Fisciano, 5–8 dicembre 2009)*, ed. Luigi Catalani and Renato de Filippis (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 327–58; Paolo Chiesa, “L'imperatore dei monaci. Benedetto di Aniane nella Vita scritta da Ardo,” in *Il secolo di Carlo Magno: Istituzioni, letterature e cultura del tempo carolingio*, ed. Ileana Pagani and Francesco Santi (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2016), 229–45; Colleen Maura McGrane, “The Rule Collector of Aniane,” *American Benedictine Review* 63 (2012): 267–83. For studies on the reform as a dynamic movement prompted not by imperial edict but rather popular impulses, see note 14.

<sup>14</sup> For studies on the commentary in the context of the Carolingian monastic reform, see Matthew Ponesse, “Smaragdus of St. Mihiel and the Carolingian Monastic Reform,” *Revue bénédictine* 116 (2006): 367–92 and “Editorial Practice in Smaragdus of St Mihiel's Commentary on the Rule of St Benedict,” *Early Medieval Europe* 18 (2010): 61–91. For an overview of recent approaches to medieval reform movements, particularly trends that have broken down boundaries in our understanding of the historical processes of reform, see Alexandra Walsham, “Migrations of the Holy: Explaining Religious Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44 (2014): 241–80, at 244–45. The notion that renewals are as much protracted processes resulting from popular impulses as they are immediate and defensive reactions to legislative intervention can be seen in recent studies on Carolingian monasticism. See, for example, Steven Vanderputten, *Medieval Monasticisms: Forms and Experiences of the Monastic Life in the Latin West* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 46–53 and *Dark Age Nunneries: The Ambiguous Identity of Female Monasticism, 800–1050* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018), 37–64; Rutger Kramer, *Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 43–57; Renie Choy, “Praying by the Rules: Legislating Intercessory Prayer in Carolingian Monastic Reform,” in *Shaping Stability: The Normation and Formation of Religious Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. Krijn Pansters and Abraham Plunkett-Latimer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 69–87; Mariël Urbanus, “‘The Abbot Shall Decide Out of Necessity’: Changing the Order of the Congregation in the Hildemar Commentary (c. 845–50),” in *Shaping Stability*, 103–18; Michèle Gaillard, “Female Monasteries of the Early Middle Ages (Seventh to Ninth Century) in Northern Gaul: Between Monastic Ideals and Aristocratic Powers,” in *Women in the Medieval Monastic World*, ed. Janet Burton and Karen Stöber (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 75–96. Studies on the spirituality and sources of the commentary include Terrence G. Kardong, “The Earliest Commentator on RB: Smaragdus on Benedict's Prologue,” *American Benedictine Review* 55 (2004):

Smaragdus complemented his commentary on the Rule with the *Diadema monachorum* (*Crown of Monks*), a devotional text containing one hundred chapters of patristic spirituality brought to bear on the current practice of Frankish monasticism.<sup>15</sup> Similar to many of Smaragdus's other works, the *Diadema* is largely a work of compilation and perhaps underscores why Smaragdus has historically received less attention in modern scholarship compared to many of the other intellectuals of his age.<sup>16</sup> Smaragdus's works tend to suffer from an apparent lack of relevance, since they appear to bear little imprint of an author in his own right. Indeed, the author seems content to defer to the authorities of the past. If he surfaces in his works at all, it is generally to clarify the teachings of his sources and provide additional Scriptural references and exegesis.<sup>17</sup> Recent scholarship, however, has begun to show that

---

171–93; Bengt Löfstedt, "Zu Smaragdus' Kommentar der Benediktinerregel," *Arctos* 18 (1984): 37–43; Otto Mazal, "Ein neues Fragment der *Expositio in regulam s. Benedicti* von Smaragdus von St.-Mihiel," *Scriptorium* 13 (1959): 210–16; Basilius Steidle, "Der Rat der Brüder nach den ältesten *Regula Benedicti*-Kommentaren des Abtes Smaragdus († um 826) und des Magisters Hildemar († um 850)," *Erbe und Auftrag: Benediktinische Monatsschrift* 53 (1977): 181–92.

<sup>15</sup> *DM*. A French translation of this text was produced by Jean Leclercq, *La voie royale. Le diadème des moines* (Saint-Léger-Vauban: La Pierre-qui-Vire, 1950). For a more recent German translation, see Christian Schütz, *Diadem der Mönche* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 2009). Réginald Grégoire provides an extensive review of the manuscript tradition in "La tradizione manoscritta del *Diadema monachorum* di Smaragdo († ca. 830)," *Inter fratres* 34 (1984): 1–20. Other studies on the *DM* include Jasmijn Bovendeert, "Royal or Monastic Identity? Smaragdus' *Via regia* and *Diadema monachorum* Reconsidered," in *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini, Rob Meens, Christina Pössel, and Philip Shaw (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006), 239–51; Daniel Marcel La Corte, "Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel: Ninth-Century Sources for Twelfth-Century Reformers," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 41 (2006): 273–90; Rädle, *Studien*, 68–76.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, recent monographs and anthologies on Rabanus Maurus: Raymund Kottje, *Verzeichnis der Handschriften mit den Werken des Hrabanus Maurus* (Hanover: Hahn, 2012); Marc-Aeilko Aris and Susana Bullido del Barrio, eds., *Hrabanus Maurus in Fulda. Mit einer Hrabanus Maurus-Bibliographie (1979–2009)* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 2010); Philippe Depreux, Stéphane Lebecq, Michel J.-L. Perrin, and Olivier Szerwiniack, eds., *Raban Maur et son temps* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Michael Embach, *Die Kreuzesschrift des Hrabanus Maurus: De laudibus sanctae crucis* (Trier: Paulinus, 2007); Norbert Kössinger, ed., *Hrabanus Maurus: Profil eines europäischen Gelehrten. Beiträge zum Hrabanus-Jahr 2006* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 2008); Franz J. Felten and Barbara Nichtweiss, eds., *Hrabanus Maurus: Gelehrter, Abt von Fulda und Erzbischof von Mainz* (Mainz: Publikationen Bistum Mainz, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> For an excellent anthology on the Carolingian practice of compilation, see *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Burton Van Name Edwards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003). Notable studies include that of Johannes Heil, who looks at the creative incorporation of patristic sources to discern Carolingian attitudes towards Jews, in "Labourers in the Lord's Quarry: Carolingian Exegetes, Patristic Authority, and Theological Innovation, a Case Study in the Representation of Jews in Commentaries on Paul," 75–95; John J. Contreni, "Glossing the Bible in the Early Middle Ages: Theodore and Hadrian of Canterbury and John Scottus (Eriugena)," 19–38, shows how glossators such

Smaragdus did more than simply compile the existing inheritance of an earlier age into uninspired collections. By examining his selection, arrangement, and reworking of sources, one can find a pertinent commentary on various educational, theological, and monastic topics.<sup>18</sup>

A more comprehensive picture of Smaragdus is also beginning to emerge as modern scholars examine his works side-by-side and identify developments in his thought and ideas.<sup>19</sup> No longer can Smaragdus be defined by the content of any one particular work. As an up-and-coming courtier writing for leading intellectuals on the one hand and as a teacher writing for inexperienced monks on the other, Smaragdus straddled the worlds of the Carolingian court and cloister throughout his career and attempted in his works to develop a consistent ideology relevant to multiple audiences. Unlike previous depictions of Smaragdus as a sporadic writer whose texts are disconnected and lacking cohesion, new research demonstrates that he followed a consistent and intelligible goal.

---

as John Scottus incorporated sources like Pliny and Isidore not only to acquaint his audience with specific biblical terminology, but also to provide a more general education to his students; Celia Chazelle, "Exegesis in the Ninth-Century Eucharist Controversy," 167–87, demonstrates how Carolingian scholars made extensive use of patristic literature to formulate different arguments in the debate surrounding the nature of the Eucharist. Similar assessments can be found in an earlier collection of essays edited by Rosamond McKitterick, *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), particularly in assessments by Giles Brown, "The Carolingian Renaissance," 1–51, John Marenbon, "Carolingian Thought," 171–92, and Rosamond McKitterick, "The Legacy of the Carolingians," 317–23.

<sup>18</sup> On Smaragdus's work of compilation, see Ponesse, "Editorial Practice," 61–91; Ponesse, "Carolingian Monastic Reform," 367–92; Matthew Ponesse, "Standing Distant from the Fathers: Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel and the Reception of Early Medieval Learning," *Traditio* 67 (2012): 71–99.

<sup>19</sup> See, in particular, Kramer, *Rethinking Authority*, 123–68. Kramer's examination of royal authority in the reign of Louis the Pious includes an extensive chapter on Smaragdus and shows how the author integrated a consistent and uniform idea of *correctio* in all of his works. Kramer seizes upon the metaphor of the *via regia*, the royal way, a path that is not only intended for kings and rulers, but for all Christians as they pursue a life of virtue as subjects of the true and eternal King. Kramer does well to show how Smaragdus's exhortation to kings was not merely a prescription of royal duties, but also a description of a way of life accessible to all Christians. What is more, he traces this idea from Smaragdus's political writing to his monastic works as well, showing how the commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict was held together by the same image of the *via regia*, the idea of the monastic life as a road toward higher learning.

I. *VIA REGIA*: FRAMEWORK, SOURCES, AND SCHOLARSHIP

The *Via regia* is somewhat unique among Smaragdus's works for not being overtly reliant on source material. The treatise contains the author's own commentary, but within a developing framework of spirituality.<sup>20</sup> Smaragdus often begins each lesson by explaining how his subject ties into that of the previous chapter. He then counsels his reader to embrace the topic at hand and proceeds to establish the truth of his teaching with a list of relevant verses culled from Scripture. He closes his discussion with a final exhortation to his reader, relating the necessity of his instruction to the life of a Christian king.

Smaragdus takes many of his themes from the *Sententiae* of Isidore of Seville and Taio of Saragossa, respectively, both of whom rely in varying degrees on the writing of Gregory the Great.<sup>21</sup> No fewer than nineteen chapter headings in the *Via regia* have a parallel in one or both of the two *Sententiae*.<sup>22</sup> Even so, the fact that Smaragdus turns to Isidore and Taio for topics of discussion, but incorporates very little, if anything, of their teachings, suggests that he was confident in his own ability to provide instruction on the conduct of officials in his day. It is also notable that Smaragdus departs from his predecessors in his organization of material, extracting from the *Sententiae* various topics on the Christian and monastic life, and rearranging them for the use of Christian leaders. He begins with the most important New Testament commandments, "Love of God and Neighbor" (chap. 1, cf. Matt. 23:37, Mark 12:30–31, Luke 10:27), and discusses the fear that compels kings to adhere to God's mandates (chaps. 2–3). He then proceeds to examine the wisdom necessary to discern God's will and the prudence to know when to act (chaps. 4–5), the simplicity of heart to do only God's will (chap. 6), the patience to pronounce right judgments and the mercy with which to temper justice (chaps. 7–10), the responsibility of honoring God with suitable works and offerings (chap. 11), and the priority of seeking heavenly treasure over worldly gain (chaps. 12–16). Remaining chapters stand apart from this central program, though many are arranged in a corresponding

---

<sup>20</sup> As Kramer, *Rethinking Authority*, 123–68, has shown, the *Via regia* has much in common with his other works, particularly the *DM* and *ER*. For further discussion of the correspondence between these works, see below, pp. 21–23.

<sup>21</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, ed. Pierre Cazier (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998); Taio of Saragossa, *Sententiarum libri quinque*, PL 80:732–990. For a discussion of these sources in the context of the *Via regia*, see Kramer, *Rethinking Authority*, 133, 148–49.

<sup>22</sup> For the correspondence between these works, see Appendix B, pp. 230–34.

order and demonstrate a progression of dispositions or behaviors (e.g., chaps. 18–19, 23–24).<sup>23</sup>

The originality of Smaragdus's discussion is also underscored by his infrequent use of existing sources. While he does at times incorporate passages from Augustine, Gregory, Isidore, and Taio, these excerpts do not feature prominently in his discussion, but are placed, rather, in a supportive role. If Smaragdus favors the work of one author in his *Via regia*, it is that of Cyprian of Carthage. Smaragdus uses four of Cyprian's works to elaborate on the subjects of patience, peace, and envy.<sup>24</sup> Cyprian wrote at a time when problems in the church could be traced back to abuses in leadership, so it is not all surprising that Smaragdus found in excerpts of his works a wealth of material on the responsibilities of Christian rulers. When incorporating the teachings of earlier writers, Smaragdus does not name his authorities. Either he did not feel it necessary to bolster his teachings with the authority of earlier writers, or he believed that calling attention to these sources would in some way displease his reader. Clearly, he sought to approach his intended audience as a spiritual adviser, not as a polemicist seeking to refute errors in doctrine or as a master needing to educate ignorant students and discipline errant monks.

Notwithstanding the originality of Smaragdus's program and teachings, the *Via regia* has failed to attract significant attention in modern scholarship. Most scholars have focused on the circumstances surrounding the text's composition and the relationship of the work to other Carolingian sources.<sup>25</sup> They posit that the *Via regia* is one of the first true *fürstenspiegel* (Mirrors of Princes) of the early Middle Ages, but

---

<sup>23</sup> Smaragdus's central program emerges when comparing the structure of the *Via regia* and *DM*. The latter work uses the *Via regia* as its initial template but departs thereafter to consider particulars relating to the monastic life. For more on the program behind both works, see Bovendeert, "Royal or Monastic Identity?," 240–50.

<sup>24</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, *De bono patientiae*, ed. Claudio Moreschini (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), chap. 19, p. 130; Cyprian of Carthage, *De opera et elemosynis*, ed. M. Simonetti (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), chap. 5, p. 58; Cyprian of Carthage, *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, ed. M. Bévenot, trans. Michel Poirier, in *L'unité de l'église* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2013), chap. 24, p. 242; Cyprian of Carthage, *Ad Demetrianum*, ed. M. Simonetti (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), chap. 10, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, M. L. W. Laistner, "The Date and the Recipient of Smaragdus' *Via regia*," *Speculum* 3 (1928): 392–97; Lester K. Born, "The *Specula principis* of the Carolingian Renaissance," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 12 (1933): 583–612, at 592–95; Wilfrid Parsons, "The Influence of Romans XIII on Christian Political Thought II: Augustine to Hincmar," *Theological Studies* 1 (1940): 337–64; Hans Martin Klinkenberg, "Über karolingische Fürstenspiegel," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 7 (1956): 82–98; Joachim Scharf, "Studien zu Smaragdus und Jonas," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 17 (1961): 333–84, at 333–52; J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The *Via regia* of the Carolingian Age," in *Trends in Medieval Political Thought*, ed. Beryl Smalley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 22–41.

assign to Smaragdus only a minor role in the tradition of Christian political thought. Such a conclusion is understandable, yet extremely limiting. Those who have approached this work for its connection to the political life of the Carolingian Empire have uncovered very little about the practical administration of the realm, the relationship between the king and his subjects, or even the personal sentiments of the author.<sup>26</sup> And this is not surprising. The *Via regia* was largely composed for devotional purposes. It was designed for the reader's personal edification and spiritual formation, and it seeks to provide biblical exemplars and scriptural maxims to urge those in authority onto the path of right leadership. Smaragdus generally avoids questions of political philosophy, saying little about what makes a government legitimate, what rights and freedoms it should protect, and what duties subjects owe their king. From this standpoint, Jonas of Orléans, Sedulius Scottus, and Hincmar of Rheims all developed more sophisticated theories of government in their respective treatises for kings.<sup>27</sup>

Hans Hubert Anton was the first to undertake a comprehensive examination of the *Via regia* in his monumental study of Carolingian political writing.<sup>28</sup> He first places the *Via regia* in the context of Smaragdus's other writings, sorting out the chronology of texts against the backdrop of the author's career as teacher and abbot. He then attempts to determine the recipient of the *Via regia* and takes up specific questions surrounding the text's Iberian influences and textual history. Lastly, Anton considers the content, sources, and spiritual program of the *Via regia* and examines

---

<sup>26</sup> In his sweeping assessment of Carolingian political thought, Wallace-Hadrill, "*Via regia* of the Carolingian Age," 22–23, concludes that ninth-century intellectuals had little time for the matters of political theory and were only interested in notions of authority as they pertained to the kingship of God. Born, "*Specula principis*," 593–94, notes that there is nothing of use in the *Via regia* that helps situate it in its historical context, since it is highly ethical in tone and "applicable to any time, place, and ruler." Klinkenberg, "Über karolingische Fürstenspiegel," 82–98, notes the correspondence between the *Via regia* and the *DM*, concluding that the morality of the *Via regia* was essentially a monastic one. Hans Hubert Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit* (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid, 1968), 176–79, similarly asserts that while the *Via regia* preceded the *DM*, the morality of the works was the same. Otto Eberhardt, *Via regia: Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds von St. Mihiel und seine literarische Gattung* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1977), 623–41, extensively argues that the spiritual framework of the *Via regia* differed from that of the *DM*, was more broadly constructed, and was intended for all Christians in general.

<sup>27</sup> Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione regia*, ed. and trans. Alain Dubreucq, in *Le métier de roi* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995); Sedulius Scottus, *De rectoribus Christianis*, ed. Siegmund Hellmann, *Sedulius Scottus* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1906), 1–91; Hincmar of Rheims, *De regis persona et regio ministerio*, PL 125:833–56, and *Ad proceres regis et ordine palatii*, PL 125:993–1008.

<sup>28</sup> Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos*, 132–89.