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EINHARD: THE SINNER AND THE SAINTS*

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ABSTRACT. This essay offers a major reassessment of the career of Einhard, biographer of Charlemagne, and an analysis of elite lay piety in the Carolingian era. Einhard's life (*c.* 770–840) is discussed in terms of childhood, youth, marriage and old age, with emphasis on the significance of his wife, Imma. His personal relationship with the relics which he had translated from Rome to Seligenstadt and his self-description as a 'sinner' offer insights into his religiosity. Einhard and Imma are also situated in a broader discussion of the religious activities of other elite married couples of their day. Monastic foundations, relic collecting, Christian household morality and close engagement with the Psalter characterise a distinctive conjugal Christianity in the Carolingian period.

Imma lay dying. Her husband prayed fervently to the martyrs Marcellinus and Peter to intervene and spare her life, but on 13 December 835 she passed away, leaving him inconsolable.[1] A few months later, he described his grief in a letter to a young correspondent. Recollection of her final moments constantly overwhelmed him: the wound which her death created would not heal, flaring up anew time and again. He felt her loss 'every day, in every action, in every undertaking, in all the administration of the house and household, in everything needing to be decided upon and sorted out in my religious and earthly responsibilities'. The pain was all the greater because the hope and trust he had placed in his chosen saints had not been fulfilled. Their intercession failed: Christ remained unmoved, and let Imma die.[2]

* I dedicate this paper with affection to the memory of Donald Bullough, whose help with an early version it is a pleasure to acknowledge. I am also grateful to Peter Brown, John Contreni, Mayke de Jong, David Ganz, Matthew Innes, Guy Halsall, Jinty Nelson, Janneke Raaijmakers, Barbara Rosenwein and Sidney Tibbetts for comments and advice. Preliminary versions of this paper were delivered at Loyola University, Chicago, and the Davis Center at Princeton University.

[1] The date is supplied by the personal commemorative calendar of Gozbald of Würzburg. Hansjörg Wellmer, *Persönliches Memento im deutschen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1973), 15 at n. 11.

[2] Einhard's letter of April 836 to Lupus of Ferrières survives incorporated into Lupus's letter collection. *Servati Lupi epistolae*, no. 3, ed. Peter K. Marshall (Leipzig, 1984), 4–6. In interpreting this letter, I am much indebted to David Ganz's unpublished paper, 'Einhard, Grief and the Enigmas of Personality'. An extended analysis of the classical tropes and Christian understanding of death which Einhard balanced in it is provided by Peter von

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Einhard, the grief-stricken husband, is renowned for his *Life of Charlemagne*, a text read by every generation of students and scholars from that day to this. To him we owe the compelling image of the emperor Charlemagne (768–814) as the mighty warrior king, the pious Christian who presided over a court of scholars where the learning of the Roman world was revived, the ruler on whom imperial coronation was foisted on Christmas Day, 800. Einhard's fame rests upon his ability to conjure the emperor to life in a sophisticated prose which evokes classical norms of Latin style and imperial biography: his importance as Charlemagne's courtier as well as his biographer has often been rehearsed.[3] Instead of discussing the familiar Einhard, the man famed among his contemporaries for his many talents – literary, artistic, administrative and political – this essay seeks out a more intimate Einhard: male, Christian and married. By teasing out the connections between his allegiance to the martyrs whose translation from Rome he organised, his powerful sense of sinfulness and his marriage, it takes his political and literary importance for granted to focus instead on his domestic and religious life. This exploration of his career does not track a progression to scholarly eminence or political wisdom, but frames it within the human life cycle of childhood, youth, marriage, maturity and old age, in a manner more familiar to historians of family than of politics or court culture.

Consideration of the intimate relationship between Einhard, his wife and his saints opens up a discussion of other contemporary elite households in order to situate Einhard and Imma in the context of a burgeoning aristocratic religiosity during the reigns of Charlemagne and his successor, Louis the Pious (814–40). In a reaction against the common tendency to over-emphasise the division between lay and religious ways of living in the Carolingian era, this essay puts the case for recognising both the malleability of that distinction and the ability of the Carolingian aristocracy to create for themselves forms of devotion which melded aspects of the contemplative and active lives into a

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, 113–18.

[3] Important studies include Siegmund Hellmann, 'Einhards literarische Stellung', *Historische Vierteljahrschrift*, 27 (1932), 40–110 (repr. in *idem*, *Ausgewählte Abhandlungen zur Historiographie und Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* (Weimar, 1961), 159–229; Arthur Kleinclausz, *Eginhard* (Paris, 1942); Helmut Beumann, *Ideengeschichtliche Studien zu Einhard und anderen Geschichtsschreibern des früheren Mittelalters* (Darmstadt, 1962); J. Fleckenstein, 'Einhard, seine Gründung und sein Vermächtnis in Seligenstadt', in *Das Einhardkreuz*, ed. Karl Hauck (Göttingen, 1974), 96–121 (repr. in J. Fleckenstein, *Ordnungen und formende Kräfte des Mittelalters* (Göttingen, 1989), 84–111; *Einhard: Studien zu Leben und Werk*, ed. Hermann Schefers (Darmstadt, 1997); Paul Edward Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard* (Peterborough, Ont., 1998).

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coherent and practicable whole. In using one aristocratic married couple as a focal point, it takes as its theme conjugal Christianity – the shared religious attitudes and enterprises of aristocratic marriages in Carolingian times.

We may begin with Imma. That we know very little about her is no surprise, for most lay women of the early Middle Ages are seldom more than names to us.[4] For all his evident love for her and reliance upon her, Einhard himself never mentions her in any of his writings – until, that is, his grief broke down his usual barriers of silence. We first encounter her in a diploma by means of which Louis the Pious granted two estates in eastern Francia, Michelstadt and *Mulinheim*, 'to our faithful man Einhard and his wife Imma' on 11 January 815.[5] It is usually assumed that they had long since been married – but that is improbable, as will be seen. Her own family background is unknown. From the twelfth century until the nineteenth, she was widely believed to have been a daughter of Charlemagne; of various recent speculations, the most plausible is that she came from a local landowning family in the vicinity of these estates.[6] It could also be that she was the widow or daughter of the former holder of *Mulinheim*, Count Drogo, and that she had rights to property in the vicinity.[7]

We are equally ignorant about her age at marriage, or whether she had been married previously. Extrapolation from admittedly very scanty evidence suggests that elite women in the ninth and tenth centuries usually contracted their first marriage at or soon after puberty, occasionally as young as twelve but more commonly between fourteen and nineteen. If widowed, they might remarry; the interval between first and second marriage could be anything from two to twenty years.[8]

[4] Cf. Julia M.H. Smith, 'Gender and Ideology in the Early Middle Ages', in *Gender and Christian Religion*, ed. Robert Swanson, Studies in Church History, 34 (1998), 51–73.

[5] *Codex Laureshamensis* 19, ed. Karl Glöckner (3 vols., Darmstadt, 1929–36), I, 299–300. On the region in which these lands lay, see now Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000* (Cambridge, 2000).

[6] Wolfgang Hartmann, 'Kloster Machesbach und frühmittelalterliche Adel im Bachgau', *Aschaffenburger Jahrbuch*, 16 (1993), 137–237 at 63–4, 219–27, cf. Wilhelm Störmer, 'Einhards Herkunft – Überlegungen und Beobachtungen zu Einhards Erbebesitz und familiaren Umfeld', in *Einhard*, ed. Schefers, 15–39, with comments on Imma at 37–8.

[7] *Codex Laureshamensis* 19, I, 300.

[8] These statements are based upon information on aristocratic women's marriage patterns assembled from Karl-Ferdinand Werner, 'Die Nachkommen Karls des Grossen bis zum Jahre 1000', in *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, ed. Wolfgang Braunfels (4 vols., Düsseldorf, 1965–7), IV, 403–79. See also the comments of Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500–900* (Philadelphia, 1981), 99; and Régine Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VIIe–Xe siècle): essai d'anthropologie sociale* (Paris, 1995), 346, 365–6; Janet L. Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', in *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge, 1995), 82–113 esp. 88–90.

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Whether Imma was scarcely out of her teens or around thirty, she was certainly within her childbearing years, for although the couple were still childless in 819, they contemplated the possibility that they might have offspring in the future.[9] A fleeting reference indicates that they may subsequently have had a son, Vussin.[10]

When we encounter Imma in 819, she and her husband were making their will together. In it, they transferred their estate at Michelstadt to the royal monastery of Lorsch, reserving the usufruct for the remainder of their lives.[11] That Imma was named both in the imperial grant of 815 and the donation to Lorsch four years later is noteworthy. Wives only feature as co-donors in approximately 20 per cent of Carolingian charters; to be named as co-beneficiary in an imperial diploma is even more unusual.[12] Was Imma more central to local networks of property and patronage than her husband? Certainly she was his active partner. Two short letters from her survive in the same manuscript as Einhard's letter collection. These not only reveal her to have been literate, but also show her participating in regulating the affairs of the church at *Mulinheim*. In one, she intercedes with a neighbouring landlord and his wife about one of their serfs who had contracted an illegal marriage and then fled for sanctuary to the church of Sts Marcellinus and Peter; in the other, we find her hard at work negotiating and dispensing advice about a delicate but unknown issue with her son.[13]

Other hints corroborate this picture of her as a woman of wide-ranging contacts and considerable reputation. When Bernharius, bishop of Worms, lay dying in 825/6 he entrusted a final task to Einhard which he was to perform with Imma's participation, and he referred to her as his 'most beloved sister', words of affection for a woman he knew and respected. To them jointly he commended his soul.[14] Bishop Gozbald of Würzburg (842–55) kept notes of the deaths of important people connected with the royal court – rulers, bishops, a few others – whom he wished to commemorate. His list is exclusively men, except for Imma: this again suggests an unusual status as well as personal

[9] Cf. the grant of Michelstadt to Lorsch in 819 (*Codex Laureshamensis* 20, i, 301–2): 'Filios quoque si nos habere contigerit, unus ex eis in eadem possessione nobis iure precario succedat.'

[10] Einhard's undated letter to the youth Vussin is usually presumed to have been addressed to a student, but the locution *mi nate* may imply a son. Einhard, *Epistolae*, no. 57, ed. K. Hampe, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* [hereafter *MGH*] *Epistolae* [hereafter *Epp.*], v, ed. E. Dümmler, K. Hampe *et al.* (Berlin, 1899), 137–8. *Ep.* 38 (*ibid.*, 128–9) is addressed by Imma to a son or grandson (the manuscript reading is uncertain); if the latter she must have been married previously.

[11] *Codex Laureshamensis* 20, i, 301–2.

[12] Cf. Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir*, 351.

[13] Einhard, *Epistolae*, nos. 37, 38, ed. Hampe, 128–9.

[14] Einhard, *Epistolae*, no. 3, ed. Hampe, 110–11.

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contact and esteem.[15] For a slightly fuller portrait of Imma, we are indebted to Lupus of Ferrières, to whom Einhard had poured out his grief in 836. In his reply, Lupus praised Imma as 'a most noble…[and]…memorable woman' with a man's spirit in a woman's body, whose good sense, dignity and probity (*prudentia*, *gravitas*, *honestas*) surpassed many men's.[16] Imma was evidently greatly respected by all who knew her, and we should perhaps read these tributes as an indication that she was a woman of mature years. Certainly she was, in Einhard's own words, his *fidissima coniunx*, his 'most trusted wife'.[17]

To Lupus, it seemed that their marriage was 'a great love, strengthened by long experience'.[18] To what extent Imma shared Einhard's devotion to Sts Marcellinus and Peter and participated in his promotion of their cult cannot readily be ascertained, however. But we know of several other Carolingian aristocratic couples where the acquisition of relics with which to endow a new family religious community was one in which the wife was as active a participant as the husband. Early in Charlemagne's reign, Roger, count of Poitiers, and his wife Eufrasia established the monastery of Charroux, accompanying their property donations with the gift of their very large relic collection.[19] In the central decades of the ninth century, we also meet wives negotiating for Roman relics alongside their husbands. In 846, for example, Oda travelled to Rome with her husband, Liudolf, count of Saxony, to obtain relics for their new foundation at Gandersheim, while in 863 Bertha was prominently associated with her husband Gerard of Vienne in requesting Roman relics for Vézelay and Pothières.[20] The active involvement of wives in establishing monastic relic shrines is particularly striking in the case of Imma's exact contemporary, Bilichild, the wife of Count Rorigo of Le Mans. She seems to have been far more energetic in restoring the ruined monastery of St Maur at Glanfeuil on the Loire than her husband, winning for herself the honorific title of 'abbess' (*abbatissa*).[21] Slightly later, we also encounter Adelheid urging on her husband, Conrad count of Argengau (and uncle of Charles the

[15] Wellmer, *Persönliches Memento*, 20, on the very personal nature of Gozbald's commemorative notes.

[16] Lupus, *Epistolae*, no. 4, ed. Marshall, 6–12, but note that, however outstanding, she could never match Einhard in Lupus's estimation (8, lines 4–11).

[17] Einhard to Lupus: Lupus, *Epistolae*, no. 3, ed. Marshall, 4, lines 8–9.

[18] Lupus, *Epistolae*, no. 4, ed. Marshall, 10, lines 35–6.

[19] *Chartes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Charroux*, ed. P. de Monsabert, Archives historiques de Poitou, 39 (Poitiers, 1910), 53–62 with relics at 60.

[20] Julia M.H. Smith, 'Old Saints, New Cults: Roman Relics in Carolingian Francia', in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. *eadem* (Leiden, 2000), 317–39 at 329–30.

[21] Odo of Glanfeuil, *Historia translationis S. Mauri*, praef., ch. 2, *Acta sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur* [hereafter *AASS*], ed. J. Bollandus *et al.* (Antwerp and Brussels, 1634–1940; 3rd edn, Paris, 1863–70), *Jan*[3] II, 334, 336–7. This account was written in 868/9.

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Bald), in his enhancement of the shrine of St Germanus: she herself travelled to Auxerre to superintend the work.[22] For Imma to have been as enthusiastic as Einhard about the cult of Marcellinus and Peter is not inherently implausible.

After this sketch of Imma, let us turn now to Einhard. He is someone we think we know from his preface to the *Life of Charlemagne*: eyewitness to the events about which he writes, nurtured by the emperor to whom he became a friend and confidant, a German who had the temerity to imagine that he 'could write something correct and even elegant in Latin'.[23] We should not forget though that the *Life of Charlemagne* is, formally speaking, an anonymous work. Surviving in over one hundred manuscripts, it is highly unlikely that the author's name could somehow have dropped out of all versions of the text.[24] Although contemporary readers evidently knew who had written it, we now rely on either the dedicatory verse inscribed in Louis the Pious's court copy by Gerward, the palace librarian, or on the preface which Walahfrid Strabo (d. 848) added when he edited the work after Einhard's death.[25] Einhard's anonymity in his most famous work contrasts with his readiness to name himself in his other extended prose work, an account of the translation from Rome in 827 of the relics of Sts Marcellinus and Peter and of the miracles they worked in Francia. Introducing himself in the superscription, he styles himself *Einhardus peccator* – Einhard, the sinner.[26] The phrase is characteristic of the man: it recurs frequently in his letters, charters and other works, always in contexts associated with the worship or personnel of the Christian church; it is not confined to his dealings with Marcellinus and Peter.[27] It also evokes sixth-century

[22] Heiric of Auxerre, *Miracula Sancti Germani*, II.1, *Patrologia cursus completus, series Latina* [hereafter *PL*], ed. J.-P. Migne (221 vols., Paris 1844–64) 124, col. 1249B.

[23] *Vita Karoli*, praef., ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi* [hereafter *MGH SSRG*] (Hanover, 1911; repr. 1922), 2.

[24] The model of anonymity was followed by Thegan, the 'Astronomer', and Notker the Stammerer, subsequent ninth-century writers of royal biography. On the manuscript dissemination of the *vita Karoli*, see Matthias M. Tischler, *Einharts 'Vita Karoli'. Studien zur Entstehung, Überlieferung und Rezeption*, Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 48 (2 vols., Stuttgart, 2001).

[25] Both preface Holder-Egger's edition at xxviii–xxix.

[26] *Translatio et Miracula SS Marcellini et Petri*, praef., ed. G. Waitz, *MGH Scriptores* [hereafter *MGH SS*] (30 vols., Hanover, 1826–1934), xv, pt 1, 239. I am much indebted to David Ganz, for letting me see his '*Einhardus Peccator*', forthcoming in *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. P. Wormald, in advance of publication.

[27] The first datable use of the expression occurs in his will of 819: *Codex Laureshamensis* 20, I, 301–2. See also Einhard's charter for St Peter's Gent, in *Diplomata belgica ante annum millesimum centum*, ed. M. Gysseling and A.C.F. Koch (2 vols., Brussels, 1950), I, 127; the inscription on Einhard's reliquary arch, reproduced in Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, 63, 65; and his letters, nos. 4, 10, 16, 30–2, 36, 39, 42–3, 45, 49, 53–4, 63–4, ed. Hampe, 111, 113–14, 118, 124–5, 127–8, 129, 131, 132, 134, 136–7, 140–1.

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precedents.[28] As he contemplated himself in relationship to God, his saints and clergy, Einhard repeatedly identified and labelled himself as a sinner. In so doing, he was expressing a deeply Augustinian outlook which regarded the human condition as essentially sinful and in enduring need of redemption.

The frequency with which Einhard insists on his own sinfulness contrasts sharply with his reticence about other aspects of his life, not merely Imma and their marriage. In particular, he tells us nothing about his family background. For Einhard, self-fashioning was self-effacing. In drawing attention to literary self-fashioning during the Renaissance, Stephen Greenblatt argued that it was especially characteristic of authors of middling origin who found themselves rising to high places and rubbing shoulders with men of great power.[29] Einhard fits this pattern. We learn from Walahfrid Strabo that he came from the Maingau – the basin of the river Main upstream from Frankfurt where *Mulinheim* lay – and that he had been sent as a child to the great monastery of Fulda to be educated.[30] We do not know for sure who his parents were, although it is widely assumed that they were the couple named Einhard and Engelfrit who gave Fulda a plot of land at Euerdorf, 50 km to the south-east, a grant documented in a charter drawn up by the young Einhard, and that their son was born *c.* 770.[31] Walahfrid was blunt in noting that Einhard was not from a particularly noble family: Matthew Innes has interpreted this as 'a well-to-do background, but no better' – modest indeed in contrast with the huge wealth of the Carolingian imperial aristocracy whom he encountered at court.[32] As we see him through his letters in the last two decades of his life, Einhard was an energetic networker, seeking or bestowing patronage and lobbying to get things done. He certainly exercised his

[28] Most notably the opening of Gregory of Tours's *Liber de virtutibus S. Martini episcopi*, where he styles himself 'Gregorius peccator'. *MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* [hereafter *MGH SSRM*], ed. B. Krusch *et al.* (7 vols., Hanover, 1884–1920), I, pt 2, 585. For other sixth-century examples, see Ganz, '*Einhardus peccator*', and for a unique female equivalent (*Radegundis peccatrix*), Gregory's *Decem libri historiarum*, IX.42, *MGH SSRM*, I, pt 1², 470.

[29] S.J. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980), 7.

[30] *Vita Karoli*, ed. Holder-Egger, xxviii–xxix. Maingau connections and possible familial links to members of the regional aristocracy are discussed by Störmer, 'Einhards Herkunft' (with the suggestion at 21 that Einhard may have owned land adjacent to Michelstadt before 815) and, more contentiously, by K. Brunner, *Oppositionelle Gruppen im Karolingerreich* (Vienna, 1979), 83–95.

[31] *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda*, no. 240, ed. Edmund E. Stengel (2 vols., Marburg, 1956), II, 235–6.

[32] Walahfrid, 'nobilitatis quod in eo munus erat insigne': praef., ed. Holder-Egger, xxviii; cf. Matthew Innes, '"A Place of Discipline": Carolingian Courts and Aristocratic Youth', in *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. C.R.E. Cubitt, York Studies in the Early Middle Ages, I (Turnhout, forthcoming).

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patronage on behalf of a couple of his own young relatives,[33] but his range of useful contacts included no influential kinsmen in high places. The surviving sources suggest an Einhard who floats detached from any familial environment, in a manner more reminiscent of ecclesiastical than secular courtiers.[34]

Although educated at Fulda, there is no evidence that his parents gave him as an oblate, an infant gifted to God to be raised in purity as a monk. Fulda, as other major Carolingian monasteries, took into its schools not just oblates and novice monks, but also pupils destined for the ranks of the elite secular clergy and some lay boys too.[35] These might move on to complete their training elsewhere, sent away into the household of a bishop or secular lord. One such was Charlemagne's grandson Bernard who, after education at Fulda, returned to the court of his father, Pippin king of Italy.[36] Einhard, however, seems to have remained at Fulda as a layman for a while, probably until his early twenties. In the 780s–early 790s we know him to have drafted charters for the monastery, and to have started experimenting writing a more classicising Latin.[37] There is perhaps a physiological explanation for his failure to move on from Fulda. Einhard described himself as a 'tiny manlet' and those who knew him confirm that he was indeed 'despicable in stature': as he grew to maturity, it may have become evident that he lacked the physique to handle horses and weapons in the hunt or on campaign.[38]

Then, at some point between 791 and 796, Abbot Baugulf sent him to court as a young man whose exceptional intellectual gifts were well suited to royal service.[39] We hear nothing of the japes and mockery

[33] Einhard, *Epistolae*, nos. 43, 63, ed. Hampe, 131, 140–1. For a discussion of Einhard's networks of patronage, see Innes, *State and Society*, 85–91.

[34] Cf. Stuart Airlie, 'Bonds of Power and Bonds of Association in the Court Circle of Louis the Pious', in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1990), 191–204 esp. 200 on the substitute networks of intellectual connections which had developed by the 820s.

[35] Mayke de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (Leiden, 1996), 232–45.

[36] *Epistolarum Fuldensium fragmenta*, no. 1, *MGH Epp.*, v, 517.

[37] *Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda*, ed. Stengel, 1, pt 2, lxiii–lxiv.

[38] 'Homuncio tantille': Einhard to Lupus: Lupus, *Epistolae*, no. 3, ed. Marshall, 4, lines 24–5; 'homuncio, nam statura despicabilis videbatur': Walahfrid, preface to the *Vita Karoli*, ed. Holder-Egger, xxix. On his small size as a literary trope, see Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier*, xxxviii. Despite his stature, Einhard's normal method of travel was on horseback, except when he was so sick that he had to travel by boat. *Epistolae*, nos. 13–14, ed. Hampe, 116–17.

[39] Walahfrid, praef., ed. Holder-Egger, xxviii. The exact date of Einhard's move to court is uncertain. He was still drafting charters at Fulda in 791 (*Urkundenbuch des Klosters Fulda*, no. 189, ed. Stengel, 1, pt 2, 284–6) but had entered royal service by the time Theodulf composed his poetic epistle *ad Carolum regem* in 796, for the poet mentions his presence (see next note).

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which surely attended the arrival of his dwarfish figure, but only that this tiny man scurried around like a purposeful ant, or a honey-laden bee.[40] Thereafter he remained in Charlemagne's entourage, rapidly winning both reputation and the ruler's trust, developing his mastery of a variety of cultural forms and honing his verbal and administrative skills. Einhard arrived at court about the time when it first settled regularly at Aachen (794), no longer as widely itinerant as previous years. At its core, the royal household comprised a fairly stable, compact group of members of the king's family together with his official secular and clerical personnel, but had an additional much wider and more fluctuating membership that changed according to the annual rhythm of warfare, hunting, political assemblies and major religious festivals characteristic of any medieval court. It also included an important group, permanently present but of changing membership: young, unmarried male aristocrats whose parents had commended them into the household of the king or his queen, to be socialised into the manners and lifestyle of the political elite. These *pueri* – the lads – were the Carolingian equivalents of the twelfth-century knightly youths whose contribution to chivalric culture Georges Duby evoked.[41] In this sense, 'youth' formed a distinct phase in the aristocratic male life cycle, when abundant physical (and sexual) energy was not yet accompanied by the responsibilites of marriage and fatherhood, property or office. These men served Charlemagne directly: their reward would come in the form of a countship, permission to marry and set up their own lordly household.[42]

The control which the Carolingian king exercised over his courtiers' lives is particularly apparent in the occasional instances of someone wishing to leave royal service. William of Toulouse was one such: twice married and after a distinguished career as a count, he desired to retire and enter a monastery. Before he could 'change his clothes interwoven with gold for the robe of Christ', he needed to be released from royal service. Finally, the *licentia convertendi*, 'permission to convert', was forthcoming, and in 804 he retired to the monastery which he founded on his own property at Gellone.[43] When such a desire surfaced in a

[40] Theodulf, *Carmina* 25, lines 155–8, ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Poetae Latini aevi Carolini* [hereafter *MGH PLAC*], ed. E. Dümmler *et al.* (4 vols., Berlin, 1881–1923), I, 487; Alcuin, *Carmina* 30.2, line 4, *ibid.*, 248.

[41] Georges Duby, 'Youth in Aristocratic Society: Northwestern France in the Twelfth Century', in *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (London, 1977), 112–22.

[42] Innes, 'A Place of Discipline'.

[43] Ardo, *Vita Benedicti* 30, *MGH SS*, XV, pt 1, 211–12; charter for Gellone: Claude de Vic and Joseph Vaissette, *Histoire générale de Languedoc* (5 vols., Paris, 1730–45), I, preuves, cols. 31–2; also Louis the Pious's diploma at cols. 34–5. The formulary of Marculf, I.19, preserves the form of words for a permit to leave court and enter the church: *MGH Formulae Merowingici et Karolini aevi*, ed. K. Zeumer (Hanover, 1886), 55–6. Royal control

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younger man, imperial permission might be rather more reluctantly granted, as was the case with Aldric, future bishop of Le Mans (832–57), to whom Louis the Pious offered a military retinue of his own to induce him to remain in royal service at court rather than depart for a new life in the church.[44]

These and a handful of other instances from Charlemagne's reign hint at an atmosphere of religious anxiety among the aristocratic elite of the time. And well might they worry about their own salvation: in precisely these years not only was a programme of vigorous moral and religious reform being enunciated but also bloody, protracted warfare in the Danube valley and especially Saxony was pushing the Carolingian empire to its fullest territorial extent. The conjunction threw into high relief the question of how extremely wealthy and powerful warrior aristocrats might exercise their ascendency in a Christian manner. Several of them turned to the Anglo-Saxon courtier-scholar Alcuin for advice. He replied with letters and, in one case, a full treatise, in the process working out a practical morality. Re-interpreting the late antique literature of Christian masculinity, he offered reassurance that the lay condition and the exercise of power were not incompatible with achieving salvation. The correct use of power and wealth combined with appropriate self-control sufficed.[45] Here is how Alcuin distilled his advice to one correspondent: 'be agreeable in counsel, strong in action, a peacemaker at home, prudent as an envoy, kind towards the poor and afflicted, just in giving judgement, generous in alms-giving in order that out of your temporal wealth you may win eternal riches in heaven'.[46] To another, he spelled out the sexual implications of the code of ethical self-restraint: 'He who has a legitimate wife should have sexual relations with her legitimately and at the appropriate times so that he may deserve to receive the blessing of children from God. Let

of courtiers' marriages was nothing new: see Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum*, IV.46, *MGH SSRM*, I, pt 1², 181.

[44] *Gesta Aldrici Cenommanicae urbis episcopi* I (*MGH SS*, XV, pt 1, 308). For an outline of Aldric's career, see Philippe Depreux, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781–840)* (Sigmaringen, 1997), 97–9.

[45] Donald Bullough, 'Alcuin and Lay Virtue', in *Preaching and Society in the Middle Ages: Ethics, Values and Social Behaviour*, Proceedings of the Twelfth Medieval Sermon Studies Conference (Padua, forthcoming). On Alcuin's sources, see Liutpold Wallach, 'Alcuin on Virtues and Vices: A Manual for a Carolingian Soldier', *Harvard Theological Review*, 48 (1955), 175–97. The importance of the Christian reformulation of the classical ethic of civic masculinity is emphasised by Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser, 'The Gender of Grace: Impotence, Servitude and Manliness in the Fifth-Century West', *Gender and History*, 12 (2000), 536–51.

[46] 'Esto in consilio suavis et in opere strenuus; pacificus in domo, prudens in legationibus; pius in pauperes et miseros, justus in judiciis, largus in eleemosynis; ut ex temporalibus divitiis tuis aeternas tibi merearis in caelis.' Alcuin, *Epistolae*, no. 111 (to Megenfrid), ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Epp.*, IV, ed. E. Dümmler (Berlin, 1895), 159–62, quotation at 161.

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no man say he is unable to keep himself from fornicating.'[47] The layman who lived up to these exhortations would be 'wise in heart, albeit a soldier with his hands'.[48]

Other moralists sounded the same note and, in the early part of the ninth century, developed it into a full code of aristocratic ethical self-discipline and sexual restraint.[49] This was the code of conduct into which the *pueri* at court were to be socialised so that, once established as counts and heads of household in their own right, they in their turn would act as models of good conduct. Through self-discipline, they might learn wisdom, honesty and discretion in every aspect of life, the qualifications for becoming trusted and faithful courtiers.[50]

Into this world of power and its perils, Einhard arrived. He came to know Alcuin – whose esteem for him is well known[51] – and had surely met the courtiers who converted to the religious life. He must have been roughly the same age as many of the *pueri*, and he most certainly enjoyed a similarly close relationship to his royal 'lord and nurturer' as they did.[52] Yet his career trajectory differed in one crucial respect: he neither converted to the religious life nor was sent off to form his own domestic-cum-military household and administer a county. He was evidently too useful to be returned to the localities. In this context, we may consider the question of the date of marriage of this man who had no powerful relatives to argue that he should be released and endowed.

Charlemagne is famous – or notorious – for retaining his daughters at court, unmarried but free to engage in informal sexual liaisons; the rationale for this seems to be that they functioned as a collective substitute for the queen after the death of his fourth and last wife in 800.[53] Like Charlemagne's daughters, Einhard probably had to wait until middle age to escape the exceptionally prolonged 'youth' which imperial patronage brought in its wake: for Einhard, as for the new emperor's sisters, the accession of Louis the Pious in January 814 brought great changes. Scarcely ten years older than Louis, Einhard

[47] *Liber de Virtutibus et Vitiis*, written at the request of Count Wido of the Breton march, *PL* 101, col. 627: 'Qui mulierem habet legitimam, legitime utatur ea temporibus opportunis, ut benedictionem mereatur filiorum a Deo recipere. Nemo dicat a fornicatione se custodire non posse.'

[48] Alcuin, *Epistolae*, no. 136, ed. Dümmler, 205.

[49] Smith, 'Gender and Ideology'; Katrien Heene, *The Legacy of Paradise: Marriage, Motherhood and Women in Carolingian Edifying Literature* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), 68–113.

[50] Innes, 'A Place of Discipline'.

[51] Alcuin, *Epistolae*, no. 172, ed. Dümmler, 284–5 at 285; *Carmina*, nos. 26, 30, ed. Dümmler, 245, 248.

[52] *Vita Karoli*, prologue, ed. Holder-Egger, 1.

[53] Janet L. Nelson, 'Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regiment?', in *eadem*, *The Frankish World* (London, 1996), 223–42.

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was unusual in managing to remain influential in the new regime, which rapidly established itself as very different in personnel, politics and moral tone from the old emperor's court.[54] For him personally, 814 seems to have been a year of transition to both the role of 'elder statesman' and full social adulthood. From this moment, clear evidence of property, wealth and marriage accumulates. In January 815 came the gift of the estates of Michelstadt and *Mulinheim*, by which date Einhard and Imma were married. Perhaps, even, without an imperial gift of property, Einhard lacked adequate means with which to give his bride a dowry – if so, this would explain Imma's unusual prominence in the documentary record.[55] From 815 onwards, several rich abbeys to administer on the emperor's behalf were an additional recognition of Einhard's position. He derived further wealth and influence from their lands, and brought to these institutions the energy to reform them in line with imperial expectations.[56] The tradition of imperial control of courtiers' marriages combines with the pattern of the evidence for Einhard's career to suggest that he was only given permission to marry in 814.

Einhard might thus have been aged about forty-five when he finally married; Imma must have been anything from ten to thirty years younger. We should also note that the extant corpus of Einhard's writings, literary and documentary, only dates from after 814. Immediately, the burden of sin is present. When he drafted the will by which ownership of Michelstadt was given to Lorsch in 819, he opened with a comment that Christ's mission had been to a 'humankind besmirched by various filthy sins'. Declaring their 'equal devotion', he and Imma made the transaction together 'for the abolition of our sins, and for pursuing the rewards of the blessed, perpetual life'; his autograph signature on the engrossed copy read 'I, Einhard, sinner and donor'.[57]

Notwithstanding the donation to Lorsch, Einhard – and Imma? – set about developing both their estates. To supplement the simple pre-existing churches, new churches were built at Michelstadt and *Mulinheim*, while at the former, Einhard also erected a splendid large basilica, designed in a manner that fully reflected the most up-to-date imperial ideas on liturgy and sacred space. By 827, building work must have

[54] The court purges and changes of personnel are summarised by Egon Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme* (Darmstadt, 1996), 92, 94, 105.

[55] For the conventions governing dowry in the ninth century, see Régine Le Jan-Hennebicque, 'Aux origines du douaire médiéval (VIe–Xe siècles)', in *Veuves et veuvage dans le haut moyen âge*, ed. Michel Parisse (Paris, 1993), 107–22.

[56] F.J. Felten, *Äbte und Laienäbte im Frankenreich* (Stuttgart, 1980), 283–6.

[57] *Codex Laurehamensis* 20, 1, 301–2. Einhard signed thus: 'Ego Einhardus peccator et donator recognovi et manu propria subscripsi.'

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been effectively finished, for he was pondering which saint to select as its dedicatee.

This is the opening point of the narrative of his *Translation and Miracles of the Martyrs Marcellinus and Peter*. This tells how Einhard sent his personal notary, Ratleic, to Rome where, with the connivance of one of the city's deacons, he robbed a catacomb and returned to Germany with the relics of the third-century martyrs Marcellinus and Peter. In November 827, Einhard installed them at Michelstadt, possession of which would revert to Lorsch after his and Imma's deaths. But the saints made it known that this was not their chosen resting place, so in January 828 he yielded to their instructions and moved them instead to *Mulinheim*. He then returned to court, only to learn that, en route from Rome, Ratleic had been robbed of part of the relics by a cleric of Hilduin, abbot of Saint-Denis (Paris) and Saint-Médard (Soissons), who had travelled with him. Only after considerable bargaining did Einhard succeed in recovering the stolen portions of the bodies. Restored to wholeness and installed at *Mulinheim*, the martyrs transformed themselves into miracle-workers. Here, at Aachen, and elsewhere, healings, reconciliations and exorcisms occurred. The purpose of the *Translation and Miracles* was to authenticate the relics, proclaim their shrine as a centre of exemplary Christianity in the midst of a corrupt empire and praise God's greatness.[58]

A strong association between the martyrs' relics and Einhard's sense of both his own sinfulness and that of the empire at large runs throughout the years after 828. He declared that he did not know why these powerful saints had deigned to take up residence with him, the 'sinner', but he rose to the challenge wholeheartedly, determined that they should receive 'fitting honour'.[59] In Marcellinus and Peter, Einhard found both patrons and clients, for just as he sought their intercession in heaven, so he fostered their cult and reputation on earth. In addition to commemorating in prose the saints' journey to their new, northern home and publicising their miracles, he decided to build them another new basilica, this time exactly modelled on the most recent architectural designs which Ratleic would have observed in Rome. The decision to build the new church was made in principle by the spring of 830, and composition of the *Translation and Miracles* completed that autumn.[60] By

[58] Cf. Julia M.H. Smith, '"Emending Evil Ways and Praising God's Omnipotence": Einhard and the Uses of Roman Martyrs', in *Seeing and Believing: Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (Rochester, NY, 2003), 189–223.

[59] Both quotations from *Epistolae*, no. 10, ed. Hampe, 113–14.

[60] *Epistolae*, no. 10, dated by Hampe to April 830, notes the decision to build a new church. On the date of the *Translatio et miracula*, see Martin Heinzelmann, 'Einhards *Translatio Marcellini et Petri*: eine hagiographische Reformschrift von 830', in *Einhard*, ed. Schefers, 269–98 at 278 and n. 43.

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then, however, Louis's empire was convulsed by political crisis and his court riddled with corruption. In this environment, it proved hard for Einhard to acquire the necessary resources, material and political, necessary to get the church built. At the very least its east end, with its apsidal relic crypt and founders' burial vault, must have been completed by the time of Imma's death in December 835 and the visit the following year of Louis the Pious (perhaps to attend the church's consecration).[61] Completion of the rest presumably followed shortly thereafter, although interior decorations were still being commissioned in 847.[62]

The final decade of Einhard's life (830–40) has sometimes been construed either as a political retirement or a religious conversion.[63] Let us see what Einhard himself says. He opens the *Translation and Miracles* looking back to his days in permanent service at court: 'When I was resident at the palace and occupied with the business of the world, I used to give much thought to the leisure I would one day enjoy.' His vocabulary here is the traditional Ciceronian juxtaposition of *negotium* – *otium*, of business and responsibility juxtaposed with time apart to cultivate country estates, friends and the mind.[64] In reading this, we should bear in mind that Louis the Pious's court included all those in royal service and forwarding royal interests, whether or not they were in immediate attendance on the emperor.[65] Einhard certainly remained a member of this broad court circle, even if no longer present in person, for he kept in touch by messengers and letters.[66] Also, the transition from *negotium* to *otium* never implied a one-way street, even in the hands of fourth-century Christian writers.[67] This was not the language of irrevocable change, let alone of monastic or clerical

[61] *Annales Fuldenses*, a. 836, ed. F. Kurze, *MGH SSRG* (Hanover, 1891), 27.

[62] As Einhard's successor and abbot, Ratleic was still commissioning paintings in 847; Lupus, *Epistolae*, no. 60, ed. Marshall, 66–7.

[63] Felten, *Äbte*, 285–6, for brief summary of earlier interpretations.

[64] *Translatio et miracula*, 1.1, ed. Waitz, 239: 'Cum adhuc in palatio positus ac negotiis saecularibus occupatus, otium, quo aliquando perfrui cupiebam, multimoda cogitatione meditarer, quendam locum secretum atque a populari frequentia remotum nanctus atque illius, cui tunc militaveram principis Hludewici liberalitate consecutus sum.'

[65] Airlie, 'Bonds of Power'.

[66] Letters show him recusing himself from the summons to court in the early weeks of 830 on the grounds of severe illness (*Epistolae*, nos. 13–15, ed. Hampe, 116–18). He was back at court, if only briefly, to write letters for Louis the Pious in November 832 (*Epistolae*, nos. 20–2, ed. Hampe, 120–1). The evidence does not reveal whether he attended in subsequent years, but does not allow us to assume that he never returned.

[67] Cf. Jean-Marie André, *L'Otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine des origines à l'époque augustinienne* (Paris, 1966); José Oroz Rota, 'L'*Otium* chez Saint Augustin', in *Les Loisirs et l'héritage de la culture classique: actes du XIIIe Congrès de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, ed. J.-M. André, J. Dangel and P. Demont, Collection Latomus, 230 (Brussels, 1996), 433–40. I owe these references to Susanna Elm.

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conversions such as those of William of Gellone or Aldric of Le Mans. Rather, Einhard deployed this vocabulary for its resonances of public service, landed property and educated reflection upon the human condition. It marked a life in which secular and divine responsibilities were complementary not antithetical.

Einhard's actions after 830 evince neither political retirement nor religious conversion. Instead, we can see most clearly firm devotion exercised within a domestic environment, combined with a continuing concern for the welfare of the empire. He was the martyrs' political spokesman, identifying closely with their cause, dedicating himself to their service in his old age and confiding his private thoughts to them.[68] In promoting them, he was doing his best to combat the sinful corruption which he believed pervaded the empire.[69] Although in a letter to Louis the Pious in April 830, he had pleaded to be allowed to serve his saints 'freed from secular responsibilities' and declared that his intention was to spend his final years in the company of his saints, praying, reading and meditating upon scripture,[70] he nevertheless continued to run his estates, developing them energetically yet perhaps also applying that same ethical use of power which Alcuin had advocated.[71] He also maintained his place in the web of patronage that spread outwards from the royal court, putting in a good word for one man here, interceding for another there, garnering political and practical support for his martyrs. The proximity of *Mulinheim* to the newly enlarged palace complex at Frankfurt will have made it extremely easy for Einhard to retain his place in imperial networks of communication.[72] Indeed, serving Marcellinus and Peter drew upon his accumulated political and managerial skills, and led him to voice scathing criticism of the sinful state of the empire.[73] His last recorded contact with Louis the Pious came in 837, when he explained to the aging emperor that the recent appearance of Halley's comet portended disasters which could only be averted by turning to the remedy of penance and beseeching divine mercy.[74] All this was quite compatible with his own

[68] *Epistolae*, nos. 10, 18, for the language of *obsequium*, *servitium* to the martyrs; *Epistolae*, no. 16, invoking them as knowing truly his innermost thoughts; ed. Hampe, 113–14, 118, 119.

[69] *Epistolae*, nos. 10, 33, ed. Hampe, 113–14, 126.

[70] 'A curis saecularibus absolutum': *Epistolae*, no. 10, ed. Hampe, 114.

[71] *Epistolae*, no. 50, on acquiring *manicipia* for the estates; nos. 37, 46, 47, 48, 49, interceding for clemency for fugitives from lordly jurisdiction who had sought sanctuary at the martyrs' shrine; ed. Hampe, 128, 133–4.

[72] Matthew Innes, 'People, Places and Power in Carolingian Society', in *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Mayke de Jong and Frans Theuws with Carine van Rhijn (Leiden, 2001), 397–437 at 422.

[73] *Translatio et miracula*, III.13–14, ed. Waitz, 252–4.

[74] Einhard, *Epistolae*, no. 40, ed. Hampe, 129–30.

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life of prayer and meditation: in the year before the comet, we find him seeking consolation after Imma's death by reading Cyprian, Augustine and Jerome in an effort to understand mortality and eternal life.[75] When Einhard himself died on 14/21 March 840,[76] he was laid to rest in the same tomb as Imma, in close proximity to his beloved martyrs.[77] The epitaph displayed nearby praised equally his service to the emperor and to Sts Marcellinus and Peter. His life had been spent in the service of patrons both human and heavenly, in *diuinum uel humanum officium*.[78]

In religious devotions and managerial responsibilities, Imma had clearly been his partner: together they regularly attended matins and the daily mass in the martyrs' church.[79] When Einhard returned to Aachen for the winter political assemblies in 828–9–30, he travelled without her, presumably leaving the administration of the church and its property in her capable hands.[80] At precisely this time, Carolingian bishops were inveighing against the preposterousness of women who set themselves up independently as the managers and administrators of churches.[81] But to the bishops who knew her, Imma was doubtless exemplary: a married woman, firmly in her husband's shadow but his reliable partner in a shared religious enterprise (Figure 1).

In the last years of their marriage, however, its character changed. Imma was no longer Einhard's sexual partner, becoming instead his 'dearest sister and companion'.[82] Their marriage had given way to

[75] Einhard to Lupus: Lupus, *Epistolae*, no. 3, ed. Marshall, 4.

[76] Einhard's date of death given as 14 March in a late ninth-/early tenth-century entry to the Fulda *Annales Necrologici* (*MGH SS*, XIII, 166) and as 21 March by Gozbald of Würzburg (Wellmer, *Persönlisches Memento*, 15 n. 11). The former date was also recorded in the Lorsch necrology (*Kalendarium Necrologium Laureshamense*, ed. J.F. Böhmer, *Fontes Rerum Germanicarum* (4 vols., Stuttgart, 1843–68), III, 146).

[77] For precise location of the burial vault, see the excavation report of A. Schubert, 'La basilica dei SS. Marcellino e Pietro a *Mulinheim* sul Meno secondo i recenti scavi', *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, 15 (1938), 141–6.

[78] Hrabanus Maurus, *Carmina*, no. 85, ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH PLAC*, II, 237–8.

[79] *Translatio et miracula*, III.4, 7, 8, 9, 10, ed. Waitz, 249, 250–1. I take Einhard's use of the plural *nos* here to mean 'we' not the formal singular other translators have assumed.

[80] Note the reversion to the singular, *ego*, each time he leaves for court: *Translatio et miracula*, III.11, 12, 19, ed. Waitz, 251, 252, 255. Similarly, Bernard of Septimania left Dhuoda running his estates whilst he attended court. Dhuoda, *Libellus manualis*, X.4, ed. and trans. P. Riché, *Manuel pour mon fils*, Sources chrétiennes, 225bis, 2nd edn (Paris, 1997), 350–2.

[81] Council of Paris, 829, cl. 42. *MGH Concilia* [hereafter *MGH Conc.*], II, ed. A. Werminghoff (Hanover, 1906–8), 638. On its import, see Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', 92.

[82] 'Olim fidissimae coniugis, iam nunc carissimae sororis ac sociae'; Einhard to Lupus: Lupus, *Epistolae*, no. 3, ed. Marshall, 4. Einhard must have been cruelly hurt when Lupus attempted to console him with the suggestion that perhaps God had taken Imma from

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Figure 1 *Einhard and Imma plan their foundation at Mulinheim* (now Seligenstadt). Mid-nineteenth-century engraving, reproduced from J. Schopp, *Der Name Seligenstadt* (Speyer, 1965).

him in punishment for having loved her physically too much. 'Affectum uestrum in uxoris amore forsitan subdiuisum non passus, putari potest ad se solum amandum reuocauisse ac, si quid eius corpori intemperanter diligendo plus iusto a uobis indultum fuerat, eiusdem corporis subtractione punisse.' Lupus, *Epistolae*, no. 4, ed. Marshall, 9.

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complete sexual abstinence in a manner reminiscent of the well-attested late antique custom among pious Christian couples such as Paulinus of Nola and Therasia or Melania the younger and Pinianus as well as other members of their circles.[83] Carolingian moralists also enjoined an ethic of sexual restraint for the laity. If Imma was by this time beyond childbearing age, it would have been appropriate for the couple to heed the strictures against intercourse except for the sake of procreation.[84] Even were she rather younger, they may have been mindful of the requirements of Carolingian church councils that the laity should abstain from sex before taking the sacraments: in this manner, the couple's daily attendance at mass became possible.[85] In their last years together, Imma and Einhard shared a life of chastity, prayer and the management and promotion of the martyrs' church.

Similar patterns of conjugal piety are evident in other aristocratic couples of this period. Rorigo and Bilichild, restorers of St-Maur de Glanfeuil, were hailed as *religiosi coniuges*, 'devout spouses'.[86] Such a phrase might equally be applied to Gerald and Adaltruda: they 'held modesty and religion as if it were some hereditary dowry' of which sexual self-restraint was but one aspect, acording to the hagiographer of their son, Gerald of Aurillac (born *c.* 855).[87] Similarly, Adelheid and Conrad (the benefactors of St-Germain at Auxerre) had such personal qualities that Heiric of Auxerre could scarcely decide 'which of them was more intent on devotion, more fervent in venerating the saints, more generous in attentiveness towards the poor'.[88] Such ninth-century 'holy households' could survive the death of one of the spouses.[89] For example, Gisla, the widow of the Saxon count Unwan, was another

[83] Cf. Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, 1993), chs. 2–3, esp. 51–5. On fifth-century precedents for other aspects of Carolingian lay religiosity, see Martin Heinzelmann, 'Sanctitas und "Tugendadel": Zu Konzeptionen von "Heiligkeit" im 5. und 10. Jahrhundert', *Francia*, 5 (1977), 741–52.

[84] Heene, *Legacy of Paradise*, 79–89.

[85] 740x750 Council of Bavaria, cl. 6; 796/7 Council of Cividale, cl. 13; 813 Council of Chalons-sur-Sâone, cl. 46; 829 Council of Paris, cl. 69. *MGH Conc.*, II, 52, 194, 283, 669–70.

[86] Odo of Glanfeuil, *Historia translationis S. Mauri*, ch. 2, *AASS Jan*[3] II, 336. On *religiosus* as applied to laymen, see R. Grégoire, '*Religiosus:* étude sur le vocabulaire de la vie religieuse', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 10 (1969), 415–30.

[87] *Vita prolixior*, attributed to Odo of Cluny. *Vita Geraldi*, I.1, 2, *PL* 133, cols. 642–3. The attribution of the *vita prolixior* to Odo of Cluny had recently been contested by Matthew Kuefler, 'Text and Context in the Cult of St. Gerald of Aurillac', paper presented to the Medieval Academy of America, March 2001.

[88] *Miraculi S. Germani*, II.1, *PL* 124, col. 1247D. See further John Contreni, '"By Lions, Bishops Are Meant; by Wolves, Priests": History, Exegesis, and the Carolingian Church in Haimo of Auxerre's Commentary on Ezechiel', *Francia*, 29–1 (2003), 1–25 esp. 19.

[89] Cf. Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford, 1989).

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contemporary of Imma's. She devoted her widowhood to a 'religious life', doing many good works, building churches, distributing alms, giving generous hospitality to pilgrims, offering moral advice to the new count, her son Bernhard, and fostering the piety of her surrogate daughter, the housekeeper-cum-holy woman Liutberga.[90] Hospitality to pilgrims, almsgiving, reverence to the clergy, domestic moral integrity and sexual self-discipline: these were the qualities which turned a woman's house into a 'church of Christ'.[91] We might almost add Gerald of Aurillac to this roll-call, for his monastic foundation, relic collecting and almsgiving fit the same pattern. What differentiates him is that he took sexual abstinence to the extreme of never marrying: his household was holy without being conjugal.[92]

We lose track of Einhard after Halley's comet. By then, he was in his late 60s and a widower, the male condition most invisible in the historical record.[93] His literary masterpieces had been published, but perhaps it was now that he composed his most private, heartfelt work. So private that only one manuscript is extant, Einhard's abbreviation of the Psalter is a catena of excerpts which form the prayers of a sinner meditating on his need for salvation and on the greatness of God.[94] As he explained in his preface, the complete Psalter is not suitable for

[90] *Vita Liutbirgae*, chs. 2, 7, ed. Ottokar Menzel, *Das Leben der Liutbirg*, Deutsches Mittelalter. Kritische Studien des Reichsinstituts für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde, 3 (Leipzig, 1937), 11, 14–15.

[91] The phrase is that of the ninth-century hagiographer of the seventh-century saint, Sadalberga. *Vita Sadalbergae* 11, ed. Bruno Krusch, *MGH SSRM*, v, 55–6.

[92] Odo of Cluny, *Vita Geraldi*, II.5 (founds monastery); II.23 (relics), *PL* 133, cols. 673–4, 683.

[93] Cf. Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', 84, and on the documentary invisibility of widowers at all periods see the chapters by Julia Crick, Margaret Pelling and Pamela Sharpe in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (Harlow, 1999).

[94] Extant in Vercelli, Bibliotheca Capitolare MS 149 of S.ix $^{3-4}$, it is edited in full by P. Salmon under the title *Psalterium adbreviatum Vercellense* in *Testimonia orationis Christianae antiquioris*, ed. P. Salmon, C. Coeburgh and P. du Puniet, *Corpus Christianorum continuatio medievalis*, 47 (Turnhout, 1977), 37–78. Salmon has expressed doubts about the attribution to Einhard. See his 'Psautiers abrégés du moyen âge', in his *Analecta liturgica: extraits des manuscrits liturgiques de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, Studi e Testi, 273 (Vatican City, 1974), 67–119, esp. 72–4, for his argument that since the text used is the Psalterium Romanum, no one as close to Charlemagne's liturgical reforms could have made it. This argument fails to take into account the great diversity of Bible texts in circulation in the late eighth and ninth centuries: for a conspectus, see Bonifatius Fischer, 'Bibeltext und Bibelreform unter Karl dem Grossen', in *Karl der Grosse*, ed. Braunfels, II, 156–216. Other witnesses to the existence of an abbreviated psalter bearing Einhard's name are (i) the reference to a 'libellus Einardi de psalmis' in the tenth-century Bobbio catalogue (G. Becker, *Catalogi bibliothecarum antiqui* (Bonn, 1885), I, 72) and (ii) Sigebert of Gembloux, *De viris illustribus* 84 (ed. Robert Witte (Frankfurt, 1974), 77), where he refers to Einhard as the author of the *vita Karoli* and an abbreviated – but Gallican – psalter. See also Eligius Dekkers, 'Sigebert van Gembloux en zijn "De Viris illustribus"', *Sacris Erudiri*, 26 (1983), 57–102.

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those who wish 'to invoke God and beseech him on account of their sins'. Rather, his selection of excerpts was directed towards that purpose.[95] Choosing not to open with the *beatus vir* of Psalm 1 but with the appeal to God from the psalmist beset by his enemies in Psalm 3, Einhard takes a highly selective and deeply personal course through the Psalter, omitting some psalms entirely and heavily abbreviating others. The ending is equally carefully designed: after following the psalms in sequence through to and including Psalm 144, he ends with a second set of extracts from Psalm 102, quite different in tone from the first. These closing verses are the doxology of a sinner seeking divine mercy. Here we encounter the most authentic Einhard, stripped of all literary pretension or self-fashioning: the human face to face with his God.

Einhard shared his reliance on the Psalter as an instrument of prayer with others of the Carolingian laity. Alcuin had advised Charlemagne on how the layman leading the 'active life' could nevertheless use the psalms for prayer at regular intervals throughout the day, in a simplification of the monastic office.[96] An anxious noblewoman suffering from 'various mishaps' commissioned Prudentius, bishop of Troyes (*c.* 844–61) to compile for her a series of brief and consolatory prayers based upon the Psalter. In the preface to his *Flores psalmorum*, Prudentius was explicit that it was appropriate for travellers and anyone in difficulty to recite a few short verses of the psalms instead of the entire Psalter.[97] If commissioning a personal set of psalm-based prayers was a sign of membership of the highest aristocracy, other elite lay folk might resort to borrowing a psalter: three women – a wife, a widow and a lady (*domna*) – availed themselves of copies lent by the monastic library at Weissenburg.[98] The handful of extant Carolingian wills also tell us of lay ownership of psalters and books containing both psalms and prayers, and there is even some evidence that the Psalter may have been the primer for teaching lay boys to read, just as it was in monastic schools.[99] Through the Psalter and prayers derived from it, pious Carolingian laymen and women could draw on the rhythm of monastic worship

[95] *Psalterium adbreviatum Vercellense*, 55.

[96] Alcuin, *Epistolae* 304, ed. Dümmler, 462–3. For the prayers of another ninth-century king, see Paul Kershaw, 'Illness, Power and Prayer in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*', *Early Medieval Europe*, 10 (2001), 201–24.

[97] Ed. Salmon, 'Psautiers abrégés du moyen âge', 93–119, with full text of preface available in *MGH Epp.*, v, 323.

[98] The tenth-century list of borrowers on the flyleaf of Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek MS 4119 (= Codex Weissenburgensis 35), is edited and discussed by Otto Lerche, 'Die älteste Ausleihverzeichnis einer deutschen Bibliothek', *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, 27 (1910), 441–50.

[99] The evidence is assembled by Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989), 217–18, 246–8.

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yet tailor their own devotional life to suit individual needs. Einhard shows how personal such usage was.

The account I have just sketched invites us to consider how fluid the early medieval boundaries between lay and religious life could be.[100] Einhard was not only a courtier, but became a married landowner and probably a father. He promoted the cult of his chosen martyr relics even more vigorously than anyone else of his time and turned his household into a 'church of Christ'.[101] He was also deeply religious in his reading, his thinking and his perception of a world permeated by sin. Much of this locates him securely within an emerging culture of elite, conjugal Christianity, in which codes of moral conduct first articulated at court in the years around 800 became domesticated in some magnates' households. This is not to argue that the sample of pious households discussed here is representative of the Carolingian aristocracy as a whole, for that would be to ignore compaints about wanton violence against women and church property or about inappropriate uses of wealth.[102] Nevertheless, there is enough evidence to indicate that we do not have to wait until the high Middle Ages to find expressions of lay piety that are actively pursued and distinctive in their modalities. André Vauchez once declared that one of the 'novel characteristics' of the eleventh–thirteenth centuries was 'the ability of lay people to create autonomous forms of piety which. . .succeeded in reshaping the religious message disseminated by the clergy to meet their feelings and specific needs'.[103] He was, of course, talking of large-scale religious movements and enthusiasms but nevertheless his sense of novelty was misplaced. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same comment holds true for the conjugal endeavours among the Carolingian aristocray which I have outlined. Ninth-century lay initiative created articulate, self-conscious forms of devotion which met the needs of personal salvation and familial identity whilst remaining fully orthodox.

There remains, though, something singular about Einhard. If he and Imma seem to have had more refined religious sensibilities than most of their contemporaries, it is in part because of the almost unparalleled first-hand evidence they have left us. Rather than being reliant upon the passing laudations of hagiographers, we have their own writings to

[100] As pointed out by Eva Synek, '"*Ex utroque sexu fidelium tres ordines*": the status of women in early medieval canon law', *Gender and History*, 12 (2000), 595–621.

[101] Cf. n. 91 above.

[102] Smith, 'Gender and ideology', 60, and *eadem*, 'Religion and Lay Society', in *New Cambridge Medieval History*, II: *c. 700–c. 900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), 664–5, for further references.

[103] A. Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, trans. J. Schneider (Notre Dame, IN, 1993), 265.

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hand. No one else explains their personal devotion to saints with an enthusiasm equal to Einhard's, and only in one other instance can we gain an equally privileged insight into the spirituality of the lay elite – Dhuoda, who nevertheless evinces no particular interest in the cults of saints. Concerned for the spiritual and moral welfare of her son, now enrolled in the ranks of the *pueri* at court, Dhuoda outlined in 841–3 a programme of penance, prayer, moral integrity and chastity for her fifteen-year-old son. In language suffused by the Psalms, her *libellus* reproduced in loving terms the aristocratic ethic which Alcuin had formulated half a century earlier.[104] Einhard and Imma would have wholeheartedly approved.[105]

Of the couple, Imma is easier to locate in her social and historiographical context. Poorly documented, like all lay women, but probably the transmitter of important property rights, she has much in common with other devout, capable women of the Carolingian lay elite. It is Einhard who remains distinctive. Uniquely, his prominence was not based upon military distinction, a successful career in the ecclesastical hierarchy or large-scale land ownership. Whether by marriage or birth, all the other lay aristocrats mentioned belonged to the ranks of the imperial 'super-aristocracy', whose wealth, power and privilege far exceeded that of Imma and her husband. Einhard had used his many abilities and his command of the Latin language to overcome the disadvantages of his tiny stature. Through his years at court, those talents had propelled him from the ranks of minor, local landowners into the circle of the *Reichsaristokratie*. Prolonged attendance at court had turned Einhard into the courtier par excellence; his aptitudes and closeness to two successive emperors combined to bring him status and contacts quite atypical of the local elites of the Maingau. Yet it seems that only marriage, when it finally happened, gave him his own place among the landed aristocracy.

After his youthful, monastic years, Einhard lived a life among the powerful, amidst all the temptations and corruptions of the court. He had married and been sexually active within his marriage. He had been in attendance upon Charlemagne in exactly those years when lay courtiers were most anxious about their chances of salvation, and upon Louis the Pious when his empire seemed on the point of collapse from external attack and internal moral corruption. Perhaps any or all of these circumstances sharpened his persistent sense of being a sinner; perhaps his minute frame seemed the living embodiment of Christian belief that, despite being created in the image of God, humankind was

[104] *Manuel pour mon fils*, ed. Riché, 27–37, for discussion of her sources.

[105] Cf. the similar but very brief advice addressed by Imma to her son (or grandson). Einhard, *Epistolae*, no. 38, ed. Hampe, 128–9 and n. 10 above.

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deeply flawed. His inner meditations on his own sinfulness went to the grave with him: but he died as he wished, in the service of Sts Marcellinus and Peter.[106]

[106] Cf. *Epistolae*, no. 14, ed. Hampe, 117: 'timeo me aliubi quam velim at aliut agentem, quam sanctis Christi martyribus servientiem, esse moriturum'.

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