Memorable crises: Carolingian historiography and the making of Pippin's reign, 750-900

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Pippin's reign is as much defined by the actions of his siblings, as by his own. In this chapter, the focus will be on Carloman, Pippin's older brother, with whom he jointly governed the Frankish realm for the first five years of his reign. In 746, just when it seemed that Carloman and Pippin had overcome the opposition and had successfully consolidated their position as the sole heirs of Charles Martel, Carloman is said to have announced his abdication. In the late summer of 747, he proceeded to Rome where he converted to the monastic life.1

In Merovingian times, the abdication and conversion of a ruler was the unmistakable sign of his failure. Stripped of their characteristic long hair, the ancient symbol of their royal dignity, and with that of their honour, these former kings were relegated to the monastery, where they were expected to remain for the rest of their lives. Carolingian sources, however, stress that Carloman was not a Merovingian ruler, and the reader is therefore invited not to interpret Carloman's conversion in these terms. Rather, Carolingian historiography emphasizes that Carloman abdicated of his own free will, and at his own pace. Furthermore, virtually every account states that Carloman was not sent off to some Frankish monastery, but honourably proceeded to Rome, where he received the tonsure from Pope Zacharias.2 Some noted that Carloman had felt

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1 Hahn, *Jahrbücher*, p. 89; Heidrich, 'Synode und Hoftag', 433.  
2 *ARF*, s.a. 745-6.
a yearning for monastic tranquillity, while others later claimed that this pious Carolingian had grown weary of the burdens of secular command. By the 820s, during the reign of Louis the Pious, Carloman’s abdication and conversion gradually began to be seen in a different light and came to be explained in a context of public penance.

Contrary to everyone’s expectations, Carloman’s extraordinary departure from the corridors of power in 747 proved not to be the end of his involvement in Carolingian politics. In the capacity of ambassador for the Lombard king, Carloman resurfaced at the Frankish court in 753, on a mission to frustrate his brother’s plans to form a pact with the papacy and invade Lombard Italy. This proved too much for Pippin to tolerate: he confined his older brother in a Frankish monastery in 754, where he died soon after. The contrast between Carloman’s well-orchestrated exit from the corridors of power and his ultimate demise in a monastery in Vienne suggests that the initial plan, namely to allow Carloman to depart with his honour intact, was abandoned when Carloman broke the rules by returning from what was meant to be seen as a self-chosen monastic exile. It was left to the inventiveness of Carolingian history-writers to cast Carloman’s history in such a way that it did not reflect badly on the dynasty and its members.

This chapter explores Carloman’s remembrance with regard to his sudden abdication and conversion, as it was transformed and perpetuated in Carolingian court historiography. In the course of the later eighth and ninth centuries, the perception of Carloman’s identity developed significantly. What this chapter studies, therefore, is what De Jong has called ‘the literary battle fought over the memoria of those who had left the political arena’ – in this case Carloman’s. To each of these authors, the conservation, and perhaps rehabilitation, of a kindly memoria for Carloman was of great importance – if not because Carloman was one of the two recognized heirs of Charles Martel, then certainly because Carloman’s reputation was closely connected to that of the dynasty, which had come to be defined on the moral and religious rectitude of its members. But although these authors shared a common objective, each had to cope with different moral and political circumstances, and consequently came up with different solutions to circumvent or solve the myriad of problems Carloman’s history had put on their path. Accounting for Carloman’s abdication was in and of itself a formidable challenge, but his unanticipated return from his monastic exile in 753, and the unceremonious way in which Pippin sub-

5 Continuations, c. 30.
6 Einhard, VK, c. 2.
sequently had him evicted from court, made this affair infinitely more difficult to explain in satisfactory terms.

Three sections make up this chapter. The first explores the reception of Carloman’s abdication and conversion in 747, especially in relation to that of other contemporary converts, namely the Merovingian Childeric III (751) and the Carolingian Tassilo (782). In particular, I focus on the motive attributed to this event, an issue eighth-century history-writers treated with some reluctance, though which in the course of the ninth century came to be explained as an act of penance. The second section discusses the event of Carloman’s return in 753/4, and investigates the strategies employed to divert the blame away from Carloman in order to preserve his reputation. As I intend to demonstrate, Carloman’s reputation was saved by the same strategy that was originally devised to justify his incarceration in 754, namely by placing emphasis on his identity as a Benedictine monk. Though he initially was reproved of having abandoned his monastery, later commentators argued that Carloman, in his devotion to the Rule of Saint Benedict, could not be held accountable for what his superiors had ordered him to do. The final section will look at Regino of Prüm, in whose early tenth-century Chronicle these two elements of Carloman’s ‘post-abdication’ identity, namely that of the humble penitent and the devoted monk, came together.

4.1. Penance

4.1.1. ‘Quod voluisset seculum relinquere’

The only reference to the Franks in the contemporary Life of Pope Zachary does not concern the pope’s alleged sanction of Pippin’s coup in 751, but Carloman’s arrival in Rome, where he, ‘abandoning the glory of his present life and earthly power, came devoutly with some of his loyal followers to St Peter, prince of the apostles (...), and accepted the burden of the clerical status from the same holy pontiff.’ It was not much later that Childebrand, who we may assume was unfamiliar with the Liber Pontificalis, added the following account to his chronicle: ‘Carloman, burning with an inextinguishable zeal for the pious cause, committed his kingdom (regnum) together with his son Drogo to his brother...’
Pippin's care and went to the threshold of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul in Rome, in order to persevere in the monastic order.’

These two testimonies support each other: Carloman had left the political arena and had proceeded to Rome, where he entered the clergy and eventually became a monk. The active mode of writing in the Continuations in combination with the pious yearnings Carloman is said to have had suggest that it had been Carloman’s own wish to abdicate and convert. In the ARF, composed in the 790s, we come across a similar emphasis on the voluntary character of Carloman’s abdication. The annals state that ‘Carloman announced to his brother Pippin that he wished to relinquish the world. And in that year they undertook no campaign, but both made preparations, Carloman for his journey and Pippin so that he might honourably direct his brother with gifts.’ When Carloman arrived in Rome, in 747, the ARF state that ‘he tonsured himself and built a monastery in honour of Saint Sylvester on Monte Soratte.’

The emphasis placed on the voluntary character of Carloman’s abdication and conversion in contemporary and near-contemporary Carolingian historiography is quite explicit and stands in sharp contrast to earlier accounts of royal abdication and conversion in Francia. A number of Merovingian rulers had preceded Carloman, albeit with one significant difference: they had had no say in the matter, nor did they appear to have been particularly eager to enter the clerical life. According to Jonas of Bobbio (d. c. 665), when the Irish missionary Columbanus had a run-in with King Theuderic II (r. 595-613) and advised him to retire to a monastery, Theuderic and his courtiers indignantly replied that they had never heard of a Frankish ruler who became a cleric of his own free will. In pre-Carolingian Francia, the monastery only called to widowed queens and princesses. Merovingian kings, on the other hand, had to be forced to abdicate and their clerical tonsure came at the cost of great personal dishonour and shame.

Two well-known examples from the Histories of Gregory of Tours reveal the humiliation associated with forced tonsure. The first example relates to...

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7 Continuations, c. 30: ‘Carlomannus devotionis causa inextinctu succensus, regnum una cum filio suo Drogone manibus germani sui Pippini committens, ad limina beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli Romam ob monachyrio ordine perseveraturus advexit.’
8 ARF, s.a. 745: ‘Tunc Carlomannus confessus est Pippino germano suo, quod voluisset seculum relinquere et in eodem anno nullum fecerunt exercitum, sed praeparaverunt se uterque, Carlomannus ad iter suum et Pippinus, quomodo germanum suum honorifice directisset cum muneribus.’
9 ARF, s.a. 746: ‘Ibique se totondit et in Serapte monte monasterium aedificavit in honore sancti Silvestri.’
10 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, l. 1, c. 28: ‘Quod et regi et omnibus circumdantibus ridiculum excitat, aientes, se numquam audisse, Merovingum, in regno sublimatum, voluntarium clericum suisse.’
Chararik and his son, two contemporaries of the early sixth-century King Clovis I. Because they had refused to support Clovis in his fight against Syagrius, Clovis had them arrested, tonsured and consecrated as priest and deacon respectively. Not wishing to accept this humiliation (*humilitas*), they pledged to regrow their long hair and take revenge, upon which Clovis decided to behead them instead.\(^{11}\) The second example concerns Clotild, who by then had become Clovis’ widow. When her son, Chlodomer, died in 524, his young sons were given to her care. This, however, was not to the liking of her other sons, Chlothar and Childebert, who planned to seize their late-brother’s kingdom and divide it between themselves. To rid themselves of Chlodomer’s heirs, they asked their mother to make a choice: should her orphaned grandchildren lose their long hair, or their lives? Clothild opted for the latter. Two of Chlodomer’s sons were put to death. However, the third boy, Chlodevald, managed to escape. He ‘set aside the earthly kingdom, went over to the Lord, and, cutting off his hair with his own hands, he was made a cleric.’\(^{12}\) Chlodevald thus chose to take up the clerical life, which Gregory emphasized by pointing out that the young prince had cut off his own hair.\(^{13}\) Praised by Gregory for his many good works as a priest, Chlodevald, later remembered as Saint Cloud, would be the only saint the Merovingian dynasty brought forth.\(^{14}\)

In Carolingian historiography, a similar distinction was introduced with regard to Carloman, who is said to have been spared the humiliation of a forced tonsure. This becomes particularly clear in the *ARF*, especially if we compare its account of Carloman’s abdication and conversion with that of the Merovingian king Childeric III in 751. With regard to the latter, the annals state that ‘Childeric, who was falsely called king, was tonsured and sent into a monastery.’\(^{15}\) Conversely, Carloman is said to have ‘proceeded to Rome, where he tonsured himself and built a monastery on Monte Soratte dedicated to Saint Sylvester.’\(^{16}\) The author’s use of the passive mode to describe Childeric’s removal from power (*tonsuratus est et in monasterium missus*) is intentional and meant to stress the involuntary and dishonourable character of his abdi-

\(^{11}\) Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, l. 2, c. 41, pp. 91-2.


\(^{14}\) *Vita Sancti Chlodovaldi*, ed. Krusch. The text was probably composed in ninth or tenth century.

\(^{15}\) *ARF* s.a. 750: ‘Hildericus vero, qui false rex vocabatur, tonsuratus est et in monasterium missus.’

\(^{16}\) *ARF*, s.a. 746: ‘Tunc Carolomanus Romam perexit ibique se tonsuravit et in Monte Serapte monasterium aedificavit in honore sancti Silvestri.’

129
cration.\textsuperscript{17} Carloman, on the contrary, is described as having actively gone to Rome (\textit{perrexit Romam}). If interpreted literally, Carloman, like Chlodovald in Gregory’s account, even removed his own hair (\textit{se totondit}).

Two centuries separated Chlodovald from Carloman, during which not a single Frankish ruler had given up his throne willingly to enter the clergy. Historians have therefore debated whether the information provided by these Carolingian sources can be relied on and, if so, whence Carloman had derived his inspiration. Surprisingly enough, Gregory’s account of Chlodovald has thus far never been considered as a source of inspiration, either for Carloman and his associates or those who committed his history to writing. Instead, historians, notably Karl Heinrich Krüger and Claire Stancliffe, have argued for an Anglo-Saxon source of inspiration.\textsuperscript{18} In the late-seventh and eighth centuries, several Irish and Anglo-Saxon kings were known to have resigned their function in order to embark on pilgrimage or retreat to a monastery, seemingly at no cost to their personal standing.\textsuperscript{19} Carloman, or so they argued, may well have been inspired by his Anglo-Saxon advisor Boniface, or perhaps took his inspiration directly from Bede’s \textit{Ecclesiastical History of the English People}.

Stancliffe further argued that religious motivation had not played a role in the forced conversion of Merovingian kings, whose abdication and monastic exile she considered to be entirely politically motivated, because they were coerced.\textsuperscript{20} Such a strict distinction between the religious and the political in early medieval societies might not be warranted, regardless of whether these Merovingian abdications and conversions were presented as having been forced or not. A more fundamental critique of Stancliffe’s argument, voiced by De Jong, is that her arguments neglect to take the rhetorical dimension of these texts into account.\textsuperscript{21} Had Carloman’s abdication and conversion truly been different from that of his less fortunate predecessors? Or had it merely been made to appear that way, perhaps to protect the Carolingian reputation? Such rhetorical manipulations, moreover, do not need to have been limited to the written testimonies alone. The ceremonies and rituals with which Carloman left the corridors of power can easily have been styled in such a way to make Carloman’s conversion look genuine and voluntary, while in fact he may have had little say in the matter. The popular adage that ‘politics is perception’ was probably just as accurate then as it is today. Perhaps all that our sources permit

\textsuperscript{17} De Jong, ‘Monastic prisoners’, p. 294.
\textsuperscript{18} Krüger, ‘Königskonversionen’, 189–93; Stancliffe, ‘Kings’.
\textsuperscript{19} For a list of Anglo-Saxon kings who opted out, see: Stancliffe, ‘Kings’, pp. 154–7.
\textsuperscript{20} Stancliffe, ‘Kings’, 158–9.
\textsuperscript{21} De Jong, ‘Monastic Prisoners’, 313.
us to conclude is that Carloman was presented as though he had acted of his own will.

Others have also been sceptical about the image presented in Carolingian historiography, and look at Pippin with suspicion. Reason for suspicion is Childebrand’s remark that Carloman, before leaving for Rome, had ‘committed his realm together with his son Drogo to the hands of his brother Pippin’. Somewhat superfluously, perhaps, Childebrand concludes his entry by stating that ‘on account of this succession Pippin was strengthened in the realm.’ We have already come to know Childebrand as predominantly Pippin’s man. His concern therefore was not Carloman’s new-found spiritual calling, but rather the effects this calling had on Pippin’s standing in the realm. What mattered to Childebrand, in other words, was the issue of Carloman’s succession.

In this respect, however, Childebrand appears to have cut a few corners. Not only is there evidence that Carloman intended for his eldest son Drogo to succeed him, but there is also some evidence that Drogo, at least temporarily, had been in control of his father’s domains. The evidence is flimsy and consists of two documents: the first is a charter, issued by Carloman on the eve of his departure, which also bears Drogo’s subscription. According to Ingrid Heidrich, this charter can be interpreted as Carloman’s formal presentation of Drogo as his successor and, more specifically, as an attempt to bind certain prominent members of his elite, in this case Abbot Anglinus of Stablo-Malmedy and his family, to Drogo’s cause. The second document is a short and anonymous note of a Frisian priest inquiring after Boniface’s whereabouts: had he gone to Pippin’s council or to that of Drogo? Apart from this, nothing is known of the careers of Drogo and his siblings, except that they ended in 754, when Pippin had them tonsured and exiled to monasteries. Unlike Carloman, his sons do not appear to have had a say in the matter. As I will discuss below, this is a direct consequence of Carloman’s sudden re-emergence in 753. Nothing before that time points to a conflict between Pippin and Carloman, or between Pippin and his nephews. Rather than to assume on the basis of Childebrand’s manipulated account of Carloman’s succession that the Continuations had meant to cover any wrongdoings of Pippin in 747, I suspect

22 Continuations, c. 30: ‘Carlomannus (...) regnum una cum filio suo Dragone manibus germani sui Pippini committens. (...) Qua successione Pippinus roboratur in regno’; cf. ARF, s.a. 745.
23 Becher, ‘Drogo’.
24 Heidrich, Urkunden, no. 15.
26 Letters of Boniface, no. 79.
27 AP, s.a. 753.
Childebrand intended to conceal Pippin’s illicit behaviour in 754, when he sent his nephews into monastic exile. Later commentators, who had more distance between them and the events they wrote about, opted for a much simpler solution: they simply chose not to mention Drogo’s name.

4.1.2. Motive

The ARF do not inform us of Carloman’s motives and the Continuations merely state that Carloman ‘burned with an inextinguishable fire for the pious cause.’ What had triggered this burning desire, Childebrand does not say. The Continuations may nonetheless offer a valuable clue in the entry preceding the one announcing Carloman’s abdication, which recounts a particularly dramatic event: ‘while the Alemanni went back on their oath to Carloman, he entered their native land in great rage with the army, and slaughtered by sword many of those who rebelled against him.’

The Alemanni had joined Odilo’s rebellion in 743, but unlike the other rebellious gentes, the Alemannian elite, as the Continuations also point out, had already sworn an oath of fidelity to Carloman in 742. It might explain why the rebellion of the Alemanni had merited such harsh punishment.

It was ‘in the course of the following year’ that Carloman abdicated, but if there is a connection between these two events, Childebrand did not wish to make it too explicit. A causal relation may have been implied, though. In the annalistic genre, narrative is created by the implication of loose connexions between adjacent entries, even if there is no immediate grammatical basis for it. That something similar may have been the case in the Continuations is suggested by the unusually dramatic language that is used to describe Carloman’s entry into Alemannia: he did so ‘with great fury’ (cum magno furore), in order ‘to slaughter many rebels’ (trucidare plurimos rebelles). Are we merely witnessing a sudden fit of literary glibness, or is the author trying to relate a very important matter?

The ARF do not mention Carloman’s violent run-in with the Alemanni, which partly explains why from this point onwards the narratives of the ARF and the Continuations are no longer synchronous. Instead of relating the conflict with the Alemanni in 746, the annalist has Carloman announce his wish to abdicate, upon which the two brothers made their preparations, ‘Carloman...’

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29 Continuations, c.29: ‘...dum Alamanni contra Carlomanno eorum fide felfissent, ipse cum magno furore cum exercitu in eorum patria peraccessit et plurimos eorum qui contra ipso rebelles existabant gladio trucidavit.’

30 Continuations, c. 25.

31 Dutton, Charlemagne’s mustache, p. 110, called this phenomenon ‘compromised parataxis’.
for his journey and Pippin so he may honourably direct his brother with gifts.32 Carloman’s actual abdication occurred the following year, in 747. This allowed the annalist to present Carloman more clearly as the instigator of his own abdication. Carloman moved at his own pace, while Pippin is presented as a supportive brother.

Carloman’s entry into Alemannia resurfaces in the Annales Mettenses priores, composed in 806. However, the author made significant changes to the tone and content of this story:

In this year, Carloman, when he saw the infidelity of the Alemanni, penetrated their territory with the army and established a tribunal in the place called Cannstatt. In that place he brought together the armies of the Franks and the Alemanni. And there was a great miracle there, namely that one army seized another and bound it without any crisis of war. However, those leaders who, together with Theodebald, have been in league with Odilo against the unconquerable rulers Pippin and Carloman, he seized and disciplined mercifully according to what each deserved.33

In his account of Carloman’s punitative campaign against the Alemanni, the author of the Annales Mettenses priores significantly reduced its violent character. No longer a massacre born out of a state of magnus furor, the author stated that Carloman had brought the Alemanni before a tribunal, over which he presided as a merciful judge. In fact, the entire ordeal was so devoid of violence that the author even went so far as to claim that Cannstatt had witnessed a ‘great miracle,’ because the Alemannian host had not put up any resistance. But like the Continuations, the Annales Mettenses priores also do not explicitly link the events in Cannstatt to Carloman’s abdication.

While none of these texts presents the punishment of the Alemanni as the reason for Carloman’s abdication and retirement to the monastery, each author pursued a different strategy to come to terms with the ‘Massacre of Cannstatt’. The Continuations present Carloman as a scourge of God, the ARF keep silent about the event and the Annales Mettenses priores present Carloman as a merciful judge. It suggests that in the later eighth and early ninth centuries,
Carolingerian commentators continued to struggle with the rendering of this event. That Carloman’s actions in Alemannia merited such careful treatment might well indicate that this was a very sensitive matter.

The only text that explicitly connects the events in Alemannia to Carloman’s abdication is a recension of a set of minor annals known as the *Annales Petaviani*.34 This recension survives in a single manuscript that has been dated to the second quarter of the ninth century. The manuscript used to be preserved at the monastery of St Martin of Massay and hence came to be known as the **Codex Masiacensis**.35 For this reason, I shall refer to this particular recension as the **Annals of Massay**. Relatively little is known about these annals and the context in which they were composed. In appendix 2, I argue that these annals are closely associated with the monastery of St Martin of Tours, where this text was probably composed at some point during the abbacy of Fridugisus (804-834).

With regard to Carloman’s abdication, the **Annals of Massay** digress significantly from the original narrative of the *Annales Petaviani*. In the original text, no particular weight is given to Carloman’s entry into Alemannia or to the abdication and conversion that followed it. In the customary style of the annalistic genre, the *Annales Petaviani* state that ‘in 746 Carloman entered Alemannia’ (*Karolomannus intravit Alamanniam*) and that, ‘in 747 Carloman migrated to Rome’ (*Karolomannus migravit Romam*). In the **Annals of Massay**, however, the story of Carloman’s abdication was given a lengthy continuation and states that Carloman’s motive for entering the monastic life was to do penance for having committed a massacre:36

> [Carolomannus intravit Alamanniam.] Ubi fertur quod multa hominum millia ceciderit; unde compunctus regnum reliquit, et monasterium in castro Cassino situm adit. Petiit autem abbatem loci illius ac fratres, ut quod vilius excogitare possent officium ei inuingerent. At illi anserum custodiam mandaverunt ei. Quas cum pasceret, contigit, ut lupus.

> [Carloman entered Alemannia.] Where it is said that he slew many thousands of men. Feeling remorseful because of it, he abandoned his realm and went to the monastery located in the fortress of Cassino. He requested the abbot and the brethren of that monastery to impose on him the vilest duty they could think of. And they charged him with guarding the geese. When he fed them, it came to pass that a wolf suddenly appeared and seized one of

34 *AP*, s.a. 746 Hahn, dJahrbiicher, p. 87.
35 Genève, BPU lat. 50.
36 *AM*, s.a. 746.
ex improviso veniens, unam eorum raperet. Quod ille cernens et eripere non valens, cum gemitu conversus ad Dominum dixit: ‘Ecce Domine, cui regnum commiseras: Quomodo enim innumerous populos ac regiones provido moderamine regerem, qui paucas anseres servare nequivi?’ Cumque amarissime fleret, reumque se credita substantiae torporis ignavia resoluta fateretur, cogente Deo qui eius compassus est lacrymis, lupus rediit, anserem sanam deposuit, frustratus dilectae praedae usu, avidis faucibus invitus abscessit.

The reference to the massacre of ‘many thousands of men’ in Alemannia hints at the author’s familiarity with the Continuations. It may also suggest that this version of events had nestled itself in other traditions, possibly oral ones, through which it could have become part of Frankish collective memory. All we are safely able to conclude is that the literate court elite of the later eighth and early ninth centuries had chosen not to write of these events in a more explicit way.

Penance is a central theme of the Annals of Massay. In their opening entry (726), where the Annales Petaviiani only note that a certain ‘Martinus died,’ the author of the Annals of Massay added that ‘he was a monk in Corbie, a man of most moderate life and extremely learned. Duke Charles [Martel] held him in the highest reverence and confided his sins to him.’ Charles Martel thus is said to have had a monk from Corbie as his confessor and Carloman went to Monte Cassino to repent for his sins. The point these annals therefore wish to make is that monks were the doctors of the soul and necessary to guide and correct Carolingian rulers as they led the Franks to their salvation. Unlike the Continuations, the ARF or the Annales Mettenses priores, these annals appear less concerned with keeping up appearances and readily sacrifice Carloman’s bona memoria to create what Regino of Prüm would later call an exemplum memorabile for others to emulate. At some point during the reign of Louis the

37 AM, s.a. 726: ‘[Martinus mortuus est.] Fuit autem Monachus in Corbeia, vir vitae continentissimae, et adprime eruditus, quem Karolus Dux in summa veneratione habuit, et peccata sua ei confitebatur.’

135
Pious, it would seem, Carloman was turning into a model penitent. But for this to work, he first need to be recognized as a first-class sinner.

4.1.3. Public penance

In the accounts discussed above, we witness a gradual transformation in the perception of Carloman's abdication and conversion, from a ruler who burned with pious zeal to a sinner in search of redemption. It might be no coincidence that Carloman's 'coming out' as a penitent occurred during the reign of Louis Pious, when 'public penance became part of the armoury of revived public power.' Could public penance have been the reason behind Carloman's conversion? It was meant to be a humiliating form of punishment and the Massacre of Cannstatt, as we have seen, appeared to have put the earliest commentators on edge. But was it enough to have caused a scandal? The humiliation of having to subject to public penance could easily have caused the dynasty's initial commentators to feel uneasy with affixing this label to Carloman's conversion.

At the same time, it will of course not do to equate Carloman's conversion in 747 with Louis' public penance at Soissons in 833. Not only were the circumstances radically different, but the meaning of public penance had changed significantly in the first half of the ninth century – something that had already been recognized at the Carolingian reform councils of 813. Public penance, the public atonement demanded for public sins, had been in use since Late Antiquity, but its form had moved away considerably from the original canonical precepts. In seventh-century Visigothic Spain, public penance had become increasingly coercive. It is also clear that, from as early as the sixth century, monastic conversion and penance had become practically indistinguishable. It therefore appears to have been closely related to the practice of monastic exile, something Frankish rulers – Merovingian and Carolingian – frequently used to rid themselves of political opponents without having to resort to bloodshed.

When seen like this, it might not go too far to postulate that sentencing Merovingian kings to the clerical tonsure and life in a monastery was regarded as
as a form of, or at least something very closely related to, public penance.44 If so (and I must admit that Frankish sources do not describe this event as a penance, public or otherwise), it was more akin to the coercive Visigothic practice, with which for example King Wamba had been made a penitent, than to the ninth-century Carolingian practice, which stressed that penance needed to be a voluntary act if it was to have meaning.

Thus far, historians have mainly approached Merovingian royal abdications from a political point of view. What has been underappreciated, however, is that these rulers were not just deprived of their distinctive long hair, the ancient symbol of their royal virtus, but that they received a clerical tonsure in return. The monastery was much more than a medieval prison house to these deposed rulers.45 Had that been its function, the history of Grifo has shown that there were other, more convenient options for that.46 Above all, the monastery remained a site for spiritual contemplation and atonement. The attribution of the clerical tonsure to these fallen rulers acknowledges as much. As Isidore of Seville explained, '[the tonsure] was a certain sign that figures on the body but is performed in the soul, so that by this sign in religious life vices might be curtailed and we might cast off the crimes of our flesh just like our hairs.'47 Those found guilty of having abused their public authority were therefore not merely banned from secular society, but they were expected to humbly atone for their sins in earnest.

Early medieval notions of authority placed a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of those whom God had entrusted it. Although the notion is certainly not a Carolingian invention, the early Carolingian kings, new to the royal dignity, had ample cause vigorously to express their familiarity with this Christian language of authority. In a charter to the monastery of Prüm, dated 761, Pippin defined his ideology as follows: 'because kings rule on account of God and because He entrusted us to govern the peoples and kingdoms on behalf of His mercy, it must be ensured that, in order that we will also be exalted rectores, we must not neglect to govern and educate the needy and the poor for the love of Christ.'48 But what if a ruler failed at being an 'exalted rector'? Bad

46 When Grifo was arrested, he apparently was neither given the tonsure, nor brought to a monastery. However, the event is recorded in a text dating to 806: AMP, s.a. 741.
47 Isidore, De ecclesiasticiis officiis, l. 2, c.4, p. 55: ‘est (…) signum quoddam, quod in corpore figuratur, sed in animo scilicet, ut hoc signo in religione vita resecetur, et criminibus carnis nostrae, quasi crinibus, exuamur.’ In a culture in which hair length was a powerful social marker, to have it removed would have been a degrading and humiliating experience.
48 DKar, no. 16, p. 22: ‘Et quia reges ex deo regnant nobisque gentes et regna pro sua misericordia ad guberandum commisit, providendum, ut et sublimes rectores simus, inpobus et pauperibus
rulers not only put their own salvation at risk, but that of the community which God had entrusted to them as well.⁴⁹

Evidence that this was a genuine concern, at least to some, at the time of Carloman’s abdication can be found in a letter of admonition that Boniface had sent to King Æthelbert of Mercia, instructing him in the moral obligations of leadership.⁵⁰ Despite the king’s many good virtues, with which the archbishop prudently began his letter, it had come to his attention that Æthelbert was guilty of fornication. With a nun, no less. ‘You will remember,’ Boniface reproached the king, ‘that you were made king and ruler over many not by your own merits, but by the abounding grace of God.’⁵¹ In an accompanying letter, Boniface reminded his envoy that ‘we ask that the king may correct himself and his people with him, lest the entire people should perish along with its ruler here and in the life to come, but that, through the emendation and correction of his own life, he once again directs his people by his example on the road to salvation.’⁵² As Boniface instructed Æthelbert, it was through penitence and purification (penitendo et purificando) that the king was expected to correct his behaviour.⁵³

So far as we know, such letters had never been sent to Carloman, and neither the Continuations nor the ARF, as we have seen, explicitly state that Carloman’s conversion had been an act of penance. But was this because the subject was taboo to these Carolingian-friendly authors? Or was it because the link between monastic conversion and penance was so obvious that it required no explanation?⁵⁴ Having already compared the ARF’s account of Carloman’s abdication to that of Childeric III, which revealed that the former is said to have converted willingly and the latter had been forced, the ARF offer a third case demonstrating that the voluntary character of these conversions may not have been as self-imposed as Carloman’s case has us believe.

In the entry for 788, the ARF state that Charlemagne brought his cousin Tassilo before an assembly at Ingelheim, where the Bavarian duke stood pro amore Christi gubernare atque educare non neglegamus. The concept of the king having to be a rector stands in a long tradition, from Gregory of Tours to Charlemagne’s Admonitio Generalis. See: Nelson, ‘Bad kingship’, 13.

⁵¹ Letters of Boniface, no. 73: ‘Et memor eris, (…) quem non propria merita, sed larga pietas Dei regem ac principem multorum constituit.’
⁵² Bonifatii epistolas, no. 74: ‘rogemus omnes communiter supra dictum, regem, ut semet ipsum cum populo corrigat; ne tota gens cum principe hic et in futuro pereat, sed ut, vitam propriam emendando et corrigeundo, exemplis suis iterum gentem propriam ad viam salutis dirigat.’
⁵³ Letters of Boniface, no. 73: ‘Et vitam tuam penitendo corrigas et purificando emendes.’
accused of various acts of treachery and perjury. Initially, the assembly
demanded capital punishment, but Charlemagne, ‘because of his love of God,
and because [Tassilo] was a relative of his, prevailed upon these men who were
loyal to him and to God, that he should not die.’ Upon asking Tassilo what
sentence he preferred instead, the duke asked ‘whether he may have license to
have himself tonsured and enter into a monastery and do penance for his great
sins, so that he might save his soul.’ Tassilo’s case suggests that monastic
conversion had become a convenient way for rulers to dispose their political
opponents in a non-violent manner. However, it also reveals the superficiality
of Tassilo’s ‘willingness’ to convert and repent for ‘the great many sins’ he
allegedly committed. If interpreted literally, Tassilo had indeed asked for
permission to ‘have himself tonsured’ and enter the monastery, but, as the
circumstances make clear, the alternative was capital punishment.

The example of Tassilo’s ‘willing conversion’ allows us to see Carloman’s
conversion from a different angle. The main distinction between these two
cases, at least in the eyes of the author, was that Carloman was given an
honourable exit from the corridors of power, while Tassilo was sent from the
corridors of power in shame. The difference between honour and dishonour
lay therefore not in these men’s willingness to convert – which, technically
speaking, both men did – but in the acknowledgment or omission in the
relevant texts of the derogatory circumstances that had led to their abdication.
Perhaps what these late eighth-century annals reveal is a shift in the perception
of penance and conversion: forced conversion was becoming a contradiction in
terms and one’s (nominal) willingness to submit to penance a conditio sine qua
non for penance to have meaning. If so, not Carloman, but Childeric is the
exception to the ARF’s rule. But then again, Childeric represented the old
dynasty, whose false kings were not just sine potestas, as I shall discuss in the
following chapter, but whose inability to repent willingly for their misconduct
may have been meant as a signal to the ARF’s readership just how decrepit this
royal gens had become.

Other texts composed in the later eighth century reveal a similar shift in
the perception of penance. The Passio Leudegaritii relates the fates of Bishop

55 ARF, s.a. 788: ‘iamdictus domnus Carolus piissimus rex motus misericordia ab amorem Dei, et
quia consanguineus eius erat, contenuit ab ipsis Dei ac suis fidelibus, ut non moriretur.’
56 Ibid.: ‘ut licentiam haberet sibi tonsorandi et in monasterio introeundi et pro tantis peccatis
paenitentiam agendi et ut suam salvaret animam.’ Note that a radically different view of this event
is preserved in Annales Nazariani, s.a. 788: ‘postulabat regem, ut non ibidem in palatio tonderetur,
propter confusionem videlicet atque obprobrium quod a Francis habere videbatur’ (cited in Nelson,
‘Bad kingship’, 2-3.)
58 See chapter 5.2.
Leudegar of Autun (d. c. 677) and his opponent, the Neustrian mayor Ebroin (d. c. 680). The original version of the *Passio* was composed in Autun in the later seventh century. It records how Ebroin ‘was sent into exile to the monastery of Luxeuil, that there by repenting he might escape the sins he had committed. But because he possessed eyes of his heart blinded by the dust of earthly greed, in his malevolent soul spiritual wisdom was of no benefit.’ In the meantime, Leudegar had also fallen out of royal favour and ‘was ordered [by the king] to remain in Luxeuil in perpetual exile.’ When Ebroin left the monastery, it was said he had ‘lived the life of a monk in pretence only.’ Probably in the third quarter of the eighth century, Ursinus, a monk from Poitiers, revised the text and presented Ebroin’s entry into the monastery differently. Ebroin was no longer sent into monastic exile, but had instead ‘asked the king whether he (...) may be spared his life and be permitted to go off to a monastery’ – a situation strikingly similar to that of Tassilo in the *ARF*. Like Charlemagne, King Childeric II (r. 662-675) consented and Ebroin was sent to Luxeuil ‘in order to become a monk.’ Also, Ebroin is no longer presented as an imposter: when the abbot of Luxeuil demanded that he and Leudegar perform penance, ‘they did their utmost to live forever within the monastic community as if they were monks.’

As these examples show, the outward display of sincerity was becoming a crucial element in the eighth-century perception of penance and conversion, something the constant emphasis on Carloman’s willingness to convert was meant to signal. The challenge with Carloman, however, was that his reputation needed to be preserved, which required of his eighth-century commentators to
keep silent about the penitential side to his conversion, the circumstances that had led to it, and perhaps the grim alternative that awaited Carloman if he proved to be unwilling. It was not until the first decades of the ninth century that Carloman came to be openly identified as a penitent, as for example the *Annals of Massay* demonstrate. By then, the early Carolingian protagonists were apparently no longer expected to be saint-like rulers, so long as they were willing to repent for their sins.

Possibly the earliest sign that Carloman's image was taking on the identity of a penitent can be found in the *Revised ARF*. In the previous chapter, I argued that this revision was probably composed at some point between 817 and c. 829. The author's perspective on Carloman's abdication might allow us to narrow the date of the revision's composition down even further to sometime after 822. In that year, after the tumultuous start of Louis's reign, the emperor made a public confession and undertook a voluntary penance before the assembly of Attigny, in imitation of Emperor Theodosius.65 Louis's public confession was a brilliant act of reconciliation that had allowed him to put an end to any lingering sentiments of hostility and distrust among his followers. A decade later, Louis would experience that public penance was in fact 'a double-edged affair' that could be used against the emperor as well.66

It may well have been in this context of renewed interest in public penance that the Reviser adjusted the content of the entry for 746 in the *ARF*. Where the annals had originally noted that 'Carloman built in Monte Soratte a monastery in honour of Saint Sylvester,'67 the Reviser added: 'where once in the time of the persecutions, which were carried out under Emperor Constantine, Saint Sylvester is said to have hidden.'68 The author deliberately chose not to present his audience with the flattering image of the revered Christian Emperor, but of Constantine before his conversion, when he was still known as a persecutor of Christians.69 The Reviser thus created an analogy between Carloman and Constantine, reminding his audience that even Constantine had not been immune to sin. As his audience would have recalled, Constantine later converted on the intercession of Pope Sylvester, who cured him of the disease that God had inflicted upon him for having persecuted His people. This time

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65 *ARF*, s.a. 822; Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici*, c. 35. For context, see De Jong, 'Power and humility', 31-2 and 39-40.
66 De Jong, 'Power and humility', 49.
67 *ARF*, s.a. 746: 'In Serapte monte monasterium aedificavit in honore sancti Silvestri.'
68 *Revised ARF*, s.a. 746: 'ubi quondam tempore persecutionis, quae sub Constantino imperatore facta est, sanctus Silvester latuisse fertur.'
69 The Reviser probably used as a source LP, *Life 34 (=Vita Silvestri)*, cc. 1-2. On the Carolingian reception of Constantine, also above, chapter 1, n. 43.
around, it was Carломan who had sinned – a persecutor of the Alemanni, perhaps? – and who by dedicating his monastery to Saint Sylvester had sought the intercession of that same saint who had made Constantine great. It is within this analogy, therefore, that the promise of Carломan’s redemption lay enclosed.

So what of the events of 747? While penance forms a likely scenario for Carломan’s abdication and conversion, the available evidence does not allow us to state with any certainty that Carломan had abdicated in order to atone for any public sins he may have committed. If this had been the case, Carломan’s sins should probably be looked for in connection with his retaliation against the Alemannian elite. It would also seem reasonable to assume that the character of his abdication will probably have been just as ‘voluntary’ as that of Tassilo, forty years later. What is clear, though, is that Carломan’s abdication and conversion, whatever its original motives may have been, were subject to reinterpretation in the decades to come. We may safely conclude that, in the second half of the eighth century, the Carolingian literary elite was quite unwilling to remember or present Carломan as a penitent. This may either have been because Carломan was simply not considered one, or because it associated him too closely with the type of moral corruption that the early Carolingian kings and their elite wished to reserve exclusively for the later Merovingian dynasty. In the first decades of the ninth century, in particular during the reign of Louis the Pious, this perception would change and Carломan’s abdication and conversion came to be presented in a context of penance. By then, public penance had become a prominent political tool, and one’s willingness to submit to (public) penance may have been more readily associated with the virtue of humility, rather than with humiliation.

4.2. Monastic vows

In the winter of 747, Carломan entered the basilica of St Peter in Rome and was made a cleric (clericatus) by Pope Zachary.70 According to the Life of Zachary, Carломan only received the ‘yoke of the clerical state after he promised to remain in the spiritual habit.’71 Although the papal biography does not mention it, the pope also donated an estate on Monte Soratte, located fifty kilometres

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70 The word clericatus can have several meanings. As a derivative of clericare (from clericum facere) it can mean ‘to make a cleric.’ It might also refer to an ordination. According to Du Cange, clericatus can refer specifically to the vita monastica. However, the Life of Zachary states that Carломan was made a monk at a later stage, when he entered into the community of Monte Cassino.

71 LP, Life 93 (Zachary), c. 21: ‘...atque in spiritual habitu fore spondens permansurum, clericatus iugum ab eodem sanctissimo suscipit pontifice.’
north of Rome, where it overlooked the Flaminian road, over which the pilgrims from the north travelled. There, Carloman and his followers founded a religious community which they dedicated to Saint Sylvester.\(^{72}\)

Within two years time, however, Carloman abandoned Monte Soratte to enter the community of Monte Cassino.\(^{73}\) His reasons for doing so are not clearly stated in the sources. According to Einhard, who wrote about seventy years after the event, Carloman left his community because of the many Frankish pilgrims that visited him on their way to Rome, preventing the pious recluse from finding the peace he so longed for.\(^{74}\) The Annales Mettenses priores, composed at the beginning of the ninth century, offer a different explanation and state that Carloman changed monasteries on the advice of Pope Zachary.\(^{75}\) In the early eighth century the cult of Saint Benedict was being revived in Italy. During the pontificate of Gregory II (715-731) the monastery of Saint Benedict on Monte Cassino, which had lain in ruins since its destruction by the Lombards in 577, was rebuilt and lavishly equipped. Pope Zachary followed in this tradition.\(^{76}\) The transformation of Monte Cassino from a desolate hilltop into a prestigious monastic institution received the papacy’s full attention. Attracting royal converts, such as the Lombard King Ratchis (744-756) or Carloman, would have been part of the strategy to boost Monte Cassino’s standing. It explains why, according to the Annales Mettenses priores, Zachary advised Carloman to move there. And, if Einhard was at least partly right about the vast number of Franks who continued to visit Carloman at St Sylvester on Monte Soratte, it might not have been Carloman looking for tranquillity, but rather Zachary looking for a way to divert all that attention to Monte Cassino.\(^{77}\) The fame of these royal converts boosted Monte Cassino’s

\(^{72}\) ARE, s.a. 746. The donation is not mentioned in the Life of Zachary (= LP, Life 93). St Sylvester on Monte Soratte remained of importance to Pippin after Carloman’s departure: CC, nos. 23 and 42.

\(^{73}\) The approximate date of Carloman’s transfer is based on an undated letter sent by Pope Zachary (d. 752) to Pippin, at the request of Carloman, who by then had already been a monk at Monte Cassino: Epistolae variorum, no. 19. Its content, referring to Pippin’s conflict with Grifo, suggests it was sent in 749.

\(^{74}\) Einhard, VK, c. 2.

\(^{75}\) AMP, s.a. 747.

\(^{76}\) According to Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, l. 6, c.40, Zachary equipped the monastery with: ‘libros scilicet sanctae scripturae et alia quaeque quae ad utilitatem monasterii pertinent; insuper et regulam, quam beatus pater Benedictus suis sanctis manibus conscripsit, paterna pietate concessit.’ According to the LP, Life 93 (Zachary), c.29, Zachary also translated the Dialogues of Gregory I (c. 540-604), of which the second book relates to the life of Saint Benedict, from Latin into Greek.

\(^{77}\) Monte Cassino began to attract a stream of prominent Frankish visitors in the mid-eighth century: According to the Huneberc’s Vita Willibaldi, c. 5, Willibald, before he became bishop of Eichstätt in 741, had already spent a decade at Monte Cassino. On his many journeys to Italy,
4. The Abdication and Conversion of CarlanMan

reputation and allowed its community to establish valuable connections between themselves and the leading families of the Latin West.78

The tonsure was the symbol that denoted all men of the clergy; living in a monastery did not automatically make one a monk. CarlanMan had sworn two oaths after abandoning his realm: the first he took in the winter of 747, when he received his tonsure and entered the clerical order in the presence of Pope Zachary. The second oath he took in Monte Cassino, where he took the monastic profession. The earliest reference thereof comes from the contemporary Life of Zachary, which states that CarlanMan, having arrived at Monte Cassino, 'professed by oath to remain there for the remainder of his life.'79 That this clear distinction between CarlanMan's clerical tonsure and his monastic profession is absent in the Continuations, is because Childebrand had lost interest in CarlanMan after he abdicated; it was sufficient for him to state that CarlanMan had proceeded to Rome 'to persevere in the monastic order' (monachyrio ordine persevereturus), with which the history of CarlanMan came to a conclusion.80 Another possibility is that the distinction between the monastic professus and the clerical tonsure was not yet very clear in eighth-century Francia. Still, the distinction was restored in the ARF, which record that it was only at Monte Cassino that CarlanMan had 'been made a monk' (monachus effectus est).81 It was subsequently taken over in the Annales Mettenses priores and the Revised ARF.82

Despite their minor inconsistencies, what these accounts have in common is that each stresses the permanent character of CarlanMan's conversion. Where the clerical tonsure implied a position betwixt and between the saeculum and the claustrum, allowing for the possibility one day to be allowed back into secular society, becoming a monk permanently barred the route back into the world. What each of these accounts therefore stress is that CarlanMan was not

Boniface may also have visited the monastery. In Letters of Boniface, no. 106, Boniface invites Abbot Optatus to join his network of prayer. See Raaijmakers, Fulda, p. 39. Boniface also sent his disciple Sturmi to Monte Cassino in 744, to inquire about the 'customs, observances and traditions of the brethren,' who lived according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. See Eigil, Vita Sturmi, c.14; Rudolf, Vita Leobae, c. 10.

79 LP, Life 93 (Zachary), c. 21: 'in quo et suam finiri vitam iure professus est iurando.' Trans. Davis, Eighth-century popes, p. 46. N.B. Davis writes 'Pepin' and 'France' where I write 'Pippin' and 'Francia'. The expression iureiurando is also present in the Regula Benedicti, c. 59 (on child oblation).
80 Continuations, c. 30.
81 ARF, s.a. 746.
82 AMP, s.a. 747; Revised ARF, s.a. 746; Cf. Einhard, Vita Karoli, c. 2.
expected to return. But as it turned out, seven years after his abdication, Carloman unexpectedly made his appearance at Pippin's court.

Carloman's reason for leaving his monastery was a diplomatic assignment given to him by the Lombard king Aistulf (r. 749-756). He travelled to Francia in the footsteps of the newly elected Pope Stephen II (752-757), who was on his way to the Frankish court to solicit Pippin's help in protecting Rome against the Lombards. Carloman was the ace up Aistulf's sleeve: as the brother of the Frankish king, Aistulf assumed Carloman would be up to the task of defending Lombard interests at the Frankish court and prevent the formation of a Franco-papal alliance. But Aistulf had assumed wrong. Much had changed in Francia since the death of Charles Martel, when the Lombards had still been military allies of the Franks. Following a turbulent succession crisis that had left one heir a fugitive and another tonsured, Pippin had boldly seized the Frankish throne, but probably struggled to consolidate his claims. It was in this context that Stephen found in Pippin a willing protector, in return for a formal apostolic sanction of his royal authority. It implied a major political reorientation to which not all members of the Frankish elite looked forward. Carloman was thus certain to find support for his cause, which made him a threat to the intentions of Pippin and Stephen. There is no record of what had occurred at the deliberations during the winter of 753/754, but later that spring Pippin led his armies across the Alps, stopping along the way to confine his brother to a monastery in Vienne, where he soon died. In addition to this, Pippin also exiled Carloman's sons to monasteries, who were never to be heard from again. These were draconic measures that left little room for decorum.

While it may have been possible to keep quiet about the fate of Carloman's sons, Carloman's own fate was a wholly different matter. The earliest testimony of his return in 754 is found in the Life of Pope Stephen II, composed shortly after the pope's death in 757. Unlike the Life of Zachary, Stephen's biography is

83 De Jong, 'Monastic Prisoners', 324-5.
84 Earlier attempts were undertaken by Pope Gregory III in 739 and 740, but it would appear that he was unable to persuade Charles Martel to abandon his pact with the Lombard king Liutprand. See: Continuations, c. 22; CC, nos. 1 and 2; LP, Life 92 (Gregory III), c. 14; Noble, Republic, pp. 44-48.
85 Einhard, Vita Karoli, c. 6: ‘cum magna difficultate susceptum est; quia quidam e primoribus Francorum, cum quibus consultare solebat, adeo voluntati eius renisi sunt, ut se regem deserturos domumque redituros libera voce proclamarent.’ Also note: Notker, Gesta Karoli, l. 2, c. 15, lines 10-11: ‘quod primates exercitus eum clanculo despicientes despiciantes carpere solerent.’ Of course, Notker had used Einhard's work as a source. See below, conclusion.
86 On Vienne's significance to the Carolingians in the eighth century, see: McKitterick, 'Bobbio Missal', 42-3.
very much concerned with the affairs of the Franks.\textsuperscript{87} As the biographer presented it, Carloman had made a promising start, as he 'had been living a devout monastic life for a considerable time in St Benedict's monastery'. However, he became a disappointment when he 'was persuaded with devilish enticements by the most unspeakable Aistulf, who sent him from there to the province of Francia to obstruct and oppose the business of ransoming the State of God's holy Church of the Romans'.\textsuperscript{88} Carloman, whose experience in Italy may have resulted in a more nuanced understanding of Italian politics, proved immune to the papal rhetoric meant to motivate the Franks to help Saint Peter fight off Lombard devils.\textsuperscript{89} To frustrate the papal cause, Carloman 'exerted himself to the fullest and strove mightily to subvert the affairs of God's holy church just as he had been sent to do by the unmentionable tyrant Aistulf.' Luckily for Stephen, 'God was propitious and Carloman totally failed to divert to his purpose the steadfast heart of his brother the Christian Pippin king of the Franks.' But as Einhard later revealed, though Carloman may not have been able to dissuade his brother from making a pact with Rome, his was not a lone cry in the wilderness: many nobles threatened to abandon Pippin, because apparently he would not listen to their counsel.\textsuperscript{90} In the \textit{Life of Stephen}, Pippin is presented as Saint Peter's valiant defender, who 'realized the criminal Aistulf's cunning and asserted that he would fight with all his strength for the matter of God's holy church exactly as he had formerly promised the blessed pontiff.'\textsuperscript{91}

A later generation may no longer have been able to recognize Carloman's actions as an attempt to preserve the Franco-Lombard pact that Charles Martel had established in 738, and which had been sealed by Pippin's adoption by the

\textsuperscript{87} McKitterick, 'Illusion', 11. McKitterick argues that the reader should be careful to characterize this text as a papal source. Its manuscript transmission is almost exclusively Frankish and the so-called Frankish recension is the most influential one.

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{LP}, Life 94 (Stephen II), c.30: 'Carolomannum (...) a monasterio beati Benedicti, in quo devote per evolutum temporis spatium monachice degebat, diabolicis eum susisionibus suadens, Franciae provinciam ab obiciendum atque adversandum causae redemptionis sancte Dei ecclesiae reipublice Romanorum direxit. Dumque illuc coniuxixisset, nitebatur omnino et vehementius decertabat sanctae Dei ecclesiae causas subvertere, iuxta quod a praefato dicendo Aistulfo tyranno fuerat directus. Sed propitiante Domino minime valuit sui germani christianissimi Pippini regis Franciaw in hoc firmum mun cor inclinare.' Trans. Davis, \textit{Eighth-century Popes}, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{89} For an example of the fiery rhetoric of Pope Stephen's letters, see: CC, no. 5.

\textsuperscript{90} Einhard, \textit{VK}, c. 6.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{LP}, Life 94 (Stephen II), c.30: 'Potius autem conperta nequissimi Aistulfi versaunt, tota se virtute isdem excellentissimi Pippinus Francorum rex professus est decertari pro causa sanctae Dei ecclesiae, sicut pridem iamfato beatissimo poponderat pontifici.' Trans. Davis, \textit{Eighth-century Popes}, p. 64.
Lombard king Liutprand (r. 712-744). The bond between the dynasty and the papacy, formed in the winter of 753/4, had become one of the cornerstones of the new Carolingian polity. Consequently, Carolingian history came to be viewed in terms of Franks and Romans fighting alongside each other for Saint Peter’s just cause, which, in retrospect, made Carloman’s rather inauspicious appearance as an agent for ‘those foul and perfidious Lombards’ difficult to explain. Carloman ended up standing on the wrong side of the moral divide between ‘apostolic good’ and ‘Lombard evil’. Unlike Grifo, however, Carloman could not so easily be vilified or omitted from Carolingian history. Thus began the challenge of integrating this aberrant element of the Carolingian past into its written memory.

From the start, the question of how to deal with Carloman’s return in a dignified manner must have been difficult one. The author of *Life of Stephen* found the answer in Carloman’s monastic identity: ‘as Carloman had vowed himself to God to lead the monastic life, they placed him in a monastery there in Francia, where some days later God called him and he departed this life.’ The author presents Carloman as a wayward monk who, seemingly without the approval of his abbot, had ventured from his monastery. To correct this error, Carloman had merely to be returned to the cloister, as his vow demanded. The papal biography adds a punitive element to Carloman’s confinement in Vienne, which is confirmed in a letter sent by Pope Paul I to Pippin in 757. At the request of Abbot Optatus of Monte Cassino, Paul inquired after the welfare of the monks who had accompanied Carloman to the Frankish court and expressed the hope that Pippin would allow them to return to Monte Cassino.

The Frankish perspective tended to be more sensitive to Carloman’s reputation. The most extreme example is the *Continuations*, which do not at all mention Carloman’s return in 753, or his subsequent demise. Instead, its readership is led to assume that Carloman had finished his days devoutly as a monk in Italy. It must have been a tempting strategy, for Einhard later followed this example in his *Vita Karoli*: having retreated to Monte Cassino, Carloman, or

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92 Contemporary Frankish sources are silent about the event. The earliest reference is in Paul, *History*, l. 6, c. 53. An alternative version, that was more friendly to Pippin’s memoria, was created in the 860s by Adrevald, *Miracles*, l. 1, c. 14. Adrevald not only identified the event as a *foedus* between Charles and Liutprand, but he also identified Pippin’s hair-cutting by the Lombard king as a Christian coming-of-age ritual, rather than as Charles’s formal recognition of Liutprand’s superior status. For discussion, see: Holtzmann, *Italienpolitik*, pp. 5-7 and 39-42 Jarnut, ‘Adoption’; Wolf, ‘Nochmals zur “Adoption”’.
94 CC, no. 11.
so Einhard claimed, ‘spent what was left of his earthly life there in the religious life.’

By the mid-790s, the author of the ARF chose an approach that had more in common with the Life of Stephen. The annals also emphasize Carloman’s monastic identity, but instead of blaming Carloman for having misbehaved as a monk, they use his monastic identity to absolve him from any personal wrongdoing. The ARF note that Carloman came to Francia, ‘as though in order to undermine the apostolic request’ (quasi ad conturbandum petitionem apostolicam), but significantly add that he had come ‘by order of his abbot’ (per iussionem abbatis sui). These are the first tentative steps towards the restoration of Carloman’s battered reputation. Although he may have wondered far from his monastery, at least Carloman obeyed his abbot’s orders as the Regula Benedicti demanded above all else.

If fault was to be found in his actions, it can only lie in the hesitation with which Carloman fulfilled the task his abbot had assigned him. After all, Carloman was only ‘quasi’ attempting to disrupt the apostolic request. Unlike the earlier Life of Stephen, the image created in the ARF is therefore not that of a willing agent of King Aistulf, intent on sabotaging the justice of Saint Peter, but that of a humble monk obedient to the Rule, regardless of his own moral objections. However, presenting Carloman as a model monachus made it difficult for the author to explain why Carloman was subsequently confined to a monastery in Vienne. According to the ARF, it was sickness, not the threat of violence, that caused Carloman to end up in Vienne, instead of returning to Monte Cassino. In Vienne, or so the ARF conclude, ‘Carloman (...) languished for many days and died in peace.’ If suspicions of immoral conduct on Carloman’s part lingered, than perhaps the agony of his long deathbed was meant to purge his soul. In the end, though, the readership of these annals could rest assured: Carloman, as befitted a Carolingian of bona memoria, had left this world in peace.

Carloman’s presentation in the ARF was the first step towards his complete rehabilitation. In 806, the author of the Annales Mettenses priores picked up on this thread. Straying from his two exemplars, the Continuations and the ARF, the author did not state that Carloman had gone to Rome ‘in order

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96 ARF, s.a. 755.
97 Benedict, Regula, c. 5: ‘De Oboedientia’, invokes John 6:38 as the biblical precept for monastic obedience to which Carloman had is said to have submitted: ‘I have not come to do my own will but that of him who sent me.’
98 ARF, s.a. 755: ‘languebat dies multos et obit in pace.’
to persevere in the monastic order' (monachyrio ordine perseveraturus) or that Carloman, as the ARF related, had moved to Monte Cassino, where he was made a monk (monachus effectus est). Instead the author chose a more specific formulation: Carloman 'proceeded to Monte Cassino and the monastery of Saint Benedict, where he professed to the monastic life, promising obedience to Abbot Optatus according to the rule.' Attention was thus diverted away from the notion that Carloman's stay in Italy was a form of exile, and emphasized the monastic aspect of Carloman's new status, with all the rules and privileges that came with it.

The Reviser of the ARF also picked up on the ARF's new theme and further tweaked its account of Carloman's conversion. The effects of this process can be observed particularly well if we compare the ARF to its later revision, which, as argued above, was probably composed in the 820s, during the reign of Louis the Pious (Fig. 6).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARF</th>
<th>Revised ARF</th>
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<td>746 Tun carolomannus Romam perrexit ibi se totondit et in Serapte monte monasterium aedificavit in honore sancti Silvestri. Ibique aliquo tempus moram faciens et inde ad sanctum Benedictum in Casinum usque pervenit et ibi monachus effectus est.</td>
<td>Carlomannus Romam profectus dimissa saeculari Gloria habitum mutavit et in monte Soracti monasterium in honorum sancti Silvestri aedificavit, ubi quondam tempore persecutionis, quae sub Constantino imperatore facta est, sanctus Silvester latuisse furt. Ibique aliquando commoratus meliori consilio hoc loco dimisso ad monasterium sancti Benedicti in Sannio provincia iuxta Casinum castrum constitutum Deo serviturus venit ibique monachicum habitum suscepit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>753 Eodemque anno Stephanus papa venit in Franciam, ad iustitiam et solatium quaerendo pro iustitiis sancti Petri similiter et Carolomannus, monachus et germanus supradicti Pippini regis, per iussionem abbatis sui in Franciam venit, quasi ad</td>
<td>Eodem anno Stephanus papa venit ad Pippinum regem (...) Venit et Carolomannus frater Regis iam monachus factus iussu abbatis sui, ut apud fratrem suum precibus Romani pontificis obsisteret; invitus tamen hoc fecisse putatur, quia nec ille abbatis sui iussa contemnere nec abbas ille praecipitis Regis Langobardorum, qui ei hoc imperavit, audebat resistere.</td>
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99 AMP, s.a. 747: ‘Consilio vero accepto eiusdem pontificis ad Cassinum montem et cenobium sancti Benedicti per eum, ibique obedientiam regulariter Optato abbatis promittens monachiae vitae professionem spopondit.’

100 Cf. McKitterick, Charlemagne, pp. 27-30.
Apart from the general stylistic revision of the original entry, several meaningful adjustments merit attention. We already discussed the invocation of Sylvester and Constantine as an analogy for Carloman’s own search for redemption.101 Also, the Reviser did not tamper with the ARF’s distinctions in Carloman’s clerical status: it is only in Monte Cassino that Carloman took up the monastic habit. However, by adding that Carloman, when he returned to Francia, had ‘already been made a monk’ (iam monachus factus), the Reviser placed additional emphasis on Carloman’s monastic identity. This was no longer a problem, because Carloman, in accordance with the Rule, acted ‘on the order of his abbot, so that he would oppose the entreaties of the Roman pontiff to his brother.’ The emphasis on his monastic vows is no longer meant to point out his dishonourable behaviour, but to reassure its readership that Carloman had not forgotten his new identity.

Carloman’s discomfort with his abbot’s orders – in the ARF implied with the word quasi – is also made much more explicit in the revision, which states that ‘it is believed that this [i.e. frustrating the apostolic petition] was done unwillingly, because the abbot did not dare to resist the command of the king of the Lombards, who ordered him to do this.’ The Reviser thus expanded the hierarchy of authority in his account: just as monks were expected to obey their abbots, so abbots were expected to obey their kings. By the time the Revised ARF were written, even Abbot Optatus was acquitted of having thwarted apostolic justice as the blame came to reside fully on the Lombard king.

Finally, the Reviser edited the account of Carloman’s problematic confinement and death at Vienne. Perhaps worried about lingering notions of foul play on Pippin’s part, the Reviser, to further reduce suspicion, added that Carloman was supposed to remain in Vienne ‘until the king should return from Italy.’ In other words, Pippin had neither wished nor expected his brother to die whilst

101 See above.
he was out on campaign in Italy. To express Pippin’s grief at his brother’s death, he is said to have ordered Carloman’s remains to be returned to Monte Cassino, ‘in which he had undertaken the monastic habit.’ This is confirmed in a more detailed account from ninth-century Monte Cassino, which records that Carloman’s remains had been brought back to the monastery in a golden, gem-encrusted chest.102 Having died with a clear conscience, there no longer was any need to have Carloman suffer on his deathbed or, for that matter, to have him die peacefully: Carloman simply contracted a fever and died.

4.3. A memorable example

Carloman’s monastic identity had been the key to his rehabilitation in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. It allowed Carolingian history-writers to avert the blame for his unexpected return away from Carloman and onto others – first, in the *ARF*, to Abbot Optatus of Monte Cassino and later, in the *Revised ARF*, to King Aistulf. This strategy not merely left Carloman blame-free, but it opened the way for praise, as Carloman now came to be presented as a dutiful and obedient observant of the *Rule*. In the course of the ninth century, Carloman had come to be regarded as a model monk and a champion of the Benedictine *Rule*, which at the time was gaining influence north of the Alps.103 According to the Astronomer, who completed his biography of Louis the Pious in the early 840s,104 Carloman had even managed to inspire an adolescent Louis the Pious ‘to imitate the memorable example of his grandfather’s brother Carloman and strive to reach the summits of the contemplative life.’105 If only there had not been an empire to govern, forcing Charlemagne to ‘lay down a strong objection’ to Louis’s pious plans. Louis’s eldest son, Emperor Lothar I, may have been another admirer, since he, at an advanced age and in poor health, abdicated in 855 to humbly join the ranks of the monks of Prüm.106

It was in the first decade of the tenth century, that the two traditions in which Carloman’s remembrance had predominantly come to stand, that of the humble penitent and that of the obedient Benedictine monk, met in the work of Regino, a onetime abbot of Prüm. Regino’s formidable *Chronicle* brought the

102 *Pauli continuatio Casinensis*, c. 4.
106 *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 855.
long and winding literary tradition that had shaped and reshaped the Carolingian perception of Carloman’s abdication and conversion to a spectacular conclusion.

Working from neighbouring Trier, Regino finished his work in 908. He wrote in the conviction that he was living in perilous times, for which the ominous signs were all around. Prüm, his former monastery, as well as imperial Aachen, had in Regino’s lifetime twice been ransacked by marauding bands of Northmen, and Carolingian authority was questioned and opposed throughout the empire. The old political structures of the empire were crumbling, which, as Stuart Airlie noted, makes Regino’s *Chronicle* a history that ‘covered both the rise and the fall of the Carolingian dynasty,’ as well as an attempt to come to terms with a new ‘politically pluralist world.’¹⁰⁷ Regino dedicated his *Chronicle* to Bishop Adalbero of Augsburg, who was also the tutor to Louis the Child (d. 911) – the latest, but, as it turned out, also the last, Carolingian scion to wield royal authority in East Francia. It is likely that Regino’s *Chronicle* was intended to assist the bishop in his edification of the young king, whom Regino would have recognized as the last hope for a Carolingian restoration – or perhaps merely the last hope for a down and out abbot.¹⁰⁸ For Regino, the deeds of the young king’s illustrious ancestors, who had once made the Frankish world a glorious place, could be looked to for guidance.

The *Chronicle* consists of two books that divide the Frankish past into a Carolingian and a pre-Carolingian era. Carolingian history began with the death of Charles Martel and his succession by Carloman and Pippin the Short. From Regino’s perspective, the early trappings of Carolingian history must already have belonged to an ancient past that lay buried deep within the vaults of Frankish memory. His knowledge of this formative phase of Carolingian history rested for the most part on the testimony of an old and respected set of annals that the modern historian would recognize as the B-recension of the ARF.¹⁰⁹ In fact, for the period 741-814 Regino’s *Chronicle* is an almost verbatim copy of ARF B. Only on rare occasions does Regino stray from his exemplar and added new anecdotes to the late eighth-century narrative of his exemplar. One such interpolation is concerned with the monastic conversion of Carloman in 747.

Royal conversions were a matter with which Regino, as the former abbot of the royal monastery of Prüm, had the necessary experience and they form an

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¹⁰⁸ MacLean, *History and Politics*, pp. 7-8; Airlie, ‘Narrative Patterns’, 112; Meens, ‘Opkomst en ondergang’, 6. Recently, Steffen Patzold has argued that Hincmar may also have written the *De ordine palatii* to regain access to court circles: Patzold, ‘Konsens und Konkurrenz’, 77-89.
important theme in his work. The monastic community of Prüm, which considered itself a Carolingian foundation from the time of Pippin the Short, maintained and nurtured its close ties to the dynasty. Over the years, it had had the privilege of welcoming a significant number of Carolingians to its ranks. Of these, however, only Lothar, who had been a great benefactor of the monastery, had joined the community in 855 because he wanted to die in the monastic habit. Before that time, Pippin the Hunchback had received the tonsure as punishment for having conspired against Charlemagne in 792 and was sent to Prüm, where he died in 811. In 833, when Louis found himself abandoned on the 'Field of Lies,' his young son Charles was sent to Prüm, though he resided there only shortly and, according to the Astronomer, did not receive the tonsure. In 885, when Regino had been the abbot of the monastery, he personally gave Hugh the tonsure. Hugh was a Carolingian prince who had been blinded and sent to Prüm, because he had defied the ambitions of Charles the Simple (or more aptly: the Straightforward) to annex Lotharingia – the kingdom that had previously belonged to Hugh's father, Lothar II (d. 869). Obviously, men like Pippin the Hunchback or Hugh had not felt the calling of the monastic life and received the tonsure under duress; they probably did not make the most exemplary of monks. With regard to Hugh, at least, it was up to Regino to teach this (admittedly blind) lion to become a docile lamb. For this reason, Carloman's case may have been of such interest to Regino. After all, as the ARF related, Carloman, still in the prime of his life, had willingly resigned his secular position to enter a life of monastic contemplation, making him an exemplary model for others to emulate.

To achieve this, Regino needed to make some adjustments to the text of his exemplar. The account of the ARF on this matter, which Regino faithfully copied before elaborating it, was, as we have already seen, concise and to the point:

Then Carloman proceeded to Rome, and there he tonsured himself and built a monastery in honour of Saint Sylvester on Monte Sotaatte.

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110 MacLean, History and Politics, pp. 32-3.
111 Prüm was founded in 721 by Bertrada, the grandmother of Pippin the Short's wife, also named Bertrada. However, Pippin and his wife effectively refounded the monastery in 762. That the monks preferred the latter tradition in the ninth century is reflected in the cartulary of the monastery. For facsimile edition: Nolden, Das goldene Buch von Prüm.
112 CL, IV, 43, ed. Schnorr von Carolsfeld, p. 38; Notker, Gesta Karoli, l. 2, c. 12, pp. 72-4.
113 Astronomer, Vita Hludowici, c. 48; Nelson, Charles the Bold, pp.91-2; De Jong, Penitential State, p. 48.
115 Regino, Chronicle, s.a. 885; MacLean, History and Politics, pp. 32-3; Airlie, 'Narrative patterns', pp. 114-15.
Remaining there for some time, he then proceeded to [the monastery of] Saint Benedict in Monte Cassino, and there he was made a monk.\footnote{ARF, s.a. 746: ‘Tunc Carlomannus Romam perrexit ibique se totondit et in Serapte monte monasterium aedificavit in honore sancti Silvestri. Ibique aliquod tempus moram faciens et inde ad sanctum Benedictum in Casinum usque pervenit et ibi monachus effectus est.’}

Regino added what he called a `memorable example' (exemplum memorabile): a moralistic account meant for his audience's instruction or inspiration. Carломan, or so Regino continued the story, 'was venerated and lavished with praise by everyone because of his royal nobility and, more importantly, because of his contempt for the earthly kingdom and the glories of the present world.'\footnote{Regino, \textit{Chronicle}, s.a. 746: ‘(...) ab omnibus propter regiam nobilitatem et, quod maius est, propter contemptum regni terreni et gloriam presentis seculi veneraretur et laudibus estollaretur.’}

However, as a man of impeccable virtue, this did not sit well with the convert-prince, who feared that all this praise might make him vainglorious. 'Fearful of the favour of human praise,' Carломan therefore left his monastery of St Sylvester in the dead of night, abandoning all his earthly possessions and accompanied only by a loyal (and anonymous) friend. When they arrived at Monte Cassino the abbot appeared at the gate, upon which Carломan 'immediately fell to the ground declaring that he was a murderer and guilty of all sorts of crimes, and he begged for mercy and asked for a place of penance.'\footnote{Regino, \textit{Chronicle}, s.a. 746: ‘(...) timens vir Deo plenus favorem laudis humanae’ and ‘(...) mox in terram corruit, se homicidam esse, se reum omnium criminum protestans misericordiam expossit, poenitentiae locum exquirit.’}

Regino further added that Carломan had kept his identity a secret from the monks of Monte Cassino, having 'declared to them that he was a Frank and that he had left Francia for such crimes that he was ready to bear exile voluntarily, provided he might not be deprived of the heavenly homeland.'\footnote{Regino, \textit{Chronicle}, s.a. 746: ‘(...) at ille confessus est, se Francum esse et ex Francia pro talia scelera migrasse, eulum liberenter fer reparatum, tantum ut patriam cadestem non amitteret.’}

In accordance with the \textit{Rule of Saint Benedict}, Carломan and his companion were put to the test and, after one year, became initiates of the community.

It is at this point that it all went wrong. When Carломan was assigned kitchen duty, 'he unknowingly gave offence in many ways' (\textit{in multis ignoranter offenderet}). Instead of correcting Carломan with gentle rebuke, as the \textit{Rule} suggests, the cook placed his faith in the didactic merits of a good thrashing, which Carломan, obedient monk that he was, humbly accepted, only exclaiming with every strike the hope that 'God and Carломan' might forgive the cook. For Carломan's loyal friend, however, this abuse was too much to bear: seeing his former lord struck for the third time, he attacked the cook with a pestle, causing an uproar among the monks. When brought before the abbot and the...
assembled community, Carloman’s identity is finally, albeit unwillingly, became known: ‘forced by necessity [Carloman] was not to conceal what God already wished to be revealed.’ The news came as a shock to the monks, who now felt greatly troubled for having maltreated this illustrious princeps. But as the community lay prostrate at Carloman’s feet, the latter made a final, if unsuccessful, attempt to restore his anonymity:

He threw himself on the ground and in tears began to deny that it was true, saying that he was not Carloman but a sinner and a murderer, and that his companion had made this up out of fear at the offence he had committed. What more? He was recognized by all and treated with great reverence.

Apart from ARF, Regino’s source of information is unknown. It has been suggested that this story may have originated in Monte Cassino, from where it was exported to Prüm, perhaps in 844, when Abbot Marcward visited the Beneventan monastery. If anything, the structure of Regino’s anecdote, though not so much its actual content, reminds of the interpolation encountered in the Annals of Massay, probably composed during the reign of Louis the Pious. But perhaps the most obvious source for this story is Regino’s own imagination.

Regino thought of Carloman as a hero from the dawn of the Carolingian Age, whose many virtues outweighed the grave sins he allegedly had committed as a ruler. The greatest of Carloman’s virtues, as far as Regino was concerned, was his humility, which translated in a sincere willingness to repent for his crimes. Carloman is further presented as a paragon of Benedictine virtue, as Regino fully exploits the tension between Carloman’s noble birth and his later-found monastic humility. As Simon MacLean noted, Regino’s story reads as a mirror of princes just as easily as it does ‘a kind of commentary on or parable about aspects of the Benedictine rule.’ What better way to have a fallen prince such as Hugh accept his new identity and learn the ways of monasticism, than by inspiring him with the powerful example of a revered ancestor?

120 Regino, Chronicle, s.a. 746: ‘Ille necessitate compulsus celare non valens, quod Deus iam manifestari, volebat.’
121 Regino, Chronicle, s.a. 746: ‘(…) ille econtra in terram provolutus cum lacrimis negare, coepit, haec non esse vera, non se esse Carlomanum, sed hominem peccatorem et homicidam, collegam suum timore perterritum propter conmissum piaculum haec exaghitas.’
122 MacLean, History and politics, p. 52-3.
123 MacLean, History and Politics, pp. 33 and 124, n. 111.
4.4. Conclusion

Whatever the exact circumstances of Carloman's abdication and conversion in 747, the event appears to have been significant enough to merit the attention of a long line of Carolingian history-writers, from the mid-eighth to the early tenth centuries. Had it truly been all that different from Childeric's conversion in 751, or Tassilo's conversion in 788? According to the Carolingian historiographers it certainly was, but their highly constructed testimonies are at the same time evidence that the differences may have been easy to miss, unless clearly spelled out. Contrary to Childeric's forced conversion, the testimonies relating Carloman's retreat from the corridors of power accompany this event with assurances that this was a voluntary process every step of the way. However, the comparison with Tassilo's political downfall has learned that this alleged 'voluntariness' may well have been limited to restrictions. It is clear that Carolingian history-writers wrote with the objective to present Carloman's exit as an honourable one, and it is in this respect that his case differs most strongly with that of the other Frankish rulers who gave up the secular world for a life in the cloister.

What eighth-century history-writers were reluctant to relate, were the circumstances that had led to Carloman’s downfall. Only Childebrand was willing to state that Carloman abdicated because he longed for the spiritual life – though what inspired such longings he did not relate. Other texts, notably the ARF, simply ignore the matter, content to emphasize that regardless of the circumstances its readership need not fear that Carloman's honour had been in danger. In the 820s and 830s, texts like the Revised ARF and the Annals of Massay began to explain Carloman’s alleged motive for converting in terms of penance – a context that for a contemporary, ninth-century readership, who witnessed their own ruler publically imitate the example of Emperor Theodosius in 822, had become both acutely topical and morally acceptable. As the Annals of Massay meant to convey: to sin was human, especially for those burdened with the responsibilities of secular rule, but what set good rulers apart from bad ones was their ability to acknowledge and atone for these sins. If earlier Carloman’s abdication and conversion had been difficult to explain, the changed perception towards public penance, as brought about during the reign of Louis the Pious, allowed Carloman's history to become a useful resource for contemporary Carolingian sinners to emulate.

Parallel to the transformation of Carloman’s literary presentation, from a pious recluse to a humble penitent, he also came to be identified as a monk. The initial stress on his monastic identity, first encountered in the contemporary
4. THE ABDICATION AND CONVERSION OF CARLOMAN

Life of Pope Stephen II, had served to justify how Pippin had relegated his brother to a monastery upon his return to Francia. After all, Carloman had vowed obedience to the Rule, and the Rule demanded monks to stay put in their monasteries. The author of the ARF, however, found an escape route that allowed for Carloman’s rehabilitation: the authority to overrule the required stabilitas loci, was the abbot. Thus, Carloman came to be absolved, as he was presented as having executed the questionable orders of Abbot Optatus obediently, humbly and unremittingly – the three core virtues advocated in the Rule.

Over time, Carloman acquired a multi-faceted identity: heir of Charles Martel, brother of King Pippin the Short, but above all that of a royal penitent and Benedictine monk. Because the focus of this chapter has been on the reception of Carloman’s abdication and conversion in Carolingian court historiography, it has largely ignored Carloman’s role in the literary tradition that developed around the rivalry between the monasteries of Monte Cassino and Fleury, over the cult of Saint Benedict. 124 In 875, Adrevald, a monk of Fleury, composed an institutional history known as the Miracles of Saint Benedict. Carloman played an important part in the account, albeit as an agent of Fleury’s chief rival, Monte Cassino. According to Adrevald, using the words of the Continuations, Carloman converted because he ‘burned with an inextinguishable fire for the pious cause’, though he added that these pious longings had sprung from a desire to repent for his sins, and in particular those of his father. 125 Adrevald was no staunch admirer of the dynasty, and told a story of how the monk Carloman ultimately failed to reclaim Benedict’s relics from Fleury, demonstrating the power of his patron saint to protect his community, even when it found itself abandoned by its Carolingian protectors.

In a different context, Carloman could be called upon as a forerunner of the monastic reforms of the ninth and tenth centuries, especially since he ended up becoming an initiate of Monte Cassino, the historical home of the Saint Benedict. According to the Astronomer, Carloman had been something of a role model to Louis the Pious, who as a child is said to have wanted nothing more than follow in his ancestor’s footsteps. And according to a tenth-century interpolation in the Life of Saint Gall, the deacon Gozbert noted how Carloman, while on his way to receive the tonsure in Rome, had stopped at the monastery

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124 Head, Hagiography, pp. 23-4; Geoffart, ‘Translation’.
125 Adrevald, Miracula Sancti Benedicti, l. 1, c. 14, pp. 36-37.
of St Gall to donate ‘a booklet that Father Benedict had composed on the coenobitic life’.\footnote{Gozbert, 
Continuatio miracula S. Galli, II, c.11: ‘Libellum quem Benedictus pater de coenobitarum conversatione composuerat.’ Cfr. Hahn, Jahrbücher, p. 89; F. Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum, pp. 230-1.}

Ultimately, however, these aspects of Carloman’s identity came together in Regino’s *Chronicle*, creating a single glorious image of this Carolingian ancestor. For Regino, Carloman was the humblest of penitents and embodied the core virtues of Benedictine monasticism. He had therefore become the ultimate model for those Carolingian princes who had been forced to give up their secular aspirations, but struggled to come to terms with their new monastic identity. Fantasy or not, Regino’s presentation of Carloman’s *conversio* in many respects concluded a long and dynamic historiographical tradition concerning an event that had constituted a major political crisis in the already tempestuous decade between the death of Charles Martel and the royal inauguration of Pippin the Short.