Sacred time, sacred space. history and identity in the monastery of Fulda (744-856)
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Most of the information about the aftermath of the crisis under Ratgar, the abbacy of Eigil and the completion of the new abbey church we owe to Candidus. His Vita Aegil is the most important testimony about the monastery's fourth abbacy, though we need to be aware that Candidus wanted to portray Eigil as an ideal abbot, depicting Ratgar as a foil to Eigil. Even from the Vita Aegil itself it is clear that Ratgar may have had had enemies, but it is also evident that quite a considerable faction of monks had supported him. Candidus does not tell us who they were. From other sources we know that after Louis the Pious had released Ratgar from exile, Ratgar moved to the community of Frauenberg, only a fifteen minutes walk from Fulda. There he died in 835 and was buried. In the chronicle of Apollo of Vilbel († 1536) we can read that Ratgar was buried as an abbot. The chronicler wrote how in 1525 Frauenberg was plundered, including the grave of Ratgar, and that the robbers took the abbot's insignia that were buried with him. That Ratgar after his deprivation was still honoured as an abbot shows that the situation surrounding Ratgar was far more complex than Candidus likes us to believe.

In the Vita Aegil Candidus had turned the history of Fulda into a struggle between Ratgar and Eigil, between scoundrels and heroes, between Discordia and Concordia. Ratgar personified bad government; Eigil in contrast was the ideal abbot, the loving, caring father of the monks. Yet Eigil himself had done a lot of building as I have just shown. Within a period of only four years Eigil finished the abbey church, added two crypts to it, built a funerary chapel, and began the construction of a new cloister. What made him different from Ratgar, according to Candidus, was that Eigil undertook this cum magno pietatis amore, with a great love for piety. In contrast to Ratgar, he had been truly a wise architect for he had not only built churches to honour God, but in his other activities he was a loyal servant of his Lord. Eigil had not persecuted anyone out of jealousy or anger; he had not incriminated; he had not cast away monks

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1 Candidus, Vita Aegil I, c. 5, pp. 6-7. For example l. 28-9, p. 6: 'quem non tam sua, quam adulatorum et accusatorum subuertebat nequitia.'
2 Oexle, 'Memorialüberlieferung, pp. 162-3.
3 The question is, whether one could 'undress' an abbot completely from his insignia, after he had been deprived from his office and was expelled. In other words, was one abbot for life? Unfortunately, we do not have a lot of information how abbots were buried in the ninth century and what was buried with them, let alone of abbots who were deprived and expelled.
4 Candidus, Vita Aegil I, c. 18, p. 16, l. 33-4.
The abbots’ vitae

out of implacable hate (as Candidus said his predecessor had done).\(^5\) He had even forgiven Ratgar, whom Candidus had depicted as the greatest enemy of the monks, including Eigel himself and had freed him from exile.\(^6\)

Candidus contrasted the good behaviour of Eigel with the faults of his predecessor. One of his aims was to show how one man’s fault is another man’s lesson. By Eigel’s example Candidus illustrated that the monks of Fulda ought to learn from what happened in the past. This chapter is about how Candidus developed this theme in the *Vita Aegil*, a composition that appears to have been a mirror for monks and abbots alike. Why did Candidus write the *Vita Aegil* and against what background? How does the text fit in the succession of abbots’ biographies written in the second quarter of the ninth century? For Candidus’ *Vita Aegil* is not the first biography of an abbot of Fulda. In chapter two I have already mentioned the *Vita Sturmi*. This text had been the first in a succession of abbots’ biographies. Baugulf, Ratgar and Eigel each got their own *vita* as well.

Fulda’s abbots’ lives are something special. A similar succession did not occur in any other monastery or bishopric of that period. What makes the abbots’ *vitae* of Fulda exceptional is that although they were written within a relatively short period, each biography was written as a specific project and by different authors.\(^7\) In this they stand apart from, for example, the *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium* that also dates from the second quarter of the ninth century or from the *Gesta abbatum* that an anonymous monk of Fulda wrote in the beginning of the tenth century.\(^8\) The *Gesta abbatum* of Fulda is a kind of catalogue (and therefore also called *Catalogus abbatum*) that lists successively the abbots of Fulda, the dates of their deaths and what they had done for the monastery. It was written in one go by a single author.\(^9\) In contrast to these other examples the abbots’ biographies of Fulda of the ninth century were written as individual texts by different authors.

As I have argued in my second chapter, Eigel probably wrote the *Vita Sturmi* sometime between 818 and 820. There once also existed a *Vita Bonifacii prosaice et metrice conscripta*. Becht-Jördens has suggested that Eigel might have responded to this *vita*, but we do not know when this text was

\(^{5}\) Candidus, *Vita Aegil* I, c. 20, p. 17. See also Supplex Libellus, c. 20, to which Candidus here refers.

\(^{6}\) Candidus, *Vita Aegil* I, c. 23, p. 19. We do not know where Ratgar stayed.


\(^{8}\) *Gesta sanctorum patrum Fontanellensis coenobii*, eds F. Lohier and R.P.J. Laporte (Rouen/Paris 1936).

\(^{9}\) At the end of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century the catalogue was brought up to date (up to abbot Hatto III - †997). *Gesta abbatum* pp. 272-274; *Die Klostergemeinschaft* 1, pp. 212-3; Oexle, ‘Totenannalen’, p. 469.
written, nor do we know its content, as the *vita* now is not transmitted to us.\(^\text{10}\) Shortly after Eigil had finished the *Vita Sturmi*, Eigil asked Candidus to write a *vita* of the second abbot of Fulda, Baugulf. This must have happened sometime around 820, only a couple of years after Baugulf had died in his *cella* near Wolsmünster.\(^\text{11}\) Unfortunately Candidus' *Vita Baugulfi* has not been transmitted to us and Candidus' reference to the *vita* in the *Vita Aegil* is the only evidence of its existence.\(^\text{12}\) Some twenty years after Candidus had finished the *Vita Baugulfi* Candidus took up his pen again around 840 to write the *Vita Aegil*. We do not know whether by then anyone had written a biography of Ratgar (835), but it is certain that there had once been a *Vita Ratgarii*. In the sixteenth century Fulda's librarian made a note of the *incipit* and *explicit* of the text, but the manuscript itself, like the *Vita Baugulfi* and many other codices, disappeared during the Thirty Years war.\(^\text{13}\) Thus the first abbeys of Fulda each got their own *vita* within a period of forty years, not long after they had died.\(^\text{14}\) The writers often had been pupils of the abbot whose *vita* they wrote. Eigil recorded the *Life* of his relative and teacher Sturmi. Candidus, a pupil of Eigil and Hrabanus, dedicated a *vita* to both Baugulf and Eigil. Together they formed an intellectual genealogy, a lineage of tutors and disciples that went back to Boniface.

Unfortunately the *Vita Baugulfi* and the *Vita Ratgarii* are lost, but it is still fruitful to compare the *Vita Sturmi* and the *Vita Aegil* as parts of what was once an unbroken chain. How did Eigil and Candidus portray the community of Fulda in respectively the *Vita Sturmi* and the *Vita Aegil* and how did they deal with the monastery’s past? In what way did these texts contribute to the ongoing debate about monasticism in Fulda? How did the *Vita Sturmi* and the *Vita Aegil* differ, and how can we explain those differences?

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\(^{11}\) *Gesta abbatum* c. 2, p. 272.

\(^{12}\) 'Since the time, in which the venerable Abbot Aegil has persuaded me with affectionate exhortation to write the life of Baugulf, our loving abbot who already is taken away from the prison-house of his body...' 'Ex eo igitur tempore, quo me venerabilis pater Aegil uitam Baugulphi, cari abbatis nostri iam de ergastulo corpore absolut, intima exhortatione persuasit litteris explicare, ...' Candidus, *Vita Aegil* I, praef. II, p. 4. See also the preface of the *Vita Aegil* II, p. 35.


\(^{14}\) Apart from perhaps Ratgar, whose *Life* may have been written later on.
Writing history

The second quarter of the ninth century saw an accumulation of other biographies related to Fulda. Scholars as Rudolf of Fulda (before 800-865), Lupus of Ferrières (†862), and Ermanrich of Ellwangen (814-874) composed the lives of Leoba, Wigbert and Sola respectively. Lupus and Ermanrich were not in fact monks of Fulda, but they had received part of their training in the monastic school that enjoyed a cultural apogee during the abbacy of Hrabanus Maurus, one of the greatest scholars of his day. There are some indications that learning had already received an impulse under the abbeys of Baugulf and Ratgar, but they are not undisputed. From the abbacy of Baugulf the Epistola de litteris colendis is the only extant document that might reveal us something about learning in the monastery. This now famous circular letter of Charlemagne, in which the ruler promotes correct reading and writing in religious communities, arrived in Fulda somewhere in the late 780s or 790s.\(^15\) It is addressed to Abbot Baugulf and his monks, but the letter probably was a circular that Charlemagne had wanted every bishop and abbot in his empire to receive. In it the Frankish ruler expressed his concerns concerning the level of education in the monasteries and cathedral schools in his kingdom:

For when in the past few years letters were often sent to us from several monasteries in which it was stated that the brethren who dwelt there, offered upon our behalf sacred and pious prayers, we have noticed in most of these letters both correct thoughts and uncouth expressions; because what pious devotion dictated faithfully to the mind, the tongue, uneducated on account of neglect of study, was not able to express in the letter without error.\(^15\)

Charlemagne worried about the skills to read and write of his clergy. To please God it was important that his servants should be able to speak and write correct Latin. Therefore the Carolingian ruler did not only expect his clergy to be ‘devout in mind’ and ‘chaste in conduct’ but also to be ‘learned in discourse’ and ‘eloquent in speech’.

\(^{16}\) ‘Nam cum nobis in his annis a nonnullis monasteriis saepius scripta dirigerentur, in quibus, quod pro nobis frates ibidem commemorantes in sacris et piis orationibus decertarent, significaretur, cognovimus in plerisque praefatis conscriptionibus corundem et sensus rectos et sermones incultos; quia, quod pia devotion interius fideliter dictabat, hoc exterius propter negligentiam discendi lingua inerudita exprimere sine reprehensione non valebat’. MGH Cap. 1, nr. 29, pp. 78-9. Translation by D.C. Munro, revised by Paul Dutton. Carolingian Civilization. A Reader, ed. P.E. Dutton (Ontario 1999) p. 79.
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Is the Epistola de litteris colendis then evidence for the sad condition of learning in Fulda under Baugulf as Franz Brunhölzl and Marc-Aeilko Aris for example have argued? To them a fragment of a library catalogue (Basel, Universitätsbibliothek F III 15 a, fol. 17v-18r) confirms their negative view of Fulda's state of erudition around 800.\(^{17}\) It shows us that the content of the monastic library under the abbacy of either Baugulf or Ratgar was composed of biblical books and monastic literature such as the Regula pastoralis and the Dialogues of Gregory the Great, sermons of Augustine and Isidore and a great number of vitae of monks and hermits. In the opinion of Brunhölzl and Aris the library of Fulda was nothing special but an ordinary average monastic library in this period.\(^{18}\) This changed however during the abbacy of Hrabanus, who in the Gesta abbatum was praised for his construction of a library. Due to the efforts of Hrabanus the library had expanded considerably with theological and philosophical books, biblical commentaries and all kinds of books useful for pastoral care.\(^{19}\)

When Charlemagne sent Baugulf his letter Fulda indeed was not the great intellectual centre it would be four decades later yet, but on that basis it is not legitimate to conclude that Hrabanus Maurus' predecessors had not taken any initiatives to turn the monastery into a place of learning.\(^{20}\) Their attempts bore fruits only under Hrabanus, who was rightly called praecceptor Germaniae.\(^{21}\) In his days the monastic school certainly prospered. Due to Hrabanus' good reputation as teacher and scholar and that of his pupils (for example Rudolf) many monks from places as Ferrières, Ellwangen, Reichenau and St Gall came to study in Fulda. The flourishing of learning also resulted in a lively production of texts, amongst which the already mentioned biographies and the sequence of abbots' vitae can also be ranked.

It was during his stay in Fulda that Lupus had written the Vita Wigberti at the request of the community of Hersfeld where the saint was

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\(^{18}\) See also: Mittelalterliche Bücherverzeichnisse, pp. 12-3.

\(^{19}\) Idem, pp. 15-56.

\(^{20}\) Ratgar had sent some of his students to Einhard, Alcuin and Clemens. Gesta abbatum c. 3, p. 272. In addition to this, we have to take into account that we are dealing with fragments of library catalogues.

\(^{21}\) The Humanist Johannes Trithemius was the first to use this title for Hrabanus. See the introduction of Zimmermann in: Hrabanus Maurus, pp. vi-vii.
buried. This he did around 836. At almost exactly the same time Rudolf, wrote the vita of Leoba, the female companion of Boniface, who was then still buried in the abbey church of Fulda. To write his text Rudolf made use of the notes of a priest from Fulda, a certain Mago, who some five years earlier had gathered information about the female saint. Within two years Rudolf had written the Vita Leobae, Hrabanus Maurus took the body of Leoba to the small church on the Ugesberg, where he had prepared her a grave. Like Hrabanus Maurus Rudolf had also been teacher of Fulda's monastic school. He had taught Ermanricch of Ellwangen in the early 830s in Fulda. Under Rudolf's supervision Ermanricch of Ellwangen wrote the vita of Sola, an Anglo-Saxon recluse and another supposed companion of Boniface, who had lived in the second half of the eighth century and who, after having spent some time in Fulda, withdrew to a cella in Solnhofen. The occasion of the writing of the Vita Sualonis was the translation of Sola's remains to a new resting-place in Solnhofen in 838-9. Only the Vita Wigberti, the Vita Leobae and the Vita Sualonis have survived the ravages of time, but possibly many more vitae were written in this productive period without leaving traces such as the work of the unknown Mago.

The flourishing of the artes in Fulda must be considered in relation to a broader cultural revival both at court and in religious communities. Also other religious communities had an active writing of biographies and other kinds of history writing in the second quarter of the ninth century, for example, in the monastery of St Wandrille (Fontanelle). Around 830, almost two centuries after the foundation of the monastery, a monk of St

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23 Rudolf, Vita Leobae, c. 1, p. 122. In his introduction Rudolf explained that he also used four accounts of Leoba's life by some of her disciples.


26 Another example is the episcopal see of Le Mans. Clerics of Le Mans produced the Gesta Aldrici, the Actus pontificum Cenomaniss in urbe decentium, the Vita S. Paucii episcopi, the Vita S. Almariri abbatis; in 836 the deacon Erconrad of Le Mans described the translation of St Liborius to Paderborn. See Berschin, Biographie und Epochenstil im Lateinischen Mittelalter. III: Karolingische Biographie, 750-920 n. Chr., pp. 238-9. Other, though slightly later, examples than Fulda in eastern Francia that would offer interesting material for comparison are St Gall and Reichenau.
Wandrille started the *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium* at the request of his abbot, beginning with Wandregisilus who founded the monastery around 649 at Fontanelle on the lower Seine. The first three abbots of the monastery each already had their own *vita*. When the author put down his pen, the last word on the abbots of St Wandrille, of whom sixteen found their way into the *Gesta*, was not yet written. Until 859 several monks revised and reworked the *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium*. Such a successive and continuous literary production was only possible in long established centres with a rather stable intellectual tradition, cathedral communities and monasteries. Unlike the *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium* the abbots' biographies of Fulda were written as individual texts within a relatively short period after the deaths of the abbots and by different authors.

Let us now turn to the abbots' *vitae* of Fulda. As the former two chapters have already extensively dealt with the *Vita Sturmi* and the metrical *Vita Aegil* the following starts with an analysis of the prose version of Ewigil's Life, before focussing on these texts as parts of a succession of abbots' biographies.

### Opus geminatum

As explained earlier Candidus wrote the *Vita Aegil* both in prose and verse. His departure from Fulda's custom to write the abbots' biographies only in prose can to a large extent be explained by his training under Hrabanus Maurus and the high level of education in Fulda at that time. Candidus was one of the representatives of a new generation of scholars that had benefited greatly from the attempts of the abbots of Fulda to turn the monastery into an intellectual centre. Writing in prose

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27 *Gesta sanctorum patrum Fontanellensis coenobii.*
31 In the text Candidus himself indicates that first the story in prose preceded the poetry. 'sicut in sequenti libro manifestissime continetur'; 'sicut sequens volumen diligenter legentibus satis evidenter ostendit'. *Vita Aegil* I, c. 15, p. 15, l. 23; c. 18, p. 17, l. 2-3.
and verse seems to have been part of the training of the brightest students.\(^{32}\) When Candidus wrote the *Vita Aegil* the monk did not live in the mother convent but elsewhere perhaps performing a *ministerium* in one of Fulda's dependencies. When Candidus complained to Hrabanus that there was no one there to read and discuss the Holy Scripture with 'to make progress' (proficere) the master advised him to write in prose and verse, as he himself had done some twenty years ago, referring to his *De laudibus sanctae crucis.*\(^{33}\) Taught in the art of poetry by Alcuin in Tours, Hrabanus had written *De laudibus sanctae crucis* in prose and metrical form.\(^{34}\) This beautifully illustrated work was the first *opus geminatum* written in Fulda.\(^{35}\) Now he advised his pupil to do the same thing. Contrary to Hrabanus who first wrote the poem and later added the prose to clarify what turned out to be a (too) complex figure poem\(^{36}\), Candidus probably wrote the metrical and prose *vitae* together. Perhaps in imitation of Bede he considered them to be complementary to each other. In the introduction to his work Candidus explained: 'I have asked to bind them together, so that one strengthens the other in the narrative'.\(^{37}\)

In his introduction to the *Vita Aegil* Candidus explicitly designates Hrabanus' *De laudibus sanctae crucis* as the example of his work, not Aldhelm's *De virginitate* or Bede's *Vita Cuthberti*, which certainly had found their way into the Fulda library, or the other early Christian and Anglo-Saxon *opus geminata* that the *Vita Aegil* also is indebted to.\(^{38}\) Candidus not only mentions Hrabanus Maurus as his intellectual example but his master also holds a prominent position within the text. In the prose version Candidus recalled the special friendship between Hrabanus and Eigil, their discussions and their concerted action in the creation of the St Michael *rotunda*. On several occasions the author referred to Hrabanus work, the dedication and altar *tituli* that the great scholar wrote for the abbey church and the funerary chapel, and he inserted the latter in his

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\(^{32}\) See Chapter Three, the paragraph on writing an *opus geminatum*.

\(^{33}\) Candidus, *Vita Aegil I*, praef. I, 1, 8-15, p. 3.

\(^{34}\) 'For his abbot, the rector of the flock of Fulda [Ratgar; see the Gesta abbatum, p. 272] sent him [Hrabanus] here to your dwellings, father [Alcuin] so that he as a student might read with me the art of poetry and so that he, triumphing, might be prepared for the Holy Scripture as was customary'. 'Abbas namque suus, Fuldensis rector ouilis / Illum hoc direxit ad tua tecta, pater, / Quod mecum legeret metri scholasticus artem / Scripturam et sacram rite pararet ouans'. Introduction to *In Honorem Sanctae Crucis*, p. 5.


\(^{36}\) *In honorem sanctae crucis*, pp. xi-xix.

\(^{37}\) 'Quos tamen ideo in unum corpus conligarem rogabam, ut in rerum narratione alter altieri subsidia ferret.' Candidus, *Vita Aegil I*, I. 18-9, p. 3.

\(^{38}\) For the library catalogues (Basel F III 15a and Basel F III 42) see *Mittelalterliche Bücherverzeichnisse*, pp. 9, 132-3 and 152. See also Chapter Three, the paragraph on writing an *opus geminatum*. 

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metrical *Vita Aegil*. The heading of this particular chapter is *Commemoratio Hrabani magistri et operis eius*.\(^{39}\) Hrabanus' prominent role in the *Vita Aegil* arose from the high esteem in which Candidus held this eminent scholar.\(^{40}\)

As with the audience of the *Vita Sturmi* that of the *Vita Aegil* seems to have been restricted to the community of Fulda. Candidus dedicated his work to his fellow monk Reccheo Modestus, another pupil of Eigil.\(^{41}\) As can be seen on the accompanying engraving (a seventeenth-century copy of the original line-drawing) and in the text Modestus was his interlocutor.

![Figure 17: Candidus and Modestus](image)

Repeatedly Candidus interrupted the narrative to address his friend.\(^{42}\) Yet, through Modestus Candidus spoke to the whole community of monks in Fulda. Candidus seems to have used his direct speech to Modestus to reach his audience at a personal level.\(^{43}\) That the *Vita Aegil* was primarily written for the monks of Fulda is confirmed by the manuscript tradition of the text. The *Vita Aegil* did not circulate outside the monastery of Fulda. No library catalogue apart from that of Fulda\(^ {44}\) lists the text and so far no indication has been discovered that authors from communities other than Fulda were familiar with this biography.\(^ {45}\) Becht-Jördens even assumes that the exemplar that the librarian recorded

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\(^{39}\) Candidus, *Vita Aegil* II, c. 20, pp. 62-72, the heading of the chapter on p. 62. The headings in the *Vita Aegil* in verse seem to be original. See Chapter Three.

\(^{40}\) Considering the fact that Candidus wrote the text in a time that Hrabanus' position as abbot of Fulda was subject to discussion (see the next chapter), it might well have been a political move too.

\(^{41}\) Idem, praef. I, pp. 3-4; c. 5, p. 7; c. 24, p. 19 and c. 25, p. 20; *Vita Aegil* II praef. I, p. 31; c. 7 p. 35; c. 15 p. 54; c. 233, p. 72; c. 25, p. 75.

\(^{42}\) Becht-Jördens, *Die Vita Aegil*, pp. 23-5.

\(^{43}\) The *Vita Aegil* is included (as *Vita Aegilis abbatis fuldensis a Candido monacho ad Modestum edita prosa et versibus*) in Basel F III 42 (Ba): Mittelalterliche Büchersammlungen, p. 152.

in the catalogue was Candidus’ autograph. Christopher Brouwer, who edited the text and who was the last person to mention its existence, referred to the book as a *codex vetustissimus*.

As said above the metrical life, to be read in the *sensus allegoricus*, revealing the eschatological meaning of Fulda’s history, was probably only used by the select few for private study and meditation. Candidus portrayed Ratgar as the persecutor of Christ, Eigil was the good shepherd who through the grace of God saved the flock (the monks of Fulda) from the wild unicorn. The prose *Vita Aegil* had a clear moralistic-didactic agenda, as the following paragraph sets out to show. This text was a mirror and an admonition for abbot and monks alike. One of its purposes was to edify the audience by exhortation and example.

A mirror for monks and abbots

The main part of the prose *Vita Aegil* deals with the period straight after the deposition of abbot Ratgar, in which the self-definition of the monastery was intensively discussed and the monks needed to choose a new abbot. Candidus did not give a dry description of the events. He included speeches of what he regarded as the leading actors of the episode, namely of some (anonymous) representatives of different factions of the monastery, the emperor Louis the Pious and Haistolf archbishop of Mainz. The rhetorical use of inserting speeches in a document, often used both in hagiographic works and historiography, enlivened the narrative and strengthened the exhortatory nature of the text. But even though it seems that Louis the Pious or Haistolf speak to us directly, we need to be aware that it was Candidus who produced their words. Candidus strongly stressed the misgovernment of Ratgar, against which the author directed the admonitions of emperor and archbishop. He portrayed Eigil as the incarnation of the monastic ideals promoted in the sermons of Louis the Pious and Haistolf. Moreover, the author attempted to edify his audience whenever he addressed himself to his friend Modestus. His lessons were aimed at the monks and abbot alike.

The emperor, the archbishop and the monks of Fulda each represented different factions in the conflict. The monks who acted as spokesmen in the *Vita Aegil* personified the different factions and opinions in the monastery. Even if Fulda did not fall under the jurisdiction of Mainz

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46 Idem, pp. xxix-xxx.
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(or any other bishopric apart from Rome as a matter of fact) on account of the papal privilege, the monks still depended on the archbishop for liturgical matters such as the dedication of churches and the consecration of priests. Since its foundation Fulda had been linked with the See of Mainz, not only through Boniface, who had once been bishop of Mainz himself, but also because Fulda lay in its sphere of influence. Therefore it was not strange that the archbishop of Mainz had acted as mediator in the conflict before the emperor intervened, first in 809, then in 812. Louis the Pious as Christian emperor was responsible for the weal and woe of the Frankish church, including the royal abbeys. To quote Louis the Pious through the pen of Candidus: 'For this reason I, unworthy, have been appointed to this emperorship by Divine Providence, so that I will be eye to the blind, foot to the lame, father of the poor and I will investigate unknown problems diligently\textsuperscript{49}, and for this reason I cannot be silent if it concerns the benefit of his order'.\textsuperscript{50} To the emperor the monks finally turned when they could not solve the conflict themselves.

Louis the Pious' admonition is the longest speech and the climax of the prose \textit{Vita Aegil}; it takes up more than a quarter of the complete text.\textsuperscript{51} Unlike the speech of Haistolf and the discussions between the monks that Candidus described, the speech of the emperor directly addressed the monks as well.

Under Ratgar the monks of Fulda seem to have been neglecting the directives of the Rule of Benedict.\textsuperscript{52} The emperor's address is partly about this carelessness of the monks concerning their way of life. Sternly Louis the Pious asked the monks why they had banned the Rule they once observed from their monastery, and why some had fled the abbey.\textsuperscript{53} 'It is shameful to dismiss the law of the truth and the holy place [Fulda] so easily only because of the threats of one [person: meaning Ratgar], when so many saints have fought for the law of God till their deaths and have

\textsuperscript{49} Job 29, 15.
\textsuperscript{50} 'Ad hoc enim me, licet minus idoneum, tamen Diuina potentia in hoc subrogavit imperium, ut essem oculus caeco et pes cludo, pater essem pauperum et causam, quam nescirem, diligentissime investigarem, ac per hoc huius religionis non possum utilitatem non loqui.' Candidus, \textit{Vita Aegil} I, c. 10, p. 12, l. 16-20.
\textsuperscript{51} Idem, c. 9-10, pp. 9-13.
\textsuperscript{52} Louis the Pious had sent Aaron and Adalfrid to \textit{si quae de regula institutis apud nos aut inceptae aut dilepsae fuissent, fraterna dilectione praemonendo corrigere}nt. Idem, c. 3, p. 5, l. 38-40.
\textsuperscript{53} Here Louis the Pious refers to the monks (including Eigil) who fled the monastery during the crisis in the 810s.
not feared the words of [their] enemies’. The emperor made clear to the monks that they should have known better:

After all, brothers, you have the knowledge of the Divine Scripture; you have the examples of the holy fathers who have preceded [you], you have a rule that is instituted especially for you. In all these [the Bible, the examples of the fathers and the rule] you can without doubt observe yourselves as if [looking] in a certain mirror, what you are and whither you are striving. The Apostle Paul has said: ‘For all that has been written, has been written for our teaching in order that we will have hope, thanks to patience and the consolation of the scriptures (Rm 15:4).’

With the crisis under Ratgar at the back of his mind the emperor lashed out at selfish agitators most of all and taught the monks that love and concord should be at the core of monastic life. This lesson is the essence of his speech:

Because this is the first commandment of the law that was given to Moses on the Mount Sinai: ‘Love the Lord, your God, with whole your heart, with whole your mind, with all your power and with your entire soul, and then [love] thy neighbour like yourself.’ For the love for God is empty if it is not connected with love of your neighbour. The full instruction of the Truth [Christ] is that the rule of love remains indivisible in [its] substance. The care of the discipline is the perfect love for the monks. She [perfect love] incites a chain of charity and peace without avarice. Thus in sincere love is moderation for the fellow-men and they who love each other, will be called the sons of the Kingdom who love each other completely. They are the ones who eat the bread in the

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54 ‘Turpe est propter unius minas legem ureritatis et locum sanctum tam facile dimittere, cum plurimi sanctorum pro lege Dei sui certarint usque ad mortem et a uerbis iniquorum non timuerint’ Candidus, Vita Aegil I, c. 9, p. 9, l. 20-3.
55 I have come independently from Becht-Jördens to a similar selection of quotations from the Vita Aegil. For an extensive analysis, see Becht-Jördens, Die Vita Aegil, pp. 28-34.
56 ‘Vos igitur, fratres, habetis notitiam Divinarum Scripturarum, habetis praecedentium exempla sanctorum patrum, tenetis praeterea regulam uobis specialiter institutam, in quibus sine dubio vos ipsos quasi in quodam speculo considerare potestis, quales sitis et quo tendatis. “Quaecumque enim” ait apostolus Paulus, “scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt, ut per patientiam et consolationem scripturarum spem habeamus”.’ Candidus, Vita Aegil I, c. 9, p. 9, l. 24-30. The quotation of Paul is from his letter to the Romans: Rm 15, 4.
57 Deut 6:5. See also Mt 22:37; Mc 12:30; Lc 10:27.
58 Literally ‘sufficient measure’, ‘right quantity’. What I think is meant here, is that from charity springs a moderate attitude towards the monastic way of life that an abbot imposes on his monks.
The emperors' vitae

Kingdom of God, who live without blemish and free from the wrinkle of improper discord.  

The emperor further admonished the monks: ‘to serve God and concord, and not the various lusts for your eyes, the deceits of learning swollen with pride and the vices of the flesh from which schisms originate, contempt for the law of God, dispute and bad thoughts’. These were clerical vices also high on the agenda of church councils of that period. In this sense the Vita Aegil is a call for reform: ‘Bring your manner of living into line with the fear of God and the authority of the holy rule, so that you, persevering in this [way of life], will be heirs to the kingdom of God.’

Candidus wanted to set an example before his fellow brethren. As such he explained his motivation to write about the period of unrest in the community of Fulda:

Let the reader not consider the so frequent reference to the above mentioned unrest to be calumny, as the sin of his [Peter’s] threefold denial, which is often recited in church, and which he [Peter], pricked by the divine visitation, has wiped out with most bitter tears, is not known to do any harm to Peter, prince of the Apostles.
Candidus used more examples from the Bible to add force to the justification of his work: Saul who became Paul, Lot who turned into a pillar of salt and the unfertile fig-tree.\^64 The main lesson to be derived from the gloomy episode in the history of Fulda was that mankind without God is lost:

I have noted these testimonies from the Holy Lecture in this book, brother Modestus, so that everyone is not his own hope, but places his hope in God; so that he, who thinks that he stands, sees to it that he does not fall; that he who has fallen because of his pride, will do his best, reprimanded by the reading of the Scripture, to rise with the help of God in humility; that every sinner, who belongs to the church with the right belief will hope for mercy from God through humble confession and true penance.\^65

[...]
Therefore brother Modestus ‘Humble yourself’, following the incitement of the Apostle, ‘under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in time of sadness’:\^66 casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.’\^67 May the help of God, without which human weakness cannot do anything good, enable you to withstand his evil will.\^68

Through his friend Modestus, whose name (‘moderate’, ‘obedient’) suited the author’s purpose well, Candidus here directly addresses the monks of Fulda.\^69

The *Vita Aegil* also contains lessons for the abbot of the monastery. As in the *Vita Sturmi*, Candidus portrayed his ideal monastery as a community in which love, charity and concord were the main values. Such

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\^64 Candidus, *Vita Aegil I*, c. 24, p. 19. Act 7: 57-8 and 9: 1-26; I Tim 1: 13 (Saul); Gn 19: 26; Lc 17: 32 (Loth); Mt 21: 18-22 (unfertile fig-tree).

\^65 ‘Haec namque ideo testimonia Diuinae lectionis in hoc libro, frater Modeste, notauit, ut non sit spes sibi quisque, sed ponat in Deo sperm suam, et qui se existimat stare, uideat, ne cadat, et qui lapsus per superbiam cadat, Diuina lectione correptus studeat cum Dei auxilio resurgere per humilitatem, et ut omnis peccator in ecclesia constitutus cum fide recta per humilem confessionem ueramqu e paenitentiam a Deo ueniam speret.’

Candidus, *Vita Aegil I*, c. 24, p. 19, l. 31-8.

\^66 Here Candidus has changed *visitationis* (visitation) in *tribulationis* (sadness).

\^67 I Pt 5, 6-8.

\^68 ‘Hinc igitur, frater Modeste, secundum Apostoli commotionem: “Humiliamini sub potenti manu Dei, ut uos exaliet in tempore tribulationis omnem sollicitudinem uestram proiciences in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de uobis. Sobrii estote et uigiliate, quia aduersarius uester, diabolus, tanquam leo ruginis circuit quaerens, quem deuoret.”

Cuius nequissimae uoluntati uos resistere concedat auxilium Dei, sine quo nihil potest humana fragilitas boni.’


\^69 Please note that Candidus uses *vos* instead of *tu*. It is another indication that Candidus addressed the whole community of monks and not only Modestus.
a community also needed a loving father, not a ferocious tyrant as Ratgar had been. The sermon of Haistolf in the *Vita Aegil* sums up the qualities of a good abbot. Candidus had the archbishop of Mainz in his speech quote from the *Supplex Libellus*. At the end of this petition the author(s) explained to the emperor what they wanted most of all: to have unity and concord with their abbot. The monks wanted a loving and peaceful father who would guide and correct the monks with gentle rebukes, not tyrannical punishment.\(^{70}\)

Candidus deliberately chose to put words from the *Supplex Libellus* into Haistolf's mouth to remind the monks of Fulda and the abbot in charge of the harm a bad abbot could do. In the *Vita Aegil* Candidus depicted Haistolf reminding Eigel how much he once had suffered himself when he had been a monk under Ratgar.\(^{71}\) Now that the monks of Fulda had chosen Eigel to be their abbot the archbishop urged him to behave in a manner he had hoped for from his abbot when he had been a monk himself. This message of course pertained to the monks and the abbot of the present-day community as well. Again Candidus made clear to his audience that one should learn from the past.

If the speeches that Candidus inserted in his text confronted the monks with bad conduct; the abbacy of Eigel served as an example of good monastic behaviour. Each speech raised different issues from different perspectives, but all were related to the problem of finding a balance between spiritual ideals and worldly occupations of a major royal abbey. Candidus brought up the same concerns when he described the discussions held between the monks just before Eigel was elected abbot of Fulda. In Candidus' account of the arguments the monks were mostly concerned with practical issues, based on personal experiences, such as whether they wanted an abbot of noble birth or not.\(^{72}\) Monks in favour of one pleaded that a person of high standing and influence would be a better match for counts and other magnates and would have the goodwill of the emperor. Opponents put forward that an abbot with powerful relations could also use his influence against the community, to oppress the monks. What about electing an eminent scholar for abbot? Or would he not use his intelligence and eloquence to silence the monks?

To shape the debates between the brethren, Candidus used the Rule of Benedict and the *Supplex Libellus*. As said above, Haistolf's speech is also a portrayal of an ideal abbot based on the *Supplex Libellus*. Thus both the speech of the archbishop and the discussions between the monks in the *Vita Aegil* originated from particular problems that the monastery of

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\(^{70}\) Candidus, *Vita Aegil* I, c. 11, p. 14, l. 5-20; *Supplex Libellus* c. 20, pp. 326-7.

\(^{71}\) Eigel even had fled the miseries in the monastery.

\(^{72}\) Candidus, *Vita Aegil* I, c. 5, pp. 6-7.
Fulda had experienced in the past. Candidus responded to topics that he and his fellow-brethren had occupied themselves with some twenty years ago, but that apparently had not lost their relevance for the present-day community. The starting point of the speech of the emperor was also the experiences of the monks themselves, as they had once expressed them in the *Supplex Libellus*. Yet, in the *Vita Aegil*, Candidus also raised new issues that had not figured in the *Supplex Libellus* but that were high on the agenda of church councils in Candidus' days. The *Vita Aegil* shows that not only emperors and bishops were expected to discipline the morals and behaviour of monks who had gone astray. There also was an impulse of reform from within the monastery. Reform was not only about monastic behaviour in relation to the well-being of the Christian people and the ruling dynasty; it also included the inner spiritual renewal of individual monks.

Whereas the metrical *Vita Aegil* had explained the timeless symbolism of the events in Eigil’s life, the version in prose was an exhortation to correct one’s behaviour. In prose Candidus expanded on examples of monastic behaviour, by means of poetry the monk turned the history of Fulda into a battle between good and evil and the monastery into the *ecclesia* of Christ. Under Eigil, the monastery of Fulda, whose monks had gone astray when Ratgar was their abbot, became an *ecclesia* again. Accordingly Eigil was remembered and praised, while Ratgar became the tyrant whose contributions to the monastery Candidus attempted to write out of history. Thus with the *Vita Aegil* Candidus not only used the past to teach the monks and their abbot an exemplary life and to demonstrate God’s hand in the history of Fulda, but also reconstructed the past and tried to influence who was to be part of the collective memory of the monastery and who was not.

Unlike the *Vita Aegil* the *Vita Sturmi* did not contain a monastic programme that the monks should regard as exemplary. This text seems to have been Eigil’s attempt to soothe disagreements and to bring new unity in a community disrupted by a violent conflict about the identity of the monastery. It was important for the author, who now had the duty to govern this unstable community, to reaffirm the cohesion among the monks and to safeguard the continuity of the monastery. Eigil therefore seems to have sought to explain the existence of different monastic traditions instituted by Boniface and Sturmi in Fulda instead of imposing his own will on the monks, as Ratgar seems to have done. But his text of course provides also a definition of the monastery and its past. The abbot

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73 This is not to say that other abbeys did not have similar problems.

74 Yet, as said at the beginning of this chapter, it did not work. In the tenth century Ratgar is remembered as the *sapiens architectus* who constructed this fabulous basilica.
The abbots' vitae

created a picture of Fulda of which the Rule of Benedict, Sturmi, Boniface and the Carolingians were important ingredients. Were these themes still prominent in Candidus' portrayal of the monastery in the *Vita Aegil*?

The Rule of Benedict

The importance of the Rule of Benedict was already evident in the *Vita Sturmi* but it is even more pronounced in the *Vita Aegil*. What Candidus cared for most was to ground his model in the 'knowledge of Divine Scripture', 'the examples of the holy fathers who had preceded us' and 'the rule'. With 'the rule' Candidus meant the Rule of Benedict, which he himself had once copied. In the *Vita Aegil* Candidus had Louis the Pious say: 'I entrust him [Eigil] to you, brethren, according to the fear of God and the authority of the holy Rule, so that he may be for you a father, a pastor and a brother in accordance with the monastery of the blessed Benedict, who filled with the Holy Spirit wrote this same rule for monks with great discretion and ordered his followers to preserve it together with him.' Candidus' portrait of a good abbot is clearly inspired by the Rule of Benedict. This monastic rule had also served as Eigil's example in his portrait of Sturmi and had inspired the portrayal of the good abbot in the *Supplex Libellus*. In imitation of the *Supplex Libellus*, the *Vita Aegil* especially elaborates on the theme of discretion and moderation, as Ratgar seems to have personified the opposite.

Another theme from the Rule of Benedict developed by both the *Vita Aegil* and the *Vita Sturmi*, is that the abbot himself should always set the good example. Benedict of Nursia wrote:

When any one receives the name of abbot, he ought to rule over his disciples with a double teaching; that is, let him show forth all good and holy things by deeds more than by words. So that to ready disciples he may propound the mandates of God in words; but to the hard-hearted

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75 Candidus, *Vita Aegil* I c. 9, p. 9, l. 24-30.
76 In the colophon of Codex Würzburg M. p. th. q. 22 we can read: 'Cognatis, quod ego Bruun monachus scripsi istam regulam sancti Benedicti abbatis'. This copy of the Rule of Benedict still exists. B. Bischoff and J. Hoffman, *Die Würzburger Schreibschule und die Dombibliothek im VIII und IX Jahrhundert* (Würzburg 1952) p. 54.
77 "Istum", inquit, "nunc ubis committo, fratres, secundum Dei timorem et sanctae regulae auctoritatem, ut sit ubis pater, pastor et frater iuxta monasterium beati Benedicti, qui hanc eandem regulam monachorum Spiritu sancto repletos cum magna discretione conscrisit suisque secum seruandam mandavit alumnis'. Candidus, *Vita Aegil* I c. 10, pp. 11-2.
79 RB, c. 2 and c. 64, pp. 440-52 and 648-52. See Chapter Two.
and the more simpleminded, he may show forth the divine precepts by his deeds.\footnote{Ergo, cum aliquis suscipit nomen abbatis, duplici debet doctrina suis praeesse discipulis, id est omnia bona et sancta factis amplius quam urbis ostendat, ut capacibus discipulis mandata Domini urbis proponere possit, duris corde uero et simplicioribus factis suis divina praecepta monstrare.' RB, c. 2, p. 444.}

According to their biographers both Sturmi and Eigil fulfilled this instruction.

In addition to this Eigil depicted Sturmi as a peaceful and discrete abbot who according to the Rule of Benedict did everything in close consultation with his brethren and who was loved by all the monks. The \textit{Vita Aegil} puts even greater stress on the close cooperation between the abbot and his flock, which is not strange considering the fact that the community had just suffered a crisis, which seems in part to have been caused by the headstrong abbot. It was Eigil's task to create new cohesion in this disrupted community. So it was very important that he would be backed by a majority of the monks without rubbing them the wrong way. Candidus stressed that Eigil did nothing without beforehand consulting the monks.\footnote{accepto fratrum consilio' (Vita Aegil I, c. 15, p. 15); 'una cum fratribus suis' (idem); 'cum consilio et fratrum consensu' (idem, c. 17, p. 16); 'vocantur ad consilium fratres' (idem, c. 19, p. 17) etceteras.} He asked his brethren advice in all matters: the dedication of the new abbey church, the building of a new cloister and the construction of the funerary chapel. Even on his deathbed he listened to their advice.

\section*{Boniface and Sturmi}

Thus to Candidus the Rule of Benedict should be the rule by which the monks should live, together with the examples of the holy fathers and the Scripture. The author did not explicitly mention the \textit{instituta sancti Bonifatii} that both the \textit{Supplex Libellus} and the \textit{Vita Sturmi} refer to. Boniface has disappeared in Candidus' foundation story, even though Sturmi is still remembered as the first abbot and founder of the monastery of Fulda.\footnote{Idem, c. 3 and 22, pp. 5 and 18.} Candidus also ignores the participation of the bishop in the spiritual formation of the monastery. Not that Boniface does not have a prominent place in the \textit{Vita Aegil}, for he does; not as the founder of Fulda or in relation to local traditions in the monastery, but as martyr of Christ whom the monks venerated as their patron saint.\footnote{Idem, cc. 1, 3 and 15, pp. 5 and 15; \textit{Vita Aegil} II, c. 1, 14 and 17, pp. 36, 52 and 60. The only reference in the \textit{Vita Aegil} to Boniface as a person of flesh and blood is as the teacher of Sturmi.} In the \textit{Vita Sturmi} Boniface had been remembered as a saint and a historical figure who to a large
The abbots’ vitae

extent had contributed to monastic life in Fulda as it was in the time the Vita Sturmi was written. In the Vita Aegil the importance of Boniface for the community of Fulda had progressed beyond the transitory world. At the time Candidus wrote his text Boniface served the monks as intercessor between the human and the divine sphere.

Did this new meaning of the martyr for the community of Fulda also imply that the local monastic traditions that Boniface once had instituted in Fulda had receded to the background? They certainly were no longer an issue, as they had been in the 810s when Ratgar had called them into question and when Eigel wrote his Vita Sturmi. It was as a martyr that Boniface was honoured, not as the initiator of Fulda’s customs.

In this context Candidus’ stress on writing should also be noted. The scholar to a large extent drew on texts; ‘For all that has been written, has been written for our teaching’. Candidus offered a repertoire of norms and values that was grounded in a broad monastic tradition. It included authoritative texts such as the Rule of Benedict and the Vita Pachomii, but also recent, home-produced work like the Supplex Libellus or the Vita Sturmi.85 His work shows most of all a deep respect for the monastic tradition, mainly the Western practice, but Candidus also used writings from the East insofar as they had been translated into Latin.86 The attempts of the abbots of Fulda and stimulated by the Carolingian court to set up a centre of education and learning had begun to pay rich rewards. This is not only clear from the presence of scholars as Candidus in Fulda, but also from the work of the monk itself; his use of sources, his eloquence and his stress on the importance of the written word. In this respect the Vita Aegil differed from the Vita Sturmi. Eigel’s speech is simple, unsophisticated and entspricht durchaus noch den Anfängen der Karolingischen Bildungsreform.87 Candidus on the other hand wrote distinguished and even stilted Latin and was clearly influenced by great writers as Sallust and Virgil.88

To Candidus monastic learning comprised the traditions of Fulda that from the beginning were transmitted by speech, example, behaviour and gesture.89 As Sturmi, himself a pupil of Boniface, had taken Eigel under his protection, Eigel had taught Candidus.90 Like other great teachers of that age, Eigel had a small circle of zealous pupils clustered

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85 Candidus, Vita Aegil I, c. 14, p. 15; Vita Aegil II 1.143 and 507, pp. 82 and 91.
86 Candidus most likely used the Codex regiarum of Benedict of Aniane.
87 Löwe, in: Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen VI, p. 695.
89 His Vita Aegil is not only about texts but also about the passing on of monastic learning from masters to pupils. For more information about the importance of the personal example of the teacher in monastic learning see Cubitt, ‘Monastic memory and identity’, pp. 262-6; Riché, Écoles et Enseignement.
90 For this intellectual lineage, see Candidus, Vita Aegil 1, cc. 1, 3 and 20, pp. 5 and 17.
around him. Candidus had been one of these young bright students. Part of their education consisted of watching and listening to their seniors. When Eigel discussed matters (perhaps theology or monastic customs) with Hrabanus, at the time magister of the monastic school with whom Eigel had a special friendship, the abbot invited his students to gather round them and listen. According to Eigel (who used Solomon as his example) 'listening makes the wise wiser.' Yet Candidus did not explicitly refer to the instituta sancti Bonifatii when he discussed the transmission of monastic learning. Local traditions that once had been initiated by Boniface were no longer in the spotlight as they had been in the Vita Sturmi. Possibly in the years after the visit of Louis the Pious' envoys Fulda's abbots had integrated Boniface's heritage with a monastic identity that was now much more focussed on the Rule of Benedict.

The Carolingians

Another theme already visible in the Vita Sturmi and further developed in the Vita Aegil is the role of the Frankish ruler in monastic politics. In the Vita Sturmi Eigel related that ever since the reconciliation between Sturmi and King Pippin Fulda had become a royal abbey. Sturmi fulfilled some important tasks for the king. In the biography of the first abbot of Fulda we can read that Sturmi was in the service of the Carolingian king as negotiator between the royal court and Bavaria and that the abbot was actively involved in some expeditions against the Saxons.

What role Sturmi and his monks precisely played in the annexation and Christianisation of Saxony is not clear. Even though Fulda lay near the border with Saxony it probably never was a mission monastery, at least not during Sturmi's abbacy. There is no evidence of missionary activity by monks of Fulda in Saxony during the first decades of its existence, even though Eigel claims the opposite for the 770s in the Vita Sturmi. According to Klaus Nass Eigel exaggerated the share of Sturmi and his monks in the mission of the Saxons. Fulda only played a role after 785 during the conversion peak after the baptism of Widukind, most of all in the person of Ercanbert, the first bishop of Minden (†830).

To Sturmi it seems to have been an abbot's self-evident duty to serve the king in war, or to conduct negotiations with enemies or to

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91 See also Alcuin. Vita Alcuini, c. 4, p. 186.
92 Vita Aegil I, c. 20, l. 31-2, p. 17.
The abbots’ vitae

... further the spread of Christianity. Of Egif we do not have such information, but this does not mean that the abbots of Fulda no longer served their king, as Sturmi had done. During his abbacy Hrabanus had visited the royal court frequently and his monastery served as a royal prison. 859 saw the first of a sequence of visits of the abbot of Fulda to Rome on behalf the East Frankish ruler and in 872 a Fulda abbot went to war again. 97

There is no evidence of Egif playing an important political role in Carolingian politics as Sturmi had done. This is not surprising, for in view of the recent crisis, Egif was probably very much occupied with the situation inside the monastery and with strengthening contacts with noble families in the vicinity who had possibly been discouraged by the earlier turbulence in Fulda. 98 Egif’s abbacy only lasted for four years, in which he had other things to do than to render political and diplomatic services to the emperor. In addition to this we have to keep in mind that to a large extent Candidus has coloured our picture of the fourth abbacy. A politically active abbot might not have been in keeping with Candidus’ ideas concerning an ideal abbot.

Yet, the Carolingian emperor did play a very important role in the Vita Aegil, as his grandfather had done in the Vita Sturmi. As Pippin had once mediated the struggle over Boniface’s body and, later on, the conflict between Sturmi and Lull, his grandson applied himself to end the crisis between Ratgar and the monks. In the Vita Aegil it was the emperor who instructed the new abbot, Egif, and his monks in matters of doctrine and monastic behaviour. This was part of his responsibility. 99 If we are to believe Candidus the emperor’s heart was broken when he heard about the crisis that Fulda was in. The Carolingian ruler had never felt such pain before except when his father had died. 100 Louis the Pious intervened and on account of this Candidus gave praise to the emperor. 101 As in the Vita

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98 Freise, ‘Einzugsbereich’, p. 1100
99 On this emperor and clergy alike agreed. See Carolingian legislation and other treatises on the responsibilities of the abbot.
100 ‘ut dicere tantum dolori numquam excerptum excepto eo, qui ei acciderat ex morte beatae memoriae Karoli, genitoris sui’. Candidus, Vita Aegil I, c. 3, p. 5, l. 34-5.
101 ‘In quibus nimirum Hluduici, serenissimi Augusti, clementiam circa nos factam reuerenter expressi. Cuius communionem atque doctrinam, esti ita, ut ab eo prolatae sunt, ad integrum explanare nequii, beniuola tamen voluuntatem illius secundum legem Dei et sanctorum dogmata patrum enodare curau, quatenus per misericordiae...
Sturmi, in Candidus' portrayal of the monastery the ties of the royal abbey with the Carolingian dynasty are prominent.

Thus in several ways the Vita Aegil elaborated on themes that we have already seen in the Vita Sturmi—these texts both portray their main characters as ideal abbots according to the Rule of Benedict, giving the Carolingian ruler a prominent role as the guardian of the well-being of the community.

New themes

The Vita Aegil on the other hand raises certain issues that the Vita Sturmi did not bring up, such as the monastic buildings. The emperor reacted against the splendour of Ratgar's basilica and how the construction had led the monks astray from their spiritual occupations. The crux of this part of the speech of the emperor is that 'people live in buildings and God lives in holy people'. Through Louis the Pious Candidus makes it clear that God only appreciates a church that is built in His honour if the patron has observed the divine law and Christian values of discretion, modesty and humanity. A building is empty and meaningless if it is not made and inhabited by good people and if its maker has been blind to the needs of his flock. Again it is about discretion, modesty and moderation. The stress on building in the Vita Aegil is clearly a response to the abbacy of Ratgar.

A second new theme that the Vita Aegil raises is the giving of alms. In the Vita Aegil the emperor had urged Eigel to be careful with the substantia Christi, that is the alms that the lay people had donated to the monastery for the poor, and the well-being of their souls. He asserted that many a monk, entangling himself in worldly affairs to the benefit of his relatives, had lost his soul. Eigel should not only refrain from spending alms on people other than the poor, who did not need it, but also make sure that his monks did not channel these gifts to family and friends or even worse, use them to support agitators. This seems to have happened during the abbacy of Ratgar. These were very important issues that were also discussed at the reform councils of the 820s. Churchmen

bonum eius memoria subolumque illius apud nos nostrisque successores in sancta oratione maneant semper'. Idem, praef. I, p. 3.

102 Idem, c. 5, p. 12, l. 37-8. I will not give the full quotation as I have given this in the former chapter in relation to how Candidus valued the creation of Ratgar. See also: De Jong, 'Religion' in: The Early Middle Ages. Europe, 400-1000, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (The Short Oxford History of Europe: Oxford 2001), pp. 132-64, here pp. 148-61.

103 See Chapter Three.

104 Candidus, Vita Aegil I, c. 10, pp. 12-3.
were very concerned about church property no longer being used for religious goals.\textsuperscript{105}

The third subject that Candidus had put into Louis' mouth was that of lay-abbots, who where appointed by the ruler in order to control the property and \textit{ministeria} of the monastery.\textsuperscript{106} Like the costly building-projects and the improper use of alms, this was another problem typical of Carolingian royal abbeys, which because of their prominent position in society were part of the structures of power, in that period. In the \textit{Vita Aegil} the emperor pointed out how important it was that an abbot should have been a monk himself and should have been brought up with monastic discipline from childhood onwards. Otherwise an abbot would never be able to lead the congregation of monks. This clearly is Candidus speaking, a monk who, like many other monks of Fulda, had entered the monastery as a child oblate,\textsuperscript{107} and who like an anonymous brother from Murbach understood a monastery to be 'we, who have lived this kind of life virtually from our cradle, instructed by our elders'.\textsuperscript{108} Lay-abbots from outside the monastery did not fit into this view of an ideal monastery.

However, Louis the Pious himself would never have used such strong words against lay-abbots, as he had been personally involved in several appointments of laymen at the head of royal monasteries.\textsuperscript{109} The practice of lay abbacies was closely connected to the growing political and economical importance of monasteries and their abbots under Carolingian rule. Kings appointed loyal followers, be it monks or laymen, to royal monasteries, both to control the economic resources of the monasteries and to gain a firm foothold in the regions of their empire. Even though Louis the Pious and Benedict of Aniane did expose the sometimes extravagant worldly behaviour of abbots, the extent to which the rules for monks applied to their abbots is unclear. Capitularies are silent on the topic of lay abbacies.\textsuperscript{110} Presumably lay abbots were tolerated as long as they did not plunder monastic wealth or threatened the spiritual, inner life of the monasteries. Only after the death of Louis the Pious, in the early

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{105} See for example the council of Paris (829), \textit{MGH Conc. 2/2}, pp. 648-9.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Felten, \textit{Äbte und Laienäbte}; De Jong, 'Carolingian monasticism', pp. 622-53.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Between 826 and 835 there lived 100 to 130 young children in Fulda. Schmid, 'Die Frage nach den Anfängen', pp. 116-7. See also De Jong, \textit{In Samuel's Image}.
\item \textsuperscript{108} 'Nos vere qui ab ipsis pene cunibilis a maioribus nostris eruditi in eadem dispositione viximus'. \textit{Statuta Murbacensia, Legislatio Aquisgranensis}, p. 442. Translation by De Jong, 'Carolingian monasticism', p. 643.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Felten, \textit{Äbte und Laienäbte}, pp. 290-7; De Jong, 'Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer', p. 635.
\end{itemize}
840s, so at the time Candidus wrote the *Vita Aegil*, did lay-abbots meet with severe criticism.\(^{111}\)

Finally, compared to the *Vita Sturmi*, Candidus' stress on concord and discord attracts attention. This can partly be explained by Candidus' subject itself, namely the aftermath of the crisis under Ratgar, but the monk may have responded to unrest in his own days too. To talk about peace and concord was nothing new. These themes were part of the rhetoric of Carolingian legislation from the late eighth century onward.\(^{112}\) Yet, to elaborate on *discordia* as Candidus does also elsewhere in the *Vita Aegil*\(^{113}\) fits in perfectly with the language of contemporary councils held at Mainz. When Candidus wrote the *Vita Aegil*, Fulda was caught in the middle of a fight over power between the sons of Louis the Pious. After this struggle had been decided in favour of Louis the German in the Middle Rhine valley, the king ordered the archbishop of Mainz to convene a synod. By this time, in 847, Louis had appointed Hrabanus, former abbot of Fulda (and teacher of Candidus), to the see of Mainz. Both the canons of a council held in Mainz in 813 and Hrabanus' own penitential served as a model for the decrees of Mainz 847.\(^ {114}\) The old themes of *pax* and *iustitia* also recur in the decisions of Mainz 847 but in comparison to Mainz 813 they are elaborated on and rephrased. *Discordia* is added to the vocabulary as being the paramount sin people can commit, to be punished with the most severe penalty that church legislators knew: excommunication.\(^ {115}\) Even though the Treaty of Verdun (843) had officially settled the conflict between the sons of Louis the Pious, there still was a lot of unrest and Louis the German's position in the Middle Rhine area still was weak.\(^ {116}\) The chapters on discord in the capitulary of 847 may have been a response of the leading churchmen of that region, the archbishopric of Mainz, to the political instability that must have caused great distress. Hrabanus himself only knew too well.

Political unrest outside doubtless affected life inside the monastic walls of Fulda. We only need to think of what would happen to Hrabanus

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\(^{111}\) Felten, *Äbte und Layenälteste*, pp. pp. 298-304. Yet, the critique did not put an end to the appointment of lay-abbots as Carolingian rulers still depended on them heavily. It could be that Ratgar had been appointed from outside, perhaps by Charlemagne to win the support of the obviously powerful family that Ratgar was related to. This might explain why the Carolingian emperor was hesitant to depose the abbot earlier.

\(^{112}\) See for example *MGH Cap.* 1: 12,5; 98,5; 131,15; 226,30; 226,30; 312,15; 321,30; 334,20; 394,15 and *MGH Cap.* 2: 47,20; 67,15; 177,10-20; 185,15,20; 215,20; 232; 372,25.

\(^{113}\) See for example the commemoration of Eigel at the end of the *Vita Aegil* II, pp. 75-7. Candidus did not repeat the discussions between the monks on the monastic identity in poetry. To summarise the events the monk used the allegory of *discordia*.


\(^{116}\) Innes, *State and Society*, pp. 210-4.
Maurus in 842. Because the abbot ranged himself on the side of first Louis the Pious and after the death of the emperor in 840 supported Lothar in the conflict, his position as abbot of Fulda became untenable when Louis the German instead won the struggle over the Middle Rhine valley.\textsuperscript{117} Even though he never said it explicitly Candidus must have been responding to the political turbulence of that period. Louis the Pious, whose authority was challenged by his sons in the second quarter of the ninth century, figures prominently in the \textit{Vita Aegil}, and so does Hrabanus, a fervent supporter of the emperor, and later on also of Lothar and Louis the German.\textsuperscript{118} As the church leaders who gathered in Mainz in 847 felt responsible for what happened in the world outside and tried to bring peace, Candidus may have felt responsible too. This might explain why the vocabulary that Candidus used in the \textit{Vita Aegil} was very similar to the language of Mainz 847.\textsuperscript{119}

A genealogy of abbots

Because of the destruction of the monastic library during the Thirty Years war we know very little about the use of the Fulda abbots' lives and their manuscripts. From the register that Fulda's curator Johann Knöttel († 1505) made, it is clear that the library of Fulda at the end of the fifteenth century was divided into forty-eight \textit{ordines}. \textit{Ordo} thirty-three contained (in this order): the \textit{Vita Bonifatii}, the \textit{Vita Liudgeri}, the \textit{Vita Aegil}, the \textit{Vita Ratgarrii}, the \textit{Vita S. Galli} etceteras. Remarkably enough, the register does not list the \textit{Life of Sturmi}. We know it must have been in the library as the Jesuit Christopher Brouwer noticed it there in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The fragments of the ninth-century library catalogues of Fulda still extant, do not mention the abbots' biographies at all.\textsuperscript{120} But even though our knowledge of the manuscript tradition of the abbots' \textit{vitae} is limited, these texts themselves offer enough material to allow a suggestion as to why they were written and what the relation between the texts was.

Even though the abbots' biographies were individual texts, written by different authors, together they formed a chain that linked the present with the past, and helped to structure the latter. To use the periods of office as a chronological framework to narrate the history of a single institution was nothing new as we have already seen from the example of the \textit{Gesta abbatum} of St Wandrille. Another, well-known, example is the

\textsuperscript{117} De Jong, 'The empire as ecclesia', pp. 209-10.

\textsuperscript{118} See earlier in this chapter. See also Candidus' introduction to the \textit{Vita Aegil}. Candidus, \textit{Vita Aegil} I, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{119} Apart from the connection between Candidus and Hrabanus.

\textsuperscript{120} Mittelalterliche Bücherverzeichnisse, pp. 3-71.
This structure proceeded from the role of office holders, be it abbots or bishops, as intermediary between the community that they presided over and the society around them, and from their role as representatives of their community. In the relation of the given monastery with the outside world abbots played a key role. In a world where religious communities were competing for secular and saintly patronage, benefactors and clients, it was important that an abbot could promote himself and above all his community. An illiterate abbot, unable to read the records in the monastic archives, could not negotiate on behalf of the monastery and was therefore condemned as a bad abbot in the *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium*. Similarly the *Vita Sturmi* and the *Vita Aegil* celebrated their abbots for what they had done for Fulda.

While the sequence of abbacies served as a framework to structure the history of the monastery from its foundation to the present day, this succession also legitimised and shaped the continued existence of the community, as it created a genealogy of abbots of Fulda and their pupils. Eigil himself had initiated this tradition when he wrote the *Vita Sturmi* and ordered Candidus to do the same for Baugulf.

Elisabeth van Houts has remarked that a need often arose to support the collective memory of a community with written evidence in the fourth generation of its existence. Bede's *Historia abbatum* of Wearmouth-Jarrow, the *Vita patrum Iurensium* and the *Vita abbatum Acaucensium* were all written during the reign of the fourth abbot. Eigil was indeed the fourth abbot of Fulda, but even though Van Hout's observation is striking and should be taken seriously, the initiative of Eigil should be also considered in its own context, namely in that of the aftermath of the crisis surrounding Ratgar and the election of Eigil as Ratgar's successor. I would argue that the abbots' biographies were intended as a written aid to serve collective memory, and also that the initiative taken by Eigil to create a list of office holders also signalled a consciousness of a lineage. Partly this lineage was based on actual

122 See also the Rule of Benedict, for example c. 56, p. 622.
123 *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium* c. 12.
124 See also the discussion held in Fulda before the election of Eigil, Candidus, *Vita Aegil I*, c. 5, pp. 6-7.
125 Van Houts, *Local and Regional Chronicals*, p. 28
126 Another example: *Vita Alcuini*, c. 4, p. 186 pp. 182-97. The author of the *Vita Alcuini* created a lineage of masters and students that via Augustine of Canterbury, Benedict Biscop, Cuthbert, Theodor of Canterbury, Bede and Egbert run from Gregory the Great (540-604) to Alcuin.
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family ties, for Sturmi and Eigil were relatives. Then, too, the great sense of relief that Fulda had withstood a severe crisis perhaps played a role. In this context it is significant that the initiative for biography was taken immediately after the crisis. Eigil was aware that the existence of the monastery was not straightforward, but also that his community had sustained real hardships. As a relative of the first abbot he now carried the torch.

Eigil must have been conscious of a lineage of abbots and of continuity with the past. To a certain extent he used the sequence of abbots' lives to create this consciousness and impose it on his community. Apart from the fact that Eigil himself wrote the *Vita Sturmi* and asked Candidus to do the same for Baugulf Eigil also tried to turn Sturmi into a patron saint of the community. Turning Sturmi, the founder and first abbot of Fulda, into a saint justified the lineage of abbots and sanctified the continuity of the community.

A memorial for abbots?

Perhaps we also need to investigate the construction of the funerary chapel east of the basilica that Eigil started in 820 as an expression of the awareness of a genealogy and continuity. The abbot built the chapel on the monastic cemetery. It was a small, round church (rotunda) with a vaulted crypt and ambulatory. In the middle of the crypt stood a column that supported the floor above it. At the ground level eight columns encircled the middle of the church. The ceiling of the church, which was probably also vaulted, converged in a single stone. In the *Vita Aegil* Candidus explained the meaning of the rotunda as a reflection of the *ecclesia spiritualis*. The saints were the living stones; Christ was the foundation, the column, and the corner stone. The eight columns


129 ‘Underneath the ground, where a passage encircles a hollow’ (‘subturam ubi perium circuit antrum’) and ‘a single stone column, placed in the middle, powerfully raises itself, while the arches join into [it] from both sides’ (‘una columna lapidea in medio posita arcubus hinc et inde in eandem compagnatis ualenter exsurgit’) Candidus, *Vita Aegil* I, c. 17, p. 16.

corresponded to the eight beatitudes of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. The circular shape of the church symbolised eternal life and the Heavenly Jerusalem of the almighty God.

Eigil built the chapel as a place of intercessory prayer for the souls of all the dead monks who lay buried at the cemetery. The lay-out and architecture of the chapel, the holy things it contained (the Eucharist), the relics inside the altars (for example earth from Bethlehem and a piece of Christ’s tomb) and the dedication (the church was dedicated to St Michael, the guardian of souls) all symbolised the redemption of mankind through Christ and were meant to help the dead. But probably Eigil intended that, in addition to its role as cult centre to help the deceased monks, the chapel would serve another purpose too. Whereas the upper part of the church, where the altars stood, served the monastic community as a whole, Eigil may have intended its crypt as a tomb for the abbots of Fulda.

In the *Vita Aegil* we can read that when Eigil felt his death approaching he went to the chapel and dug his own grave in its east end. From the epitaph Hrabanus Maurus wrote for Eigil we know Eigil’s sepulchre was in the crypt. Probably the abbot, already an old man when he started the construction, had decided that he wanted to be buried in the church when he built it. But had Eigil intended the crypt to be his personal grave only? There was enough room underneath the chapel to house other bodies as well. However, the space was too small to accommodate the bodies of all the monks of Fulda and moreover the Council of Mainz 813 had prohibited the burial of people in churches with the exception of high placed ecclesiastics such as bishops and abbots. Therefore it seems more likely that Eigil had intended the crypt to serve as a tomb for the abbots of Fulda rather than as a burial ground for the whole community.

Until 820 there had been no fixed place in Fulda where the monks buried their abbots. As I have shown, Sturmi had rested in the abbey church of Fulda. Baugulf, who died in 815 in Wolfsmünster, was also buried in this *cella*. Perhaps Eigil, who had tried to formalise the

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131 See also Zahlenbedeutungen.
133 Idem, pp. 104-116. The following is to a large extent indebted to Ellger’s survey and analysis of the existing source material concerning the church of St Michael and its possible uses.
135 *Versus, quos ipse abbas Eigil dictaverat sibi* in: idem, pp. 74-5.
136 From the eleventh century till the early modern period the bones of deceased monks were piled up in the crypt, meaning that all monks would be exactly at the same place on Judgement Day. Ellger, *Die Michaelskirche*, p. 105
remembrance of Fulda’s abbots in a sequence of *vitae*, also wished to create a monument for the abbots, which strengthened the awareness of a genealogy and its continuity too. Yet, Eigil’s initiative to make a tangible architectural counterpart to the sense of continuity and of lineal descent, also evinced in the abbots’ *vitae*, was not followed, as both archaeological and written sources have shown.

Archaeologists have discovered two graves in the ambulatory of the crypt of the church of St Michael. One of them without doubt belongs to Eigil. The other one was possibly that of Hatto, the sixth abbot of Fulda, who died in 856. In 835 Ratgar was buried on the Frauenberg, where he had spent the last fifteen years of his life. Eigil’s successor, Hrabanus Maurus, had eventually become archbishop of Mainz in 847 and was therefore buried in the monastery of St Alban in Mainz, where all the archbishops of the see were buried since 813. It is unknown where Thioto, Hatto’s successor, was buried. Of Sigihart (†899) we know that he was buried in Fulda, but not precisely where. In short, we cannot tell how well this monument worked. Maybe the *vitae* fulfilled their part of the function more effectively.

![Figure 18: Graves found outside the western apse of the abbey church.](image)

Between 1908 and 1913 Joseph Vonderau discovered twelve graves in the eastern wing of the cloister (built by Eigil and Hrabanus), which bordered on the western transept of the abbey church. All graves point in the direction of Boniface’s sepulchre. One of them certainly belonged to an abbot as appears from the vestments that Vonderau found in the burial site. Both Christopher Brouwer, who had seen the old abbey church before it was replaced by a baroque one, and other informants confirm that since

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the last quarter of the eleventh century the abbots of Fulda had been buried near the western transept.142 Thus the wing of the cloister enclosing the western apse, where Boniface was buried, had become the burial-gounds for the abbots of Fulda. What about the abbots before the eleventh century? Vonderau and Otfried Ellger have argued that they, at least since Sigihart, had been buried in the eastern wing of the cloister too, but in the part that cannot be excavated because of the position of the present-day cathedral.143

The other abbots of Fulda, with the possible exception of Hatto, apparently did not follow the example that Eigel had set by choosing the crypt of the funerary chapel of St Michael as his tomb. They seem to have preferred the proximity of Fulda’s patron saint, rather than that of their fellow-brethren. This does not mean, however, that Eigel had not intended the crypt of the church of St Michael to be a burial-place not only for himself but for his successors too. It would fit well into the picture that we have of his other activities as abbot of Fulda that were all geared towards the reconstruction of the monastery and the creation of an awareness of its enduring existence.

Conclusion

Both the Vita Sturmi and Vita Aegil are textual memorials of the contributions of those abbots to the monastery of Fulda. Eigel remembered Sturmi for having founded the monastery, for having instituted the Rule of Benedict, for having organised the burial of Boniface in Fulda, for acquiring royal privileges, and for building the abbey church. Candidus honoured Eigel for having restored the monastery to its identity after a severe crisis that had almost meant Fulda’s disintegration. The vitae commemorated the physical as well as the spiritual contributions of the abbots to the monastery.

Like Candidus, Eigel had also responded to the discussions about monastic identity, but less obviously so. However, his work is not a monastic programme as Candidus’ had been. The Vita Sturmi is an instrument to reconcile the monks and reinforce their cohesion. Eigel needed to appeal to the community as a whole. To express a preference for a particular monastic tradition would have been dangerous in a rather unstable community. It would not have served his aim.

Even though the succession of abbots’ lives of Fulda differs from texts like the Gesta abbatum Fontanellenium in that the biographies were

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142 Browerus, Antiquatatum, p. 179; Ellger, Die Michaelskirche, p. 114.
143 Vonderau, 'Die Ausgrabungen am Dom zu Fulda in den Jahren 1919-1924', p. 17; Ellger, Die Michaelskirche, p. 115.
written as individual texts by different authors, the Fulda Lives also contributed to the collective identity of their communities. Written for only the community of monks, the succession of abbots' vitae linked the past to the present-day community and contributed to the creation of a consciousness of continuity. The vitae not only answered contemporary needs but also responded to the monastery's traditions and its existing corpus of texts, of which each vita in its turn became part itself. Together they formed the history of a single institution. Central to all vitae was the community of Fulda and what its abbot had contributed to its existence. The recurrence of certain topics in the vitae (such as the Rule of Benedict and the relation between the monastery and the Carolingians) probably also strengthened the sense of continuity for the monks.

The abbots' biographies were written for the abbots and monks alike. More than the Vita Sturmi, the Vita Aegil is a document that seeks to hold a mirror up to the entire community. While the Vita Sturmi is in the first place meant to reconcile, the Vita Aegil is very critical with respect to the behaviour of Candidus' fellow-brethren. The correction of monastic discipline and behaviour was an endless process, and part of monastic identity. Since Carolingian monasteries played an important political, social and economical role, the constant proximity to the world outside demanded a continuous (re)defining of the monastic identity. This meant finding a balance between the inner world of the cloister and the world outside, between spirituality and secular concerns. In his own way this is what Candidus did. While Eigil portrayed Sturmi as a hermit and an example of ascetic spirituality, to counterbalance and comment upon the recent developments in the monastery, Candidus used the abbacy of Ratgar, an example of bad government, as a foil to make clear what a good abbot should be like. This picture had been shaped by the decades of discussions about the monastic identity conducted both at the royal court and councils and also within the monastic walls of Fulda.

The Miracula sanctorum in ecclesias Fuldenses translatorum by Rudolf of Fulda has sometimes been considered to be the fifth vita in the sequence of abbots' vitae in Fulda. Rudolf in a way indeed wrote a portrait of the fifth abbot of Fulda, Hrabanus, who had also been his master. Yet, for one thing Hrabanus was still alive when Rudolf took up his pen. More importantly, the purposes and plans of the Vita Sturmi and Vita Aegil on the one hand and the Miracula sanctorum on the other differed. Whereas both Eigil and Candidus had concentrated on Fulda's own past, Rudolf turned to the past of the early Christian church and its martyrs. Both Eigil

144 Only the Vita Sturmi seems to have spread beyond the monastery.
145 Berschin, Biographie und Epochenstil III, p. 240; Brunhölzl, Geschichte der Lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters I, p. 344.
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and Candidus had responded to and contributed to the existing corpus of texts about the monastic identity of Fulda with regard to the worldly occupations of a royal abbey. Rudolf on the other hand drew upon a different tradition and yet other texts, a literary landscape in which saints, miracles and holy cities were central. In relation to this the scene of their narratives varied. While Eigil's and Candidus' view was directed inward the monastic community itself, Rudolf, as it were, widened the perspective to include the power of the saints and extended the depiction of Fulda to include its dependencies. However, even though the approaches of Eigil and Candidus, and Rudolf differ, all three of them offered their fellow-brethren a definition of Fulda: Eigil and Candidus of a monastery balancing the demands of society and inner spiritual life, Rudolf of the monastic landscape as a sacred space. The *Vita Sturmi* and *Vita Aegil* are about the recent past; the *Miracula sanctorum* deals with relics of Roman martyrs, symbols of the distant, early Christian past. The next chapter is about the role of Roman martyrs in the self-perception of the monastery of Fulda.