

MATTHEW BRYAN GILLIS

## Noble and Saxon: the meaning of Gottschalk of Orbais' ethnicity at the Synod of Mainz, 829

In 829 at the Synod of Mainz, a young Fulda monk accused his abbot, Hrabanus Maurus, of violently enslaving him – the son of a Saxon nobleman – to the monastic life.<sup>1</sup> This was a bold assertion of his identity that led the bishops to restore his freedom, despite his abbot's furious protests. The monk was Gottschalk of Orbais (ca. 806–ca. 868), who adopted a fascinating series of identities that make him stand out as a dramatic and controversial individual of the ninth century.<sup>2</sup> After the synod, Gottschalk spent the next two decades surfacing across the landscape of ninth-century Europe, from Francia to Bulgaria. He represented himself as a penitential servant or client of God, began to espouse controversial views on predestination known as *praedestinatio gemina*, an Augustinian-based doctrine in which both the saved and the damned are predestined, and even spread these teachings as a missionary. In 848 and 849 he was condemned as a heretic by synods at Mainz and Quierzy for his theology, but in response he identified himself as a ninth-century Augustine, and claimed that those who accepted his teachings were God's elect. He spent the remaining twenty years of his life as a prisoner in the monastery of Hautvillers, where he secretly continued to write texts and died still in a state of excommunication.<sup>3</sup>

This legacy of audacious claims and controversies has led modern scholars to make equally striking assertions about Gottschalk's identity. As Siegfried Epperlein has noted, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars described many different "Gottschalks": he was the first "German" theologian, the first "German protestant," a representative of the "nordic spirit," a "German Calvin," a "martyr of extreme Augustinianism," the first "pre-Reformation reformer," a "Luther-like" Saxon who fought against the power of bishops, both a "revolutionary" and a "reactionary."<sup>4</sup> He has more recently been called a "dissident."<sup>5</sup> Each of these imagined

<sup>1</sup> Concilium Moguntinense a. 829 (ed. Albert Werminghoff, MGH LL Concilia 2, Hannover 1908) 601–605. See also: Steffen Patzold, Konflikte im Kloster Fulda zur Zeit der Karolinger, in: Fuldaer Geschichtsblätter 76 (2000) 69–162, at 140–153; Mayke de Jong, In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West (Leiden 1996) 77–91; Jürgen Weitzel, 'Oblatio puerorum.' Der Konflikt zwischen väterlicher Gewalt und Selbstbestimmung im Lichte eines Instituts des mittelalterlichen Kirchenrechts, in: Vom mittelalterlichen Recht zur neuzeitlichen Rechtswissenschaft. Bedingungen, Wege und Probleme der europäischen Rechtsgeschichte. Winfried Trusen zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. Norbert Brieskorn/Paul Mikat/Daniela Müller/Dietmar Willoweit (Paderborn 1994) 59–74; Eckhard Freise, Studien zum Einzugsbereich der Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda, in: Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda im früheren Mittelalter 2, ed. Karl Schmid (Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 8, München 1978) 1003–1216, at 1017–1029.

<sup>2</sup> A watershed moment in Gottschalk studies was the discovery and publication of two manuscripts of his texts (Bern, Burgerbibliothek 83 and 584) by Germain Morin and Cyril Lambot. See: Germain Morin, Gottschalk retrouvé, in: Revue Bénédictine 43 (1931) 303–312 and Gottschalk of Orbais, Œuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc d'Orbais (ed. Cyril Lambot, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense 20, Louvain 1945).

<sup>3</sup> For Gottschalk scholarship in addition to that listed above, see: Bernard Boller, Gottschalk d'Orbais: de Fulda à Hautvillers, une dissidence (Paris 2004); Celia Chazelle, The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ's Passion (Cambridge 2001) 165–208; George Tavard, Trina Deitas: The Controversy between Hincmar and Gottschalk (Marquette Studies in Theology 12, Milwaukee 1996); Albrecht Diem, Een verstoorder van de ordo: Gottschalk van Orbais en zijn leer van de dubbele predestinatie, in: Utrechtse historische cahiers 16 (1995) 115–131; Marie-Luise Weber, Die Gedichte des Gottschalk von Orbais (Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters 27, Frankfurt am Main 1992); David Ganz, The debate on predestination, in: Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom, ed. Margaret Gibson/Janet Nelson (Aldershot 1990) 283–302; D.E. Nineham, Gottschalk of Orbais: Reactionary or Precursor of the Reformation?, in: Journal of Ecclesiastical History 40 (1989) 1–18; Siegfried Epperlein, Herrschaft und Volk im Karolingischen Imperium (Berlin 1969) 175–245; Jean Jolivet, Godescalc d'Orbais et la Trinité: la méthode de la théologie à l'époque carolingienne (Études de philosophie médiévale 46, Paris 1958); Klaus Vielhaber, Gottschalk der Sachse (Bonner historische Forschungen 5, Bonn 1956); Maria Christine Mitterauer, Gottschalk der Sachse und seine Gegner im Prädestinationsstreit (Dissertation, Universität Wien 1956); Walter Kagerah, Gottschalk der Sachse (Dissertation, Greifswald 1936).

<sup>4</sup> Epperlein, Herrschaft 185f.

<sup>5</sup> Boller, Gottschalk 153–162.

“Gottschalks” ultimately fail to convince precisely because they reflect modern concerns and perspectives. The many different ninth-century representations of Gottschalk found in the sources – both his own and others’ constructions – always occurred in particular circumstances and were attempts to establish “who he was” at that given moment. The workings of the process of representation are well-established terrain among early medieval historians examining collective identity.<sup>6</sup> Yet the case of individuals like Gottschalk and the others examined in this volume offer new possibilities for understanding how early medieval people fashioned and asserted their identity not only in ways that changed “who they were” from one episode to the next, but also in ways that simultaneously transformed the world around them.<sup>7</sup>

This article is part of an ongoing study that seeks to bring these images of Gottschalk and their historical contexts together in order to demonstrate how he continually recreated himself and what impact his representations had on the course of ninth-century history.<sup>8</sup> As an author – whose writings include poetry in the form of prayers and hymns, letters, confessions, various kinds of doctrinal tracts, *florilegia*, and even grammatical treatises – Gottschalk offers us a striking example of how a member of the educated elite established and reestablished his individual identity in the ninth century. Yet I hope that it will also offer approaches and methods useful to historians studying figures who failed to leave any texts behind. To that end I have chosen to explore an episode from Gottschalk’s life for this essay for which none of his own writings survive – namely the striking case of his suit against Hrabanus Maurus at the Synod of Mainz in 829, and his assertion that his rights as a Saxon noble had been violated. My examination will focus on interpreting what Gottschalk’s case meant to those involved, especially regarding his Saxon identity. This incident appears to be the only one from Gottschalk’s life in which his Saxon origin played any role; his own numerous surviving poetic, theological and grammatical writings contain no mention of his ethnicity.<sup>9</sup> In fact, he was later described by the St-Bertin annalist as “Gottschalk, a certain Gaul, monk and priest from the Monastery of Orbais in the diocese of Soissons” (*Godescalcus gallus quidam, monasterii Orbacensis paroeciae Suessionicae monachus et presbyter*), rather than a person of Saxon origin.<sup>10</sup> That his ethnic identity seems to have vanished in his later life underscores the circumstantial nature of self-representation, but also calls upon us to investigate why this identification was so crucial to his success in recovering his freedom in 829.

<sup>6</sup> On the tradition of research on early medieval identity, see Walter Pohl, *Tradition, Ethnogenese und literarische Gestaltung: eine Zwischenbilanz*, in: *Ethnogenese und Überlieferung. Angewandte Methoden der Frühmittelalterforschung*, ed. Karl Brunner/Brigitte Merta (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 31, Wien 1994) 9–26. For recent works, see: Walter Pohl, *Aux origines d’une Europe ethnique: Identités en transformation entre antiquité et moyen âge*, in: *Annales HSS* 1 (2005) 183–208; id., *Identität und Widerspruch. Gedanken zu einer Sinngeschichte des frühen Mittelalters*, in: *Auf der Suche nach den Ursprüngen. Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters*, ed. id. (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 9, Wien 2004) 23–36; Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (New York 2002); Walter Pohl, *Ethnicity, theory and tradition: a response*, in: *On Barbarian Identity – Critical Approaches to Ethnogenesis Theory*, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout 2002) 221–240; id., *Die Völkerwanderung. Eroberung und Integration* (Berlin 2002). On early medieval Christianity, see Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State. Royal Religious Authority in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge 2009); ead., *Charlemagne’s church*, in: *Charlemagne. Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester 2005) 103–135; ead., *Religion*, in *The Early Middle Ages: Europe 400–1000*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Oxford 2001) 131–166.

<sup>7</sup> On research on the early medieval individual, see the introduction of this volume and Barbara Rosenwein, *Y avait-il un “moi” au haut Moyen Âge?*, in: *Revue historique* 307 (2005) 31–52. In addition to the other essays in this volume, recent studies include: Scott DeGregorio, *Texts, topoi and the self: a reading of Alfredian spirituality*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 13 (2005) 79–96; Frank Riess, *From Aachen to Al-Andalus: the journey of Deacon Bodo (823–76)*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 13 (2005) 131–157; Paul Kershaw, *Illness, Power, and Prayer in Asser’s Life of King Alfred*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001) 201–224.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Gillis, *Gottschalk of Orbais: A Study of Meaning, Power and Spirituality in a Ninth-Century Life* (Dissertation, University of Virginia 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Gottschalk, *Œuvres*, ed. Lambot; id., *Lettre inédite de Godescalc d’Orbais* (ed. Cyril Lambot, *Revue Bénédictine* 68 [1958]) 41–51; id., *Carmina* (ed. Norbert Fickermann, *MGH Poetae latini aevi Carolini* 6, Weimar 1951) 86–106; id., *Carmina* (ed. Karl Strecker, *MGH Poetae latini aevi Carolini* 4, Berlin 1914) 934–936; id., *Carmina* (ed. Ludwig Traube, *MGH Poetae latini aevi Carolini* 3, Berlin 1886) 723–738.

<sup>10</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 849 (ed. Georg Waitz, *MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed.* [5], Hannover 1883) 36.

## GOTTSCHALK OF ORBAIS AND THE SYNOD OF MAINZ, 829

Sometime before Charlemagne's death in 814, Gottschalk was given as a child oblate to Fulda along with a donation of land as a *pro memoria* gift for his deceased father, the Saxon count Berno.<sup>11</sup> During his *pueritia* or before he was of the age of understanding, Gottschalk was forced by Hrabanus Maurus to take the monastic vow and tonsured against his will.<sup>12</sup> He remained at Fulda until 829 except for a few years in the 820s when he was at the monastery of Reichenau, where he studied under Wetti and met one of his life-long friends, Walafrid Strabo.<sup>13</sup> Gottschalk appears on memorial lists from Fulda in 822 and 825/826 and from Reichenau in 827/828.<sup>14</sup> While at Fulda he probably sought the favor of Hrabanus, who later accused him of being ungrateful (*ingratus*) for the nurturing he received there "from the crib."<sup>15</sup> As Mayke de Jong has suggested, Gottschalk may have been Hrabanus' favorite pupil until he wished to leave Fulda.<sup>16</sup> Hrabanus complained in 829 that he wanted to achieve rank "beyond his station," which probably meant that he desired to pursue a clerical career that would have taken him beyond the bounds of the monastery.<sup>17</sup> Stymied by his abbot, Gottschalk found an ally in Hatto, a fellow Fulda monk, who years before had been sent to Tours with Hrabanus by abbot Ratgar to study with Alcuin and later became abbot of Fulda (842–856).<sup>18</sup> Hatto wrote letters to Otgar, Archbishop of Mainz, explaining the situation and asking that a synod hear Gottschalk's case, which occurred in 829.<sup>19</sup>

The sources for the Synod of Mainz are limited to excerpts of letters from Hatto and Hrabanus, as well as Hrabanus' *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, which he wrote as a riposte to the synod's decision to award Gottschalk his freedom.<sup>20</sup> Gottschalk sought his *libertas* and the return of his *haereditas* at the synod.<sup>21</sup> According to Hrabanus' *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, Gottschalk found important allies at the synod among Saxon bishops (*primates*), who supported his legal rights as a Saxon nobleman and probably helped convince the synod that he should be restored his freedom.<sup>22</sup> The synod was one of four organized by Louis the Pious and his ministers for the reform of the church and especially the reform of morals (*mores*), the way of life (*conversatio*)

<sup>11</sup> Freise, *Studien* 1024–1026; *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda im früheren Mittelalter* 1, ed. Karl Schmid (Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 8, München 1978) 245f. The gift is recorded in the Saxon cartulary of Fulda; see: *Traditiones et Antiquitates Fuldenses* (ed. Friedrich Dronke, Fulda 1844) 97. De Jong, *Samuel's Image* 77–78, 82 and 85, suggests that Gottschalk's mother gave him to Fulda.

<sup>12</sup> *Concilium Moguntinense*, ed. Werminghoff 603. On the history of Fulda in this period, see *Fulda-Werk. Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Schmid (Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 8, München 1978); Ulrich Hussong, *Studien zur Geschichte der Reichsabtei Fulda bis zur Jahrtausendwende*. Erster Teil, in: *Archiv für Diplomatik* 31 (1985) 1–225; id., *Studien zur Geschichte der Reichsabtei Fulda bis zur Jahrtausendwende*. Zweiter Teil, in: *Archiv für Diplomatik* 32 (1986) 129–304; Eigil, *Vita Sturmii* (ed. Pius Engelbert, Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Hessen und Waldeck 29, Marburg 1968); and, more recently, Janneke Raaijmakers, *Sacred Time, Sacred Space. History and Identity at the Monastery of Fulda (744–856)* (Dissertation, University of Utrecht 2003). On Carolingian monasticism, see Mayke de Jong, *Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer*, in: *The New Cambridge Medieval History 2: c. 700–c. 900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1995) 622–653; ead., *Penitential State*; Friedrich Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich* (Darmstadt 1988); and the articles of Josef Semmler, including especially id., *Karl der Große und das fränkische Mönchtum*, in: *Karl der Große. Lebenswerk und Nachleben 2: Das geistige Leben*, ed. Bernhard Bischoff/Wolfgang Braunsfels (Düsseldorf 1965) 255–289. Hrabanus' bibliography is massive, but good places to begin are Stephanie Haarländer, *Hrabanus Maurus zum Kennenlernen. Ein Lesebuch mit einer Einführung in sein Leben und Werk* (Mainz 2006), and the articles in *Hrabanus Maurus: Lehrer, Abt und Bischof*, ed. Raymund Kottje/Harald Zimmermann (Mainz 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Gottschalk, *Œuvres* ed. Lambot 170. See also Weber, *Gedichte* 246–254; De Jong, *Samuel's Image* 78f.; Schmid, *Klostersgemeinschaft* 1, 245f.; Freise, *Studien* 1026; Vielhaber, *Gottschalk* 14.

<sup>14</sup> Schmid, *Klostersgemeinschaft* 1, 218–220, and 228.

<sup>15</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 419–440, at 419.

<sup>16</sup> De Jong, *Samuel's Image* 89f.

<sup>17</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 419; Freise, *Studien* 1026; Vielhaber, *Gottschalk* 13.

<sup>18</sup> Epperlein, *Herrschaft* 191f.; Freise, *Studien* 1027; De Jong, *Samuel's Image* 79.

<sup>19</sup> *Concilium Moguntinense*, ed. Werminghoff 603–605.

<sup>20</sup> See Notes 1 and 15 for reference to the sources, and de Jong, *Samuel's Image* 80, who discusses the mss. for the *Liber*.

<sup>21</sup> Freise, *Studien* 1021; De Jong, *Samuel's Image* 79. Regarding the *haereditas*, their arguments are based on a letter from Hatto and one from Hrabanus; see respectively, *Concilium Moguntinense*, ed. Werminghoff 605, and *Epistolarum Fuldensium fragmenta* (ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH EE 5, Berlin 1928) 517–533, at 519–520.

<sup>22</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 431f. Freise, *Studien* 1022, suggests that the *primates* were Gottschalk's relatives rather than bishops.

and actions (*actiones*) of the clergy.<sup>23</sup> A church council concerned with clerical abuses was the suitable place for a hearing about Gottschalk's forced tonsuring. The excerpts from Hatto's and Hrabanus' letters provide the following picture of the assembly:

“In the year of the Lord 829, in the sixteenth year of Louis' rule, in the month of June a synod was held at Mainz in the chapter of the canons in the basilica of the martyr Alban ... [There] Gottschalk, son of the Saxon count Berno, sued his abbot, Hrabanus, asserting that he had been unwillingly tonsured and violently enslaved to the monastic life by him. Thus, after the matter had been debated in the meeting of the bishops according to divine and human law with diligent effort, he, who had made the accusation, was found to be absolved [of his monastic oath] by canonical authority. And by their judgement he was restored to his paternal freedom. If it should please the abbot, [Gottschalk's] and his relatives' oath should be an end to their controversy; for if the abbot should be willing to accept all of the injury done to [Gottschalk] that he caused, he should make compensation according to the law. If, however, [Gottschalk] should not wish to perform the oath nor seek compensation for his injuries, let him then simply enjoy his legitimate freedom.”<sup>24</sup>

It seems clear that Gottschalk did enjoy his *libertas* after the synod as the account indicates, although whether the dispute was ever settled by Hrabanus paying compensation and Gottschalk making an oath is unclear.<sup>25</sup> Some scholars have tended to connect the compensation with the issue of Gottschalk's *haereditas*, although there is no textual basis for doing so.<sup>26</sup> Hatto asked Archbishop Otgar in another letter after the synod to help Gottschalk recover his inheritance, although Saxon Law allowed for the disinheritance of a son as long as the land went to the church or the crown.<sup>27</sup> Both applied in Gottschalk's case, since Fulda was a royal abbey. Yet a letter Gottschalk wrote to Ebo, the archbishop of Reims in 831, indicates that he was in possession of one parent's property after the synod, which suggests that he regained his inheritance at the Assembly of Worms, where later in 829 the emperor himself could have settled the issue.<sup>28</sup>

Based on the account above and Hrabanus' *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, scholars have speculated about what arguments Gottschalk made to the bishops to recover his freedom. Freise and Weitzel, following Hrabanus' *Liber*, have argued that Gottschalk made a two-fold argument at Mainz: first, against child oblation in principle – that free parents could not force their children to become monks – second, that he appealed to the personality of the law by claiming that the witnesses at his oblation had not been Saxons.<sup>29</sup> The passage from the *Liber* dealing with this question states:

“For when they hear that the regular oblation for young boys, ought to be confirmed by appropriate witnesses ... they say that over a Saxon no one of the Franks or Romans, or from any other gens, can be regarded among them as noble by birth and upright by conversion unless he be a Saxon witness. For, they say, the law of their gens does not allow that a man summoned from another gens serve as a witness – this is an infringement of their liberty.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Constitutio de synodis anno 829 in regno Francorum habendis* (ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH LL Capitularia regum Francorum 2, Hannover 1890) 2–3. On the synods of 829, see Mayke de Jong, *Ecclesia and the early medieval polity*, in: *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Stuart Airlie/Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006) 113–132, at 129–131. On Louis the Pious and his reign, see Egon Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme* (Darmstadt 1996), and the collection of articles in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, ed. Peter Godman/Roger Collins (Oxford 1990).

<sup>24</sup> *Concilium Moguntinense*, ed. Werminghoff 604: *Anno Domini 829., imperii Ludovici 16., mense Iunio synodus Moguntii in claustris basilicae Albani martyris celebratur ... Interpellavit Rabanum abbatem Gottescalcus, filius Berni comitis Saxonis, asserens se et invitum fuisse attonsum et violenter ab eo monasticae vitae mancipatum. Habita ratione cum in conventu sacerdotum secundum divina humanaque iura diligenti studio causa discuteretur, inventus est is, qui interpellabat, auctoritate canonica esse solvendus. Ac per hoc eorum iudicio paternae restitutus est libertati, ea tamen ratione ut, si abbati ita placeret, controversiae eorum finis inter eos istius ac propinquorum suorum esset iuramentum; quod quidem si abbas suscipere vellet, omnem ei iniuriam, quam perpeusus est, secundum legem componeret; si autem ille iuramentum nollet exigere, nec iste compositionem suae quaereret iniuriae, sed tantum legitima frueretur libertate.”*

<sup>25</sup> Godescalcus, *Carmina* (ed. Ludwig Traube, MGH Poetae latini aevi Carolini 3, Berlin 1886) 707–722, at 708–709; de Jong, *Samuel's Image* 82–83; Freise, *Studien* 1022 and 1029; and Vielhaber, *Gottschalk* 15–16, and 86.

<sup>26</sup> Vielhaber, *Gottschalk* 5; Godescalcus, *Carmina*, ed. Traube 708–709. This position was criticized by Epperlein, *Volk* 187f.

<sup>27</sup> *Concilium Moguntinense*, ed. Werminghoff 605; and *Lex Saxonum* (ed. Claudius von Schwerin, MGH *Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui* 4, Hannover 1918) 7–33, at 32.

<sup>28</sup> Gottschalk, *Lettre*, ed. Lambot 44, lines 70–72.

<sup>29</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 431–432. See also Weitzel, *Oblatio* 9; Freise, *Studien* 1022 and 1027. De Jong, *Samuel's Image* 79–81, argues that Hrabanus probably exaggerated this issue.

<sup>30</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 431: *Cum enim audierint regularem oblationem in pueris minoris aetatis, testibus idoneis confirmari debere ... dicunt quod super Saxonem nullus de Francorum aut Romanorum, aut ex alia qualibet gente, licet*

The identities of the witnesses must have been known from Gottschalk's *petitio*, which Freise speculates Hrabanus would have brought with him to Fulda to prove the nobility and truthfulness of the witnesses.<sup>31</sup> The document, which is lost today, no doubt revealed that the witnesses had been Franks. De Jong, however, suggests a different, two-fold approach: first, that he argued that his oblation had been irregular – since Saxon Law required his witnesses to be Saxons – and, second, that he argued that his forced profession and tonsure had been illegal.<sup>32</sup> Of the two she proposes that the latter held the most weight with the bishops, who would have been aware of legislation forbidding forced tonsuring.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to legal arguments, however, Hrabanus' text makes it clear that Saxon identity was a key element in the synod's deliberations, raising questions about its meaning to those involved in the hearing. According to the record of the council, six bishops at the council held Saxon sees: Badurad of Paderborn, Wolfgar of Würzburg, Harud of Verden, Williric of Bremen, Gerfrid of Münster and Geboin of Osnabrück; another bishop, Bernold of Strasbourg, was also known to be a Saxon.<sup>34</sup> Badurad of Paderborn in particular was a powerful figure, who served Louis the Pious frequently as a *missus* and was related to the royal family.<sup>35</sup> What is more, Gottschalk and Badurad may have even belonged to the same Saxon kin group, the Immedinger, although the existence and significance of such groups is disputed.<sup>36</sup> These figures, according to Hrabanus, lent Gottschalk the support he needed to win his freedom, and exploring the meaning of Saxon noble identity for them and for Gottschalk will help us understand both why he identified himself this way and why they in turn helped him.

### SAXON NOBLES AS CAROLINGIAN ELITES

When Gottschalk argued that he was a Saxon nobleman – the son of count Berno – who had been violently enslaved (*mancipatus*) as a monk, he drew from a deep well of historical memory and cultural imagery that informed the Saxon bishops about who they were as Carolingian elites. This common source of Saxon identity formed the key link between Gottschalk and the influential prelates, and explains their concern with his ethnicity, his nobility, the fact that his oblation witnesses had not been Saxons, and the issue of his *compensatio*. Yet to examine these issues will require us to consider the development of Saxon ethnicity and noble identity in the late eighth and early ninth century.

What did the transformation of Saxon elites into Carolingian nobles involve and, correspondingly, how did a Christian culture develop in Saxony? Other scholars have emphasized the importance of various aspects of this transformation: the missionaries' role in teaching the Saxons how to live as Christians;<sup>37</sup> the econom-

---

*inter suos nobilis natu atque honestus conversatione habeatur, nisi Saxo testis esse possit. Hoc enim, aiunt, legem gentis suae pati non posse, ut alterius gentis homo in testimonium citetur ad infringendam legem libertatis suae.*

<sup>31</sup> Freise, Studien 1027.

<sup>32</sup> De Jong, Samuel's Image 79–81.

<sup>33</sup> De Jong, Samuel's Image, and for further discussion on the legal arguments and the context of forced tonsuring at Fulda, see: Gillis, Gottschalk.

<sup>34</sup> Concilium Moguntinense, ed. Werminghoff 604; Philippe Depreux, Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781–840) (Sigmaringen 1997) 140f.

<sup>35</sup> Thegan, Gesta Hludowici imperatoris (ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed. 64, Hannover 1995) 248. See also Hedwig Röckelein, Reliquientranslationen nach Sachsen im 9. Jahrhundert: über Kommunikation, Mobilität und Öffentlichkeit im Frühmittelalter (Beihefte der Francia 48, Stuttgart 2002) 52–54; Christopher Carroll, The bishoprics of Saxony in the first century after Christianization, in: Early Medieval Europe 8 (1999) 219–245, at 233 and 236; Franz Tenckhoff, Die Paderborner Bischöfe von Hathumar bis Rethar (806–1009) (Paderborn 1900) 6–19; id., Die Beziehungen des Bischofs Badurad von Paderborn zu Kaiser Ludwig und seinen Söhnen, in: Westfälische Zeitschrift 56 (1898) 89–97.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Wenskus, Sächsischer Stammesadel und fränkischer Reichsadel (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, philolog.-hist. Kl. 3. Folge, 93, Göttingen 1976) 129–130. On kin groups, see Gerd Althoff, Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Medieval Europe, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge 2004) 23–64; Rudolf Schieffer, Gebhardt. Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte 2: Die Zeit des karolingischen Großreichs (714–887) (Stuttgart 102005) 89–98; Stuart Airlie, Aristocracy, in: The New Cambridge Medieval History 2: c. 700–c. 900, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1995) 431–450; Hans-Werner Goetz, Social and Military Institutions, in: The New Cambridge Medieval History 2: c.700–c.900, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1995) 451–480.

<sup>37</sup> Ian N. Wood, An absence of saints? The evidence for the Christianisation of Saxony, in: Am Vorabend der Kaiserkrönung, ed. Peter Godman/Jorg Jarnut/Peter Johanek (Paderborn 2002) 335–352; id., The Missionary Life. Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400–1050 (London 2001); Wolfert van Egmond, Converting monks: Missionary activity in early medieval Frisia and Saxony, in: Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals, ed. Guyda Armstrong/Ian Wood (Turnhout 2000) 37–45; Lutz E. von Padberg,

ic and spiritual relationships between Saxon nobles and monasteries, with the latter serving as educational centers;<sup>38</sup> the translation of relics from Francia and Rome to Saxony that not only “sacralized” the landscape with miracles, but also gave occasion for Saxon authors to educate the nobility with hagiographical texts;<sup>39</sup> the intermarriage of Saxon nobles with their Frankish counterparts;<sup>40</sup> the role of former Saxon hostages in spreading Christian ideas among their countrymen after a long stay among Frankish hosts;<sup>41</sup> and the ways authors fashioned the memory of the forced conversion of Saxony, which included minimizing the Frankish brutality while emphasizing the role of pious missionaries, to transform the Saxon conversion into a “success story” for the Saxon nobility with Charlemagne as their own sword-wielding apostle.<sup>42</sup> Each of these arguments has contributed to a more nuanced view of the Saxon nobles’ transformation into Christians in the ninth century. But one might still ask how their view of themselves as Carolingian elites developed in the changing cultural landscape of this era down to the episode of Gottschalk’s trial in 829.

Matthias Becher has recently argued that during the Saxon wars (772–804) and in the early ninth century the Saxon nobles developed as a group from the families of petty kings who previously ruled different groups of ‘Saxons’; according to Becher, the Saxons had a very fluid political culture, as they changed and reformed their political associations frequently.<sup>43</sup> The *Annales regni Francorum* record a few key moments connecting Saxon elites to the Carolingian regime. The annalist recorded that a multitude of Saxons swore in 777 by their good birth (*ingenuitas*) and their land (*alodes*) that they would remain faithful to Charlemagne, his sons and the Franks, and would accept Christianity.<sup>44</sup> In 782, Charlemagne established Saxon counts from the “most noble” of them over their native land and thereafter some of the Saxon nobles and their followers fought alongside Frankish troops against other Saxons and attended royal assemblies during the 780s.<sup>45</sup> Becher’s analysis of Saxon political culture helps explain the frequent rebellions and conflicts in Saxony in the period – especially in the 790s, when much of Saxony erupted in violence after several years of peace and cooperation with the Carolingian regime.

While it is disputed to what degree the nobles betrayed their oaths and fought against the Franks in the 790s, there is evidence that some of them remained loyal to Charlemagne and were recognized as important Frankish allies against other Saxons.<sup>46</sup> Two late charters from Charlemagne’s reign demonstrate this point. Amalung, the father of the Saxon count Bennit, and Hiddi, father of Asig or Adalric, left Saxony out of loyalty

---

Zum Sachsenbild in hagiographischen Quellen, in: Studien zur Sachsenforschung 12, ed. Hans-Jürgen Häbeler/Jörg Jarnut/Matthias Wemhoff (Oldenburg 1999) 173–191; Karl Hauck, Die fränkische-deutsche Monarchie und der Weserraum, in: Die Eingliederung der Sachsen in das Frankenreich, ed. Walther Lammers (Darmstadt 1970) 416–450.

<sup>38</sup> David Appleby, Spiritual progress in Carolingian Saxony: A case from ninth-century Corvey, in: Catholic Historical Review 82 (1996) 599–613; Heinz Löwe, Lateinisch-christliche Kultur im karolingischen Sachsen, in: Religiosität und Bildung im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Tilman Struve (Weimar 1994) 46–86; Hans Patze, Mission und Kirchenorganisation in karolingischer Zeit, in: Geschichte Niedersachsens 1, ed. id. (Hildesheim 1985) 653–712.

<sup>39</sup> Röckelein, Reliquienttranslationen; Karl Heinrich Krüger, Studien zur Corveyer Gründungsüberlieferung (Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission Westfalens 10. Abhandlungen zur Corveyer Geschichtsschreibung 9, Münster 2001) 92–95.

<sup>40</sup> Wenskus, Stammesadel.

<sup>41</sup> Matthias Springer, Die Sachsen (Stuttgart 2004) 221–213; Adam Kosto, Hostages in the Carolingian World (714–840), in: Early Medieval Europe 11 (2002) 123–147, at 142–145.

<sup>42</sup> Von Padberg, Sachsenbild 173–191; Joachim Ehlers, Die Sachsenmission als heilsgeschichtliches Ereignis, in: Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Kaspar Elm zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. Franz Felten/Nikolas Jaspert (Berliner historische Studien 31, Berlin 1999) 37–53; Helmut Beumann, Unterwerfung und Christianisierung der Sachsen durch Karl den Großen, in: Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione ecclesiastica delle campagne nell’alto medioevo: espansione e resistenze, 10–16 aprile 1980 (Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo 28, Spoleto 1982) 129–168.

<sup>43</sup> Matthias Becher, *Non enim habent regem idem Antiqui Saxones...* Verfassung und Ethnogenese in Sachsen während des 8. Jahrhunderts, in: Studien zur Sachsenforschung 12, ed. Hans-Jürgen Häbeler/Jörg Jarnut/Matthias Wemhoff (Oldenburg 1999) 1–31. For a recent treatment of the Saxon Wars, see Springer, Sachsen 178–210. On Saxon social and political institutions in general, see Ian N. Wood, Beyond Satraps and Ostriches: Political and social structures of the Saxons in the early Carolingian period, in: The Continental Saxons from the Migration Period to the Tenth Century, ed. David Green/Frank Siegmund (Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology 6, Rochester/New York 2003) 271–299.

<sup>44</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* (ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed. [6], Hannover 1895) 48.

<sup>45</sup> *Annales Laureshamenses* (ed. Georg Pertz, MGH SS 1, Hannover 1826) 22–39, at 32. Saxons attended assemblies and fought in campaigns in 785, 787, 788, 789 and 791; see *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze 68–70, 78, 80, 84, 86 and 88.

<sup>46</sup> Eric Goldberg, Popular revolt, dynastic politics, and aristocratic factionalism in the early Middle Ages: the Saxon *Stellinga* reconsidered, in: *Speculum* 70 (1995) 476–501, at 472–478; Carroll, *Bishoprics* 221–222.

to Charlemagne during the rebellions and received other lands as compensation from the emperor.<sup>47</sup> In 811 and 813, Charlemagne recalled their loyalty and confirmed their descendants' rights to the properties he had awarded them.

Yet not all cases may have been as clear as those of Amalung and Hiddi. In the confusion of the fighting, some Saxons must have believed that they had remained loyal to the king, but because of the circumstances of the conflict they were mistaken for rebels, and lost their property due to their oaths in 777. An interesting example of such a case is that of Richolf and Richart, whose descendents sought Louis the Pious' help in recovering their lost property in a letter from around 815. The anonymous Saxons carefully framed their story to emphasize the hardships that befell their family as loyal Christians in Charlemagne's service.<sup>48</sup> First, they noted how their uncle, Richolf, was killed with the Saxon counts returning from an embassy with the Danish king in 798.<sup>49</sup> Then they wrote how their father, Richart, lost his wife and property to Saxon rebels while he was away from home at court. Richart rescued his wife by stealth (*furtim*) and fled with her to her homeland in Marstheim. Then, when numerous Saxons were expelled by Charlemagne to end the rebellions, they were mistakenly deported with the others and had no way to recover their property. Richart died not long after, and their mother had no way to regain their *haereditas*.<sup>50</sup>

Saxons such as Richart, Richolf, Amalung and Hiddi must have been included among the *fideles Saxones* mentioned in the Capitulare Saxonicum of 797, when Saxon and Frankish elites together participated in the creation of legislation dealing with the Saxon wars and the transformation of Saxony into a part of the Carolingian empire.<sup>51</sup> It is possible that Gottschalk's father, count Berno, was counted among them as well. Saxons who descended from such figures probably viewed themselves as Christians and victors in the Saxon wars on the side of Frankish regime, rather than as conquered and forcibly converted people.

As Ian Wood has recently pointed out, the political narrative of this period is difficult to establish.<sup>52</sup> Yet it seems likely that a new Saxon identity began to take shape among nobles as a result of their experiences in military campaigns and assemblies, where Saxon legislation outlining the position of the *nobiles* was passed.<sup>53</sup> This process continued after the Saxon Wars, as the annals record Saxon nobles' participation in campaigns and assemblies throughout the first three decades of the ninth century.<sup>54</sup> Louis the Pious made a concerted effort to encourage the Saxons to be loyal to him. It is quite likely that pleas, such as that of the descendants of Richart discussed above, induced Louis to restore lost Saxon property *en masse*. In 816 he restored the *hereditas* of Saxons whose fathers legally lost it during the wars for *perfidia*, an act which the Astronomer claimed proved effective since the Saxons (along with the Frisians) remained most devoted to him throughout his reign.<sup>55</sup> This loyalty may have also been helped by the fact that in 819 Louis married Judith, whose mother Heilwig was a noble Saxon.<sup>56</sup> When the royal annals were revised in the early ninth century, the scene of the Saxon oath of 777 was notably changed. Where the original annalist had described the Saxons as a multitude pledging their *ingenuitas* and *alodes*, the redactor wrote that the "whole senate and people" (*totus senatus ac populus*) of the Saxon *gens* swore on their freedom and fatherland (*libertas et patria*) to be loyal.<sup>57</sup> While the change may

<sup>47</sup> DD.Kar.d.Gr. 213 (811) and 218 (813) (ed. Engelbert Mühlbacher, MGH DD Die Urkunden der Karolinger 1. Die Urkunden Pip-pins, Karlmanns und Karls des Großen, Hannover 1906) 284f. and 290f.

<sup>48</sup> Quidam Saxo Ludowicum I imperatorem orat (ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH EE 5, Berlin 1899) 300–301.

<sup>49</sup> The embassy is recorded in *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze 102–105.

<sup>50</sup> Quidam Saxo, ed. Dümmler 300–301.

<sup>51</sup> For reference to the Capitulare, see Note 53 below.

<sup>52</sup> Wood, *Absence* 335–341.

<sup>53</sup> Such legislation includes two capitularies: *Capitulatio de partibus Saxonibus* and *Capitulare Saxonicum*. 797 Oct. 28 (ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH LL *Capitularia regum Francorum* 1, Hannover 1883) 68–72; *Lex Saxonum*, ed. von Schwerin 7–33, which was probably compiled around 802–803. On the *lex*, see Heiner Lück, *Lex Saxonum*, in: RGA, 2. Aufl. (Berlin 2001) 332–336.

<sup>54</sup> Saxons fought for the regime and attended its assemblies in 802, 808, 809, 810, 813, 815, 816, 819, 820, 822, 823 and 828; see *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze 117, 125, 128f., 131f., 138, 141, 143–144, 149, 160, and 175.

<sup>55</sup> Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris* (ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed. 64, Hannover 1995) 356–357.

<sup>56</sup> Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. Tremp 214f. On Judith, see Elizabeth Ward, *Caesar's wife. The career of the Empress Judith, 819–829*, in: *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, ed. Peter Godman/Roger Collins (Oxford 1990) 205–227.

<sup>57</sup> *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze 49.

reflect the revisor's classicizing tendency, his greater recognition of the Saxon elites and their relationship to the Carolingian regime gives evidence of the new political currents in the early ninth century. The redactor even described the famous Widukind as "*unus ex primoribus*" of the Westfalians, while the original annalist simply called him a rebel.<sup>58</sup> The switch from *ingenuitas* to *libertas* could also indicate a changing emphasis on the nobles' status as imperial elites. For Louis probably restored the Saxon nobles' *libertas* in 816 along with their property, since their fathers who betrayed their oaths would have lost both. Louis' measures to win the Saxons' loyalty may have helped them interpret the wars as a thing of the past and enabled them to get on with the business of being Carolingian elites under the favor of their emperor.

Another of Louis' measures of 816 was later directly related to Gottschalk's hearing. The legislation that led Badurad and the Saxon bishops to claim that Gottschalk's oblation had been invalid is probably located in a capitulary produced by the emperor in 816.<sup>59</sup> The issues dealt with in this document relate to the problems of proving that witnesses in a trial are false, the use of trial by combat or the ordeal of the cross, the legal status of Saxons and Frisians in comparison to Franks, and the problem of being sued or called before the court outside of one's *patria*. The capitulary speaks to the problem of making an oath about one's legal status and inheritance as follows:

"If someone in another land, where he is accustomed to live either on account of a benefice or for some other reason, is called to court for whatever reason, let him make justice there according to his own law, and let him swear a legitimate oath with such fellow oath swearers of the sort he might have with him in that region or province. The exception to this is when someone calls him regarding his own status, that is regarding the freedom or inheritance which his dying father left him: regarding these two issues let him take the oath in his own homeland, that is in the legitimate place of the oath ..."<sup>60</sup>

Here then is a passage of Carolingian – not specifically Saxon – legislation establishing that in cases about a person's free status or property in the empire they should take their oath in their *patria* presumably so that they could do so with people of their same ethnic identity. The Saxon bishops were most likely referring to this or other such legislation, when they raised the issue of the absence of Saxon witnesses at his oblation. For when they made their judgement, the bishops restored to Gottschalk his "paternal freedom" (*libertas paterna*), which corresponds with the clause in the passage above referring to the freedom, which the person's dying father (*pater*) left him. While the Badurad and the other Saxon bishops rallied to Gottschalk's cause no doubt because they were Saxons, their method of defending his rights was with legislation applicable to all people living within the empire. In other words, for the bishops to protect Gottschalk's rights as a Saxon nobleman was to defend him as a Carolingian elite.

Another issue of the hearing involving secular law was the bishops' attempt to settle the dispute with the paying of compensation and an oath. The compensation was quite likely for the manner – *violenter* – of Gottschalk's tonsuring, rather than for simply his loss of freedom in principle. Saxon law, like other early medieval law codes, was very specific regarding physical injuries, including those that might relate to a violent tonsuring. Simply to strike a nobleman required thirty *solidi* compensation.<sup>61</sup> But to cause a nobleman to bleed or to pull his hair each required one-hundred and twenty, and if the injury caused bone to appear the fine was one-hundred and eighty *solidi*.<sup>62</sup> Should Gottschalk have resisted, his tonsuring could have been bloody and even resulted in more serious injury. In any case, the tonsuring would have involved the pulling of his hair, and as a Saxon nobleman, Gottschalk and his relatives could have demanded that Hrabanus pay the fine for the sake of honor. Yet while Saxon law would have dictated the amount to be paid, the Lex Salica allowed for Hrabanus, who was a Frank, to demand an oath from Gottschalk and his relatives to prove that *compensatio*

<sup>58</sup> *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze 49.

<sup>59</sup> *Capitula legi addita* (816) (ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH LL Capitularia regum Francorum 1, Hannover 1883) 267–269.

<sup>60</sup> *Capitula legi addita*, ed. Boretius 268: *Si quis in aliena patria, ubi vel propter beneficium vel propter aliam quamlibet occasionem conversari solet, de qualibet causa fuerit interpellatus, ibi secundum suam legem iustitiam faciat, et cum talibus quales in ea regione vel provincia secum habere potuerit coniuratoribus legitimum sacramentum iuret. Excepto si quis eum de statu suo, id est de libertate sua vel de hereditate quam ei pater suus moriens dereliquit, appellaverit: de his duobus liceat illi sacramentum in patria, id est in legitimo sacramenti loco, iurandum offerre ...*

<sup>61</sup> *Lex Saxonum*, ed. von Schwerin 17: *I. De ictu nobilis XXX solidos, vel si negat tertia manu iuret.*

<sup>62</sup> *Lex Saxonum*, ed. von Schwerin 18: *III. Si sanguinat CXX solidos vel eum XI iuret; IV. Si os paruerit, CLXXX solidos vel cum XI iuret; and VII. Si per capillos alium comprehenderit, CXX solidos conponat vel undecima manu iuret.*



should be paid.<sup>63</sup> Such an arrangement may also have been a way for the bishops to placate the furious abbot and save him the embarrassment of paying compensation.<sup>64</sup> Should he not demand the oath or Gottschalk not wish to give it, then the matter would be over.

#### MEMORY OF THE SAXON WARS IN THE 820S AND 830S

In his *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, Hrabanus attacked his opponents' legal argument about Gottschalk's non-Saxon witnesses with a historical critique of their *gens* as a conquered and forcibly converted people. The abbot was not, however, the only Carolingian writer of the late 820s and early 830s to interpret the significance of that conflict and the Saxon past. Einhard and the anonymous author of the *Translatio sancti Viti* also did so, although their interpretations were meant to contrast the Saxon past with the present in a much more positive way. For over a decade now, scholars have examined how Carolingian authors used the past to give meaning to the present and to influence their contemporaries, demonstrating the political importance of such strategies.<sup>65</sup> These three authors' portrayals of the wars demonstrate that the memory of the conflict and conversion was a topic loaded with political meaning that could be employed for very different ends decades after the integration of the Saxons into the Carolingian empire had begun in full swing.

In his *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, Hrabanus argued that the bishops' position at Mainz had been illegitimate, disputing their appeal to secular law and claiming that they were opposed to monasticism as a whole. His *Liber* is a defence of child oblation and monasticism, which he interpreted as divinely inspired institutions traceable back to ancient Israel and the early church.<sup>66</sup> He turned chiefly to *lex divina*, or Scripture, and patristic authorities to refute Gottschalk's position and the bishops' decision as anti-monastic.<sup>67</sup> But regarding the Saxon witnesses, he turned to recent history and approached the issue as follows:

“For, they say, the law of their gens does not allow that a man summoned from another gens serve as a witness – this is an infringement of their liberty. As if those who profess servitude to Christ should destroy the liberty and nobility of their birth, since they are freer, who are one with God, than those who are judged to serve different vices and sins. They fashion their argumentation certainly only to make the monastic conversion and regular discipline hateful to men, saying that those who become monks are made into slaves; and those who say that his devotion of servitude is a charge of nature do not understand that they fight against the lord, for no power could be better or greater than to serve God, whom love serves well. ... But let them consider that which is sensible according to God and men: should those who are inferior by virtue and dignity spurn those superior and more eminent than themselves, and reject them as if they were unworthy of all honor, which was the reason they were made subject to them? For who does not know, living in this part of the world, that the Franks were in the faith and religion of Christ before the Saxons, whom they later subjected to their dominion by force of arms – being made their superiors and by right their lords although with paternal disposition – dragging them away from the cult of idols and converting them to the faith of Christ? But now these notions are spurned ungratefully by certain primates of this very gens according to the flesh against the law of heaven and the law of the court: the witnesses are not deemed truthful and are cast aside unworthily, a decision that neither human and divine reason ever dictated nor that ever existed in the law of the three-cornered world ...”<sup>68</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ingeborg Schröbler, *Glossen eines Germanisten zu Gottschalk von Orbais*, in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Literatur und Sprache* 77 (1955) 89–111, at 92–93; Heinrich Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte* 2 (München 1928) 681.

<sup>64</sup> In fact, the wording of the text suggests as much. See Note 24 above.

<sup>65</sup> Examples of the growing literature on this theme include: Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge 2004); *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources and Artifacts*, ed. Richard Corradini/Max Diesenberger/Helmut Reimitz (*Transformation of the Roman World* 8, Leiden 2003); *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen/Matthew Innes (Cambridge 2000); and Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton 1994).

<sup>66</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 419–432 (on oblation) and 433–440 (monasticism).

<sup>67</sup> De Jong, *Samuel's Image* 84; and on Hrabanus and *lex divina* in general, see ead., *Old law and new-found power: Hrabanus Maurus and the Old Testament*, in: *Centres of Learning. Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East*, ed. Jan Willem Drijvers/Alasdair MacDonal (Leiden 1995) 161–176.

<sup>68</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 431f.: *Hoc enim, aiunt, legem gentis suae pati non posse, ut alterius gentis homo in testimonium citetur ad infringendam legem libertatis suae. Quasi illi libertatem ac nobilitatem generis sui perdant qui servitium Christi profitentur, cum magis illi liberi sint qui uni Deo, quam qui diversis vitiis atque peccatis, servire probantur. Hanc profecto non ob aliud argumentationem igitur fingunt, quam ut monasticam conversationem ac regularem disciplinam in odium hominibus vertant, dicentes eos servos fieri qui monachi fiunt; et non intelligunt se contra Dominum pugnare qui eius devotionem servitii*

Hrabanus' first critique was that the Saxon bishops were concerned with the damage to Gottschalk's freedom (*libertas*) and nobility (*nobilitas*) because he had been forced to become a slave (*servus*) as a monk. Arguing that they contrasted their nobility with monastic servitude and framing their legal case as an anti-monastic position, Hrabanus suggested that the Saxons had not really learned how to be good Christians yet, for they rejected one of the most important spiritual institutions of the empire. He made another parallel with the Saxons of decades past when he claimed, earlier in the text, that his opponents were "worthy of death" for spreading such ideas among those under them, which one might argue was reminiscent of the capital punishment imposed on those Saxons who rebelled and abandoned Christianity during the wars.<sup>69</sup> Hrabanus' characterization was that Saxons were essentially the same as they had been during the wars: they were unwilling Christians, who still struggled against their Frankish masters.

Hrabanus' second critique was that the Saxon *gens* was inferior to the Frankish one, since the Franks had been Christian before the Saxons and had become their lords by right of conquest – dragging them away from their pagan idols. In this way, Hrabanus tried to convince his audience not only that as pagans the Saxons had been inferior to the Franks in the past, but also that they remained so because they came to Christianity late and then only by force. According to this vision, the Saxons were a conquered people, under the paternal thumb of their "superior" Frankish masters, and therefore the bishops' desire for Saxon witnesses was illegitimate.<sup>70</sup> Hrabanus made a parallel argument about his own relationship to Gottschalk, claiming that *minores* should not contradict their *maiores*.<sup>71</sup> This provides an insight into the abbot's understanding of the Saxons, both as a whole and in the person of Gottschalk, who for him were spiritual juniors in need of paternal guidance.

Hrabanus' interpretation of the Saxons could have been influenced by the Fulda text, *Vita sancti Sturmi*, written by Abbot Eigil probably 818–820, which Janneke Raaijmakers argues was important as a foundational history of Fulda.<sup>72</sup> The text describes the Saxons as a cruel and most aggressive *gens*, dedicated to pagan rites, depraved and perverse, deviating from the faith of Christ and concerning itself with vain errors.<sup>73</sup> The presence of Saxon monks at Fulda, however, and the donations of Saxon counts to the monastery must have made the interpretation of Saxon identity and the memory of the wars a somewhat sensitive issue. Fulda's Saxon cartulary contains 115 entries from various Saxons and Frisians, including land donations from six different counts in addition to Gottschalk's father.<sup>74</sup> There was a great effort to foster the conversion of the Saxons in Fulda at this time, which meant that the abbot's and his monks' attention was frequently turned towards Saxony.<sup>75</sup> The tensions and difficulties inherent in this mission may have affected life at Fulda, especially when a crisis such as the controversy surrounding Gottschalk's legal status erupted within the cloister's very walls.

---

*dicunt pensum esse naturae, cum nulla sit melior maiorque potestas quam servire Deo, cui bene servit amor ... Haec vero cum se ita habeant, quae ratio est secundum Deum, aut secundum homines, ut qui inferiores sunt virtute et dignitate, superiores sibi et eminentiores spernant, et quasi indignos omni honore respicientes abjiciant, quibus subjici oportebat? Quis enim ignorat sub hac plaga mundi habitans, Francos ante Saxones in Christi fide atque religione fuisse, quos ipsi postmodum suae dominationi subegerunt armis, atque superiores effecti, dominorum ritu, imo magis paterno affectu, ab idolorum cultu abstrahentes, ad fidem Christi converterunt? Sed nunc a quibusdam primatibus de ipsa gente secundum carnem editis ingratis spernantur, ac contra jus coeli contraque jus fori, ne testes esse veritatis valeant, indigne ajiciuntur cum hoc nec ratio humana, neque divina id fieri debere ullo modo dictet, nec talis ordo unquam in orbe triquadro fuerit ...*

<sup>69</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 431. See, for example, *Capitulatio*, ed. Boretius 68–72, where the penalty for conspiring against the regime and abandoning one's faith was execution.

<sup>70</sup> Patzold, *Konflikte 150–153*, notes that Agobard of Lyons employed a similar argument against the Burgundians when they desired to use the so-called *Lex Gundobadi* in 822.

<sup>71</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 425; De Jong, *Samuel's Image* 85.

<sup>72</sup> Eigil, *Vita sancti Sturmi* (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 2, Hannover 1829) 365–377, at 376. Raaijmakers, *Sacred Time* 68–90.

<sup>73</sup> Eigil, *Vita Sturmi*, ed. Pertz 376.

<sup>74</sup> The names of the other counts are: Liutholf, Berenhart, Himmâs, Willehalm, Adalrih, and Erih. See, *Traditiones*, ed. Dronke 95–102.

<sup>75</sup> Hans Hummer, *The identity of Ludouicus piissimus Augustus in the Praefatio in librum antiquum lingua Saxonica conscriptum*, in: *Francia* 31 (2004) 1–14; Dieter Geuenich, *Zur althochdeutschen Literatur aus Fulda*, in: *Von der Klosterbibliothek zur Landesbibliothek. Beiträge zum zweihundertjährigen Bestehen der Hessischen Landesbibliothek Fulda*, ed. Artur Brall (Bibliothek des Buchwesens 6, Stuttgart/Fulda 1978) 99–124; Johannes Rathofer, *Altsächsische Literatur*, in: *Kurzer Grundriß der germanischen Philologie bis 1500 2: Literaturgeschichte*, ed. Ludwig Erich Schmitt (Berlin 1971) 247–261; Ingeborg Schröbler, *Fulda und die althochdeutsche Literatur*, in: *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 1 (1960) 1–26. On the problem in general, see: Von Padberg, *Zum Sachsenbild* 173–191.

Hrabanus also used historical examples from Roman and Persian history to indicate that the inhabitants of these empires were united under a single imperial law – different ethnic laws had not been allowed in other empires and therefore the Saxons in the Carolingian empire should not have their own.<sup>76</sup> Here he was clearly misrepresenting Gottschalk's and the bishop's position, for it was Hrabanus – not his opponents – who drew a distinction between Saxon and other Carolingian elites. His argument apparently failed to convince Louis the Pious at the Assembly of Worms later in 829, where his archchaplain Hilduin also urged the elites of the empire to see themselves as one people, and the decision of Mainz was upheld.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, Hrabanus' interpretation of the memory of the Saxon wars indicates that Gottschalk's trial was occasion for Saxon identity and the memory of the wars to be discussed and disputed. It had been twenty-seven years since the fighting ended, and yet the abbot used the conflict as a device for critiquing his episcopal opponents. Other Carolingian authors from the 820s and 830s, however, interpreted the Saxon wars quite differently than the abbot of Fulda.

Writing his *Vita Karoli* sometime in the late 820s, Einhard portrayed Charlemagne's efforts to conquer and convert the Saxons at length.<sup>78</sup> He wrote that by the conflict's end the Saxons, "having rejected the worship of demons and having abandoned their ancestors' rites, accepted the sacraments of the Christian faith and religion and became in effect joined to the Franks as one people."<sup>79</sup> While he contrasted the *perfidia Saxonum* during the fighting with Charlemagne's *magnanimitas* and *constantia mentis*, Einhard nevertheless emphasized that the Saxons rejected paganism and adopted Christianity, becoming *one* with the Franks, rather than dominated by them as Hrabanus wrote.<sup>80</sup> Einhard also compared the losses of the Saxon *nobilitas* with those of the Frankish elite: "So many men from the nobility of both the Franks and the Saxons performed with the highest honors and were consumed in this war."<sup>81</sup> In doing so, he drew a parallel between the two elites that signified their unity to come after the fighting, offering a positive interpretation of the Saxon nobility for contemporaries, despite the great loss and destruction of the war. For Einhard, the war was history, or the past, while Saxon and Frankish unity were the present, which the court audience was meant to understand as a profound achievement of the regime.

Another text from the period is the anonymous *Historia translationis sancti Viti*, written at Corvey around 834, a monastery founded with Louis the Pious' support and approval.<sup>82</sup> This text was written perhaps by a Saxon author to commemorate the transfer of Saint Vitus' relics to Corvey in 822. The author presented a contrast similar to that of Einhard between the memory of the forced Saxon conversion and the current identity of their nobles. While the Saxons had been compelled by Charlemagne to be a part of the empire and had been defeated when they rebelled, they now submitted with a devout mind.<sup>83</sup> The author also noted that the number of monks at Corvey at the time of the *historia* was constantly growing from "most noble *gens* of the Saxons," and when the relics arrived, other Saxon nobles prayed alongside the monks for the favor of Saint Vitus at the monastery.<sup>84</sup> Like Einhard before him, the author of the *Historia* understood the conquest, rebellion and conversion of the Saxons as a remote thing of the past; to him Saxon nobles, like other Carolingian elites, became monks or prayed alongside them.<sup>85</sup> As in the case of the *Vita Karoli*, the *Historia* presented an interpretation of

<sup>76</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 432.

<sup>77</sup> *Epistolarum Fuldensium fragmenta*, ed. Dümmler 519–520. On Worms, see de Jong, *Samuel's Image* 83; Freise, *Studien* 1023.

<sup>78</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* (ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed. [25], Hannover 1911). On the *Vita Karoli* (including its dating) see, Matthias Tischler, *Einharts Vita Karoli*. Studien zur Entstehung, Überlieferung und Rezeption (MGH Schriften 48, 1 und 2, Hannover 2001); especially id., *Die Entstehungszeit der Vita Karoli*, in: *ibid.* 1, 151–239, and the following forthcoming studies: David Ganz, *Charlemagne's Biographer: A Study of Einhard*; Mayke de Jong, *Penitential*; and Helmut Reimitz, *Historiographie und Identität in den fränkischen Regna der Merowinger- und Karolingerzeit*. For an alternate view on the dating, see McKitterick, *History* 29f.

<sup>79</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, ed. Pertz 10: *abiectione daemonum cultu atque relictis patriis caerimoniis, Christianiae fidei atque religionis sacramenta suscipere et Francis adunati unus cum eis populus efficerentur*.

<sup>80</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, ed. Pertz 10; and see Beumann, *Hagiographie* 137f.

<sup>81</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, ed. Pertz 11: *Plures tamen eo bello tam ex nobilitate Francorum quam Saxonum et functi summis honoribus viri consumpti sunt*.

<sup>82</sup> *Historia translationis sancti Viti* (ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS 2, Hannover 1829) 576–585, at 577f. On this text, see Appleby, *Spiritual* 603–607; Röckelein, *Reliquientranslationen* 100–108.

<sup>83</sup> *Historia translationis sancti Viti*, ed. Pertz 577.

<sup>84</sup> *Historia translationis sancti Viti*, ed. Pertz 578f. and 581f.

<sup>85</sup> Von Padberg, *Sachsenbild* 183–187, describes the changing image of the Saxons as a whole in hagiographical texts from later in the ninth century in similar terms.

unity and equality between the Frankish and Saxon world in the present, whereas Hrabanus' *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, offered one of disunity and inequality with the Saxons as essentially the same as they had been during the wars: bad, reluctant Christians and an inferior, conquered people.

#### THE HELIAND AND SAXON NOBLE IDENTITY

But one might still ask how Saxon nobles viewed themselves as Carolingian elites in the 820s and 830s, especially regarding matters such as *servitium* and *libertas*, which Hrabanus raised in his *Liber de oblatione puerorum*. A text that may provide some answers to this question is the *Heliand*, an Old Saxon translation of the Gospels, written by a famous, unnamed Saxon poet sometime during the same period as the *Vita Karoli*, the *Historia* and Hrabanus' *Liber*.<sup>86</sup> Louis sought to bolster the loyalty of his Saxon nobles through sponsoring or at least supporting the translation of the Bible into Old Saxon, which survives today in the form of the Old Saxon Genesis fragment and the *Heliand*.<sup>87</sup> The principle evidence for dating the translation to Louis' reign is the *praefatio*, which cites that the emperor supported the text's translation so that his subjects speaking the *theudisca lingua* could better understand their faith.<sup>88</sup> While there has been debate about whether the translation was made under Louis the Pious or Louis the German, the description of Louis as "*Ludouicus piissimus augustus*" in the preface is consistent with the former's title during his reign.<sup>89</sup> German nationalist scholarship in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century saw the text as evidence for the "Germanization of Christianity" – a position recently revived by Ronald Murphy – while most current studies have viewed the text as evidence of Carolingian attempts to spread Christianity among the Saxons or to impose it on them.<sup>90</sup> The most recent approach to understanding it, however, is to see it as an "Aktualisierung" of the Gospel, or an interpretation of it meant to speak to a particular audience in a specific context.<sup>91</sup>

The author's name is unknown, but the poem's preface indicates that he was a well-known Saxon poet, although it does not specify whether he was an Anglo-Saxon or a Saxon.<sup>92</sup> The text was written either in or near Saxony. Fulda, Werden and Corvey have been suggested as the place of origin, although there is no way to be sure which is correct.<sup>93</sup> Since so many other Old High German texts originated in Fulda under Hrabanus' leadership, including the translation of Tatian's *Diatesseron*, which formed the basis for the *Heliand* transla-

<sup>86</sup> *Heliand und Genesis* (ed. Hermann Paul/Otto Behaghel, *Altdeutsche Textbibliothek* 4, Tübingen 101996). The English translation is *The Heliand: The Saxon Gospel* (trans. Ronald Murphy, Oxford 1992).

<sup>87</sup> Good introductions to the poem include Wolfgang Haubrichs, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit* 1, 1. Die Anfänge: Versuche volkssprachiger Schriftlichkeit im frühen Mittelalter (ca. 700–1050/60), ed. Joachim Heinzle (Frankfurt am Main 1988) 330–353; John Knight Bostock, *A Handbook on Old High German Literature*, revised edition (Oxford 1976) 169–177.

<sup>88</sup> *Heliand*, ed. Paul/Behaghel 1f.

<sup>89</sup> *Heliand*, ed. Paul/Behaghel 1f., and Hummer, *Identity* 1–14. For an alternative position, see Wolfgang Haubrichs, *Die Praefatio des Heliand: Ein Zeugnis der Religions- und Bildungspolitik Ludwigs des Deutschen*, in: *Niederdeutsches Jahrbuch* 89 (1966) 7–32, supported recently by Dennis Green, *Three aspects of the Old Saxon biblical epic the Heliand*, in: *The Continental Saxons from the Migration Period to the Tenth Century*, ed. Dennis Green/Frank Siegmund (*Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology* 6, Rochester/New York 2003) 247–263, at 250.

<sup>90</sup> John Hines, *The conversion of the Old Saxons*, in: *The Continental Saxons from the Migration Period to the Tenth Century*, ed. Dennis Green/Frank Siegmund (*Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology* 6, Rochester/New York 2003) 299–314, who argues that the text was imposed on the Saxons by their conquerors; Haubrichs, *Anfänge* 330–334; Hermann Dörries, *Der Heliand als Missionsspredigt*, in: id., *Wort und Stunde* 2 (Göttingen 1969) 259–276. For examples of older scholarship that deals with "Germanization," see Walter Baetke, *Die Aufnahme des Christentums durch die Germanen. Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Germanisierung des Christentums*, in: *Vom Geist und Erbe Thules* (Göttingen 1944) 82–117; Hermann Wicke, *Der Dichter des Heliand als germanischer Verkündiger des Wortes Gottes*, in: *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte* 43 (1938) 32–48; Ludwig Wolff, *Germanisches Frühchristentum im Heliand*, in: *Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde* 49 (1935) 37–54. The concept of the "Germanization" of Christianity comes from August Friedrich Christian Vilmar, *Deutsche Altertümer im Heliand als Einkleidung der evangelischen Geschichte* (Marburg 1845). Ronald Murphy, *The Saxon Savior: The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth-Century Heliand* (Oxford 1989), has restated Vilmar's position. For a critique of Murphy, see Green, *Aspects* 250f.

<sup>91</sup> Haubrichs, *Anfänge* 346. Green, *Aspects* 251, suggests that the poet allowed for the accommodation of pagan elements in the Christian story.

<sup>92</sup> *Heliand*, ed. Paul/Behaghel 1f.

<sup>93</sup> Hans Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe: Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600–1000* (Cambridge 2006) 138–140, discusses the arguments.

tion, the case of Fulda is a strong one.<sup>94</sup> Gottschalk has even been suggested as the poem's author, although there is little evidence to support this.<sup>95</sup> The fact that the *praefatio* claims that the author was already a famous Saxon poet suggests that Gottschalk, who seems to have written only Latin poetry and that not until after his time at Fulda, was not the composer.<sup>96</sup> Haubrichs suggests instead that the poet was a figure like Cædmon, described by Bede as having simply heard the biblical stories and then composed Old English poetry about them by divine inspiration rather than by training in meter and prosody.<sup>97</sup>

The preface indicates that the poet wrote in the Saxon idiom so that the audience – *litterati et illiterati* – could better understand the story.<sup>98</sup> The text seems to have been directed at Saxon nobles in particular, for all of the participants in the story, including Christ and his family, are characterized as noble by birth.<sup>99</sup> Particular scenes, such as the Wedding at Cana, depicted an aristocratic milieu: a large feast in a great hall with the noble participants happily getting drunk on apple wine.<sup>100</sup> Christ even commands his apostles to seek out the nobles of each town when they spread the Gospel.<sup>101</sup> Christ himself is portrayed as a lord (*drohtin*) and his disciples as his noble-born (*athalborana*) warrior-companions (*gisithos*) or thanes (*thegan*).<sup>102</sup> The themes of their loyalty to their lord and courage in exchange for the gift of eternal life are striking examples of how the Saxon elites may have viewed relationships of lords and followers as inseparably political and spiritual.<sup>103</sup> The fact that the Saxon elites' relationship with the Carolingian regime involved their acceptance of Christianity suggests that they may have understood their connection with Charlemagne and Louis the Pious in just such terms. The image of Christ even changes slightly over the course of the poem; Christ the generous giver of jewels becomes Christ the leader who wants to take his warrior companions to "God's light" or eternal salvation.<sup>104</sup> This transformation may indicate that the poet wanted his audience to regard the spiritual aspect of such relationships as ultimately of deeper significance.

The Heliand poet treated the themes of service and loss of freedom very specifically. In the poem, a thane's freely given service to his lord (*theganskepi*) – here given to Christ in exchange for eternal life – is juxtaposed with the service sinners must render the devils in Hel as punishment.<sup>105</sup> Saxon nobles probably viewed voluntary service as appropriate to their status as Carolingian elites, while coerced service was beneath them or suitable as a punishment for those who broke their oaths to their lord. Such an attitude may explain why the Saxon bishops, and any of Gottschalk's relatives at the synod, reacted so strongly to his coerced monastic *servitium*, and sought to rescue him from this state. According to Hrabanus, Gottschalk had argued that monastic servitude was not necessary for salvation – a point the abbot grudgingly conceded, although he countered that service to God was the best of all human undertakings.<sup>106</sup> Yet for the bishops Gottschalk's coerced service probably conjured up memories of the conflict and upheaval long since in the past. Related to this would be the portrayal of Christ's loss of freedom in the Heliand. The poet described him fifteen times in bonds (*bendi*) and

<sup>94</sup> Geuenich, *Literatur* 99–124; Rathofer, *Literatur* 247–261; Schröbler, *Fulda* 1–26.

<sup>95</sup> Tette Hofstra, A note on the "Darkness of the Night". Motif in alliterative poetry, and the search for the poet of the Old Saxon Heliand, in: *Loyal Letters. Studies on Mediaeval Alliterative Poetry and Prose*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen/Alasdair Andrew MacDonald (Mediaevalia Groningana 15, Groningen 1994) 93–104, at 96f.; Heinz Rupp, *Forschung zur althochdeutschen Literatur 1945–1962*, in: *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 38 (1964) 1–67, at 50. On Gottschalk learning verse after his time at Fulda, see his poem *Age quaeso perge Clio* to Ratramnus, written ca. 850, in Weber, *Gedichte* 151f. and 254–257.

<sup>96</sup> Heliand, ed. Paul/Behaghel 1f.

<sup>97</sup> Haubrichs, *Anfänge* 333, and for related comments, see Green, *Aspects* 247–255.

<sup>98</sup> Heliand, ed. Paul/Behaghel 1f.

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, Heliand, ed. Paul/Behaghel 16f. and 49f. For the translation, see: *The Heliand*, trans. Murphy 12f. and 43. See also Haubrichs, *Anfänge* 336 and 343–345.

<sup>100</sup> Heliand, ed. Paul/Behaghel 76–79; and *The Heliand*, trans. Murphy 67–69.

<sup>101</sup> Heliand, ed. Paul/Behaghel 74; and *The Heliand*, trans. Murphy 65.

<sup>102</sup> Heliand, ed. Paul/Behaghel 46–49, 49–51, 82, and 143; and *The Heliand*, trans. Murphy 40–42, 42–44, 72, and 130f. See also Haubrichs, *Anfänge* 330–353; Bostock, *Handbook* 169–177; Dennis Green, *The Carolingian Lord: Semantic Studies on Four Old High German Words – Balder, Frô, Truhtin, Hêrro* (Cambridge 1965) 59–63, 115–196 and 216–232.

<sup>103</sup> Heliand, ed. Paul/Behaghel 143, and 166f.; and *The Heliand*, trans. Murphy 130f. and 154f.

<sup>104</sup> Heliand, ed. Paul/Behaghel 48 and 103f.; and *The Heliand*, trans. Murphy 42 and 91f.

<sup>105</sup> Heliand, ed. Paul/Behaghel 156–159 and 163; and *The Heliand*, trans. Murphy 143–146 and 150.

<sup>106</sup> Hrabanus, *Liber de oblatione puerorum*, PL 107, 430 and 434f.

iron chains (*fiterios*) from the time he was taken by the thanes of the high priests until his crucifixion.<sup>107</sup> This image may have symbolized to the audience the great disgrace of losing one's freedom and rekindled images of the wars in the minds of Saxons in a way that allowed them to see that Christ – like some of them – had suffered this humiliation. The poet emphasized this point by having Christ afraid of his enemies' iron chains before his encounter with them on Gethsemene, which is portrayed as an upcoming battle.<sup>108</sup>

The similarity between this image and Gottschalk's loss of *libertas* is conspicuous. The synod pronounced Gottschalk freed from his chain (*vinculum*) when he recovered his freedom.<sup>109</sup> This can be read figurately, in the sense that the monastic vow bound one to a life of service to God, and literally, if Hrabanus brought him to Mainz bound as a prisoner in order to humiliate him and show the synod that he was a troublemaker. Had he done so, the chains appear to have had the opposite effect of illiciting sympathy and support from fellow Saxons. Whatever the case, they viewed Gottschalk's monastic status as unlawful bondage and a form of *servitium* to which he had been wrongfully subjected. The Saxon nobles' aversion to coerced servitude at Mainz and in the *Heliand* may reveal an important aspect of their development as Carolingian elites. While they no doubt saw the Saxon wars as a thing of the past with wrongful persecutions since made good and old treacheries forgiven by Louis the Pious, it is clear that the wars still remained subject to continuing interpretation in the present, which could lead to tension and even controversy in the empire, as it did in Gottschalk's case.

### CONCLUSION

Gottschalk's suit against Hrabanus in 829 involved a declaration of identity with powerful resonances among his contemporaries. What might appear to have been a mere legal dispute about his freedom on the surface, was actually cause for heated debate about the meaning of the Saxons' place in the Carolingian world. Therefore this incident was a key episode both in Gottschalk's life – a point when he left Fulda and began a career as a highly influential, albeit controversial ninth-century intellectual figure – and for Saxon nobles as a whole. Now privileged members of the imperial elite, they nonetheless retained a memory of darker times and understood Gottschalk's case within that framework. Furthermore this incident then served to confirm their status as part of the aristocratic caste of the empire. Yet from this moment, Gottschalk and his fellow Saxon elite seem to have parted company, and the fact that neither he nor others ever identified him again as a Saxon nobleman underscores the circumstantial and episodic nature of individual identity. Gottschalk's self-identification here was a very successful strategy that brought him powerful support and enabled him to recover his freedom. Yet to claim that it was nothing more than that – to suggest that it was merely a scheme and that his ethnicity and nobility did not really matter to him – is to miss the point entirely. For Gottschalk's identity and his desire to leave Fulda were inseparable: he believed that his loss of freedom was criminal, he identified with his episcopal supporters at the synod rather than with his abbot, he saw the wider horizons of elite imperial circles as his privilege, and he must have felt that the walls of his monastery were far too narrow for someone of his status and ambition. Once Gottschalk was freed from the confines of Fulda, his ethnicity and nobility simply lost their fundamental significance because the reason for asserting them was gone. Thereafter he sought other ways to identify himself in new and very different circumstances.

<sup>107</sup> *Heliand*, ed. Paul/Behaghel 174, 175 and 176, 178, 181, 183–184, 185–187, 188–189, and 191 and 193; and *The Heliand*, trans. Murphy 162–164, 166f., 168f., 171f., 173f., 176, 179 and 181. Murphy suggests a connection between the portrayal of Christ and Saxon memories of bondage during Charlemagne's reign.

<sup>108</sup> *Heliand*, ed. Paul/Behaghel 170; and *The Heliand*, trans. Murphy 158.

<sup>109</sup> *Concilium Moguntinense*, ed. Werminghoff 604. I would like to extend my gratitude to those who kindly read and commented on this or earlier versions of this text: Monica Black, Richard Corradini, Paul Kershaw, Rosamond McKitterick, Elizabeth Meyer, Duane Osheim, Helmut Reimitz, Anton Scharer, David Spear, and Irene van Renswoude. Thanks also to Walter Pohl for making my work a part of the Wittgenstein Project, and to Marianne Pollheimer for her help during the editing process.