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Rachel Stone and Charles West, eds., *Hincmar of Rheims: Life and Work*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015. xvi + 309 pp. Figures, tables, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$120.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-7190-9140-7; \$34.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1-5261-0654-4; \$34.95 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-1-7849-9189-0.

Review by John J. Contreni, Purdue University

Hincmar served as archbishop of Reims from 845 to his death in 882. Although little known outside the world of modern Carolingian scholarship, he was the ninth century's Cardinal Richelieu, albeit a much more prolific author and, one suspects, a more committed churchman. He cut a giant swath through ninth-century ecclesiastical and political history, serving with (never under) four successive West Frankish monarchs. Born sometime during the first decade of the century during the reign of Emperor Charlemagne (768-814), he died fleeing Viking marauders with his church's treasures in a changed world ruled by a congeries of small kings and fractious warlords. As Rachel Stone states in her meaty introduction to this collection, Hincmar's impact was "surprisingly slight" (p. 27). We study his voluminous and varied written legacy (history, law, hagiography, poetry, correspondence, prescriptive documents of all sorts, opinions on all that mattered) primarily to gain insight into his vision of Carolingian society and to the changing world around him.

This "life and works" collection aims to bring together between two covers recent work on many facets of the archbishop's career to counter-balance the potential idiosyncrasy of a single-author study. *Hincmar of Rheims: Life and Work* thus lies somewhere between Heinrich Schrörs's and Jean Devisse's still magisterial biographies[1] and the yearly haul of specialized journal articles. The editors are to be commended for bringing together a set of perceptive and well-researched studies (ninety-three pages of endnotes in 288 pages of text with an uncommonly detailed index) that ask the right questions and will prompt new thinking about one of the Carolingian age's great figures. Besides the subject at the heart of the collection, the fourteen essays coalesce around a common theme, the observation that Hincmar's core convictions were refined in the crucible of the events in his life. Raised from his earliest years as a monk of Saint-Denis in Paris, Hincmar's worldview emerged in response to myriad challenges he faced as an archbishop motivated to advance a vision of the Christian community on earth. From all accounts, he took this mission most seriously and armed with intelligence, a well-stocked library, the personnel and financial resources of his cathedral, a legalistic bent, and a dogged personality, he pursued it relentlessly. This much was already known about the archbishop. What many of the essays in the collection bring into sharp focus is his creative use of sources and his willingness even to fabricate and sometimes to bend facts and texts in pursuit of his vision of how things should be.

They also reveal that despite his prodigious output and indefatigable labors he was sometimes unable to control the narrative he wished to construct.

While Hincmar travelled in exalted circles, he never lost focus on the administration and spiritual welfare of his diocese. He became archbishop after a ten-year vacancy at Reims. Much had unraveled during the hiatus and much had been lost. Josiane Barbier pursues a single *Nota* monogram in a copy of an economic inventory to show how keen Hincmar was to reclaim the services of the archdiocese's slaves who had naturally enough taken advantage of the leaderless church to declare their freedom. Defense of his church's property, human and terrestrial, was a core value. Hincmar was also attentive to the crucial role parishes played in maintaining the Christian community. He worried about how parishes were to be organized, administered, and above all, staffed while fending off rapacious magnates, bad priests, and neighboring bishops. Charles West sees his concern for parish life amid threats to this bedrock Christian institution as a real test of Hincmar's "powers of conceptual and organisational synthesis" (p. 237). To his credit, West argued, Hincmar was aware of the tension that marked the work of parish priests. They were expected to navigate successfully the porous divide between being part of their communities (even farming) while somehow remaining apart from it. In Hincmar's view, bishops and parish priests engaged in the same project, but at different levels. Following centuries would not be so solicitous of parish life. Hincmar's thinking about parishes clustered around challenges in two specific parishes. The case of Trising, a criminous parish priest, further illustrates how local issues in Hincmar's experience prompted big-picture thinking. Trising was replaced in his parish after he became intimate with his brother's step-daughter, got into a drunken brawl about it, and chopped off several of his brother's fingers. Mayke de Jong underscores the broader implications of this microhistory when she set it in the context of the pope's growing involvement in Frankish ecclesiastical affairs. Trising was one of several priests on record who went over the head of their bishop to enlist papal support on their side. They were buoyed, de Jong suggests, by one of the age's most interesting cultural products—a massive set of forged papal letters and decretals that subordinated strong bishops such as Hincmar to Rome's far off authority. Thus, local sex and local violence implicated deeper questions of authenticity and ecclesiastical authority that went all the way to the top. Again, when Louis the German invaded Charles the Bald's kingdom in 875, many bishops found themselves between two kings, two loyalties, and two armies, or, as the archbishop put it, between the hammer and the anvil. What to do? Hincmar's guidance to his bishops was to remember their oaths of loyalty and to uphold them faithfully. At the same time, he reminded kings of *their* oaths. The immediate issue was the invasion, but, as Clémentine Bernard-Valette points out, the breaking of Christian peace that breaking oaths led to was the core issue. Nowhere did Hincmar adumbrate his vision of episcopal authority more than in the life of his sixth-century predecessor and Francia's great apostle, St. Remigius of Reims. In Marie-Céline Isaïa's view, Hincmar crafted a portrait of Remigius in which Remigius and Hincmar become "interchangeable" (p. 179) and work to justify the ninth-century archbishop's authority and actions. Here, the biographer put history to personal use when he inflated the life of a long-dead saint to address pertinent broader, contemporary issues.

Hincmar creatively manipulated his sources throughout his career for his own ends. He is renowned for his command of Roman legal sources, but Simon Corcoran shows how he took Roman jurisprudence out of context or cited laws incompletely to serve his own purposes. In a flagrant instance of "verbal manipulation" (p. 143), Hincmar changed the wording in a citation from the Theodosian Code that judged accusations against priests as *laudibilis* (praiseworthy) to make them just the opposite, *inlaudibilis* (unpraiseworthy). When he used more recent royal

pronouncements, Carolingian prescriptive texts known as capitularies, he preferred those that went back to the glory days of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious (814-840), as if the cachet of these much admired monarchs lent them greater power. Hincmar, in Philippe Depreux's analysis, used capitularies to constrain contemporary behavior by reminding powerful actors of their commitments. He further reinforced the authority of royal capitularies by implying that they were also ecclesiastical documents, thus theoretically doubling their authority. He also changed the basic nature of annals when he took over compiling the *Annals of St-Bertin* from Bishop Prudentius of Troyes upon Prudentius's death. Janet Nelson sees in Hincmar's continuation of the annals much more than memorialization of yearly events. Hincmar's annalistic entries became longer, more historical, more pointed, and more polemical when he used his pen to set the record straight as he saw it. With the annals, he became a historical source who crafted his text deliberately to stamp his own impress on events. Sometimes that meant masking his personal participation in history, as in the account of his bitter and long-running conflict with his nephew and namesake, Bishop Hincmar of Laon. The elder Hincmar groomed his relative for the position at Laon, but the plan soured when the younger Hincmar defied the king and his uncle initially over Laon's property, but then soon over everything else. Hincmar of Laon eventually was deposed and then blinded. The dispute left an extensive parchment trail, but in Christine Kleinjung's telling, Hincmar papered over most of it when he told it in the *Annals of St-Bertin*, especially submerging his own role in the bishop's downfall. History could be tailored by omission as well as by commission.

Hincmar was not always so successful in shaping the narrative he wanted to tell. His life of Remigius of Reims, to judge from its eighty-five surviving copies, was his most successful work. However, as it was copied and recopied, elements of his message of strong ninth-century episcopal power instantiated at Reims on the example (often fabricated) of a sainted sixth-century bishop were stripped from the text. As Reims was minimized in the narrative, France was elevated. Remigius was remembered for baptizing Clovis, not for warranting Hincmar. In his treatise on abduction, *De raptu*, the bishop argued forcefully against violence toward women and the attack on the Christian social order that forced marriage represented. Marriage was not yet a sacrament and so, Sylvie Joye notes, Hincmar charged the king as father of his people to preserve the essential bonds of Christian society. But Hincmar was ahead of his times. Church thinking on marriage was inchoate, varied, and contradictory. Old Testament marital histories offered counter examples to Hincmar's notions, while even contemporary Carolingian royal family dynamics challenged his vision of the "organic unity and purity" (p. 191) of the Christian social order. Hincmar was no more successful when it came to squelching living heresy in the form of Gottschalk of Orbais's teaching on double predestination both of the saved and the damned. Gottschalk ended up in Hincmar's archdiocese and thus became his problem to manage. Everything he did—composing a massive treatise on predestination consisting of 1100 citations from 150 works, recruiting the best minds to counter Gottschalk's teaching, confining the heretic to monastic imprisonment—failed. Matthew Bryan Gillis notes that Hincmar could never get the heretic to abandon his views or to keep from spreading them through writings smuggled out to a growing band of followers. Paradoxically this long-running drama saw opposition coalesce and grow against Hincmar himself.

Hincmar was, indeed, an oppositional figure. In the ninth century, a mock-epitaph composed while he was still alive described him as a greedy thief who did one good thing: he died.[2] In the pages of *Hincmar of Rheims* he comes alive again as a persistent champion of the transformation of the kingdoms of the Franks to the Christian society that its leaders hoped to

achieve. In a letter to King Charles the Bald, Hincmar reported that he had overheard some laymen criticizing bishops for wanting to gab about scripture all day long.[3] The archbishop's aperçu may well explain his struggles. The Carolingian world was not ready to become the city of God.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Rachel Stone, "Introduction: Hincmar's World"

Janet L. Nelson, "Hincmar's Life in His Historical Writings"

Christine Kleinjung, "To Fight with Words: The Case of Hincmar of Laon in the Annals of St-Bertin"

Elna Screen, "An Unfortunate Necessity? Hincmar and Lothar I"

Clémentine Bernard-Valette, "We are Between the Hammer and the Anvil: Hincmar in the Crisis of 875"

Margaret J. McCarthy, "Hincmar's Influence During Louis the Stammerer's Reign"

Simon Corcoran, "Hincmar and His Roman Legal Sources"

Philippe Depreux, "*Hincmar et la loi* Revisited: On Hincmar's Use of Capitularies"

Marie-Céline Isaïa, "The Bishop and the Law, According to Hincmar's Life of Saint Remigius"

Sylvie Joye, "Family Order and Kingship According to Hincmar"

Josiane Barbier, "'The Praetor Does Concern Himself with Trifles': Hincmar, the Polyptych of St-Remi and the Slaves of Courtisols"

Charles West, "Hincmar's Parish Priests"

Matthew Bryan Gillis, "Heresy in the Flesh: Gottschalk of Orbais and the Predestination Controversy in the Archdiocese of Rheims"

Mayke de Jong, "Hincmar, Priests, and Pseudo-Isidore: The Case of Trising in Context"

NOTES

[1] Heinrich Schrörs, *Hincmar, Erzbischof von Reims: Sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1884); Jean Devisse, *Hincmar, archevêque de Reims, 845-882*, 3 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1975-76).

[2] *App.* 9, in Michael W. Herren, ed. and trans., *Iohannis Scotti Eriugenaes Carmina* (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1993), pp. 126-7.

[3] *Epistola XV ad Carolum regem*, in Jacques-Paul Migne ed., *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 126 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1852), col. 97D.

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