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THE CAROLINGIAN *SPECULUM PRINCIPIS* — THE BIRTH OF A GENRE

The writing of instructions for rulers had always been the privilege of the most confidential advisers and most erudite savants. However, while the close associates of the monarch concentrated in the first place on matters of current politics, the art of solving conflicts and overcoming crises, the learned experts were rather preoccupied with the theory of government and its long-term strategic goals. What arose as a result were well thought-out and artistically composed expositions presenting the portrait of an ideal ruler and the ways he should realize his most important tasks. We find there an analysis of those characteristics of a monarch which determine the success of his mission and of those incidents from the area of politics which might determine the success of his rule.

These works, although sometimes quite varied in character, received the common name “mirrors of princes”, since they were to create a kind of guide prepared for the ruler and describing the most important traits of a good and happy reign. At the same time the subjects received a concise definition of the good and bad acts of their leader as well as the clear criteria of the assessment of his government. In this way “the text-books of a good ruler” combined the instructions referring to everyday political practice with the theory of the exercise of power and deliberations on polity that referred even to the ancient tradition. In the Merovingian period, when monarchy started to be fully identified with the person of the ruler, the acts and behaviour of the king became

not only a clear model to be followed, establishing the norms of exercising power, but also defined the ways the state should function and designated the scope of the public sphere. Therefore the *speculum principis* went beyond the strict deliberations upon the merits and virtues of a good monarch and turned into a discourse upon the perfect ruler who improved the state and worked for the good of his subjects¹.

Carolingian “mirrors of princes” very often referred to the well-known and popular fragments of St. Augustine's work *City of God*, where in the part devoted to the future and expected Kingdom in Heaven² he discussed extensively the features of an ideal Christian ruler. We find there a description of a happy reign, to the glory of God and the good of the subjects, with a clearly accentuated opinion that this is possible only when the rule is just, merciful and acted with humility³. The fact that this was the favourite treatise read by Charlemagne shows that its expositions of the virtues and tasks of a good monarch were not merely of theoretical value, but had a concrete influence on royal actions⁴. This contributed to a definite evolution of the genre, since the erudite descriptions of the royal office and its attendant functions started to be complemented by recommendations addressed directly to the ruler⁵. They referred to his education, the values he professed, moral virtues to be obeyed at his court and among

¹ A brief review of these problems can be found in J-Ph. Genet's article, *L'évolution du genre des miroirs des princes en Occident au Moyen Âge*, in: *Religion et mentalités au Moyen Âge. Mélanges Hervé Martin*, ed. S. Cassagnes-Brouquet, A. Chauou, D. Pichot, L. Rousselot, Rennes 2003, pp. 531–541, also W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und spätmittelalters*, Stuttgart 1938, pp. 3–8. These problems in the Carolingian era have been discussed by H. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit*, Bonn 1968. Cf. also *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 4, col. 1040–1048 (H. Anton).

² Saint Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Lipsiae 1928, liber V, cap. 20. The whole doctrine of St. Augustine has been discussed by H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Paris 1937; on the composition of his work see pp. 65–67. Cf. H. X. Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme politique: essai sur la formation des théories politiques du Moyen Âge*, Paris 1955, pp. 67–71.

³ Saint Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, liber V, cap. 24. Cf. interesting remarks by Ch. Mohrmann, *Domus Dei chez St. Augustin*, in: *Hommages à Max Niedermann* (Collection Latomus, 23), Bruxelles 1956, pp. 244–250.

⁴ Einhard, *Vita Caroli Magni*, in: *Quellen zur Karolingischen Reichsgeschichte*, vol. I, ed. R. Rau, Berlin 1962, cap. 24.

⁵ R. Bradley, *Backgrounds of the Title Speculum in Medieval Literature*, in: *“Speculum”*, vol. 29 (1954), pp. 102–105, pointed out the essential role of Saint Augustine in defining the characteristics of the genre and the reasons for the preparation of such works.

the circle of his confidential advisers as well as concrete types of behaviour connected with the everyday functions both of the monarch himself and his entourage. St. Isidore of Seville derived the significance of the ruler's office and tasks from an analysis of the current terminology that allowed the definition not only of the purpose of reign but also the presentation of a list of instructions and items of advice. He did not, however, develop his description and analysis of the office and the monarchy itself any further. The first Carolingian text-books for rulers, on the other hand, contained a full presentation of desirable behaviour and typical situations together with admonitions and recommendations concerning the way of performing the tasks which were discussed in detail.

Isidore's maxim that "kingdom is derived from the kings and the kings are so named because what they do is called kingship" became part and parcel of the canon of deliberations upon the early-medieval monarchy⁶. The etymology of those terms was later complemented by analogies referring to other offices and functions. The office of a consul was explained by its connection with the process of "consulting the citizens", or heading the council, while the name "priest" was derived in Latin from "sacrifice"⁷. Those etymological deliberations were complemented by a short comment concerning the two most important virtues of a king: mercy and justice. The author reasonably remarked that severe administration of justice does not always add to the ruler's good name, hence mercy is perceived more easily and wins more praise⁸. The stress laid on the two basic virtues of the sovereign emphasized the practical dimension of his power, but did not turn into an introduction to more extensive deliberations on that subject⁹. Nevertheless, it clearly encouraged deliberations on the

⁶ Isidore de Séville, *Etymologies*, in: *Patrologiae latinae cursus completus*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1850 (henceforward PL), vol. 82, lib. IX, cap. III, 1, col. 341, *Regnum a regibus dictum, nam sicut reges a regendo vocati*.

⁷ *Ibidem*, lib. IX, cap. III, col. 342, *Consules appellati, vel a consulendo civibus, vel a regendo cuncta consilio; Reges a regendo vocati, sicut enim sacerdos a sanctificando*.

⁸ *Ibidem*, col. 342, *Regiae virtutes praecipuae duae, justitia et pietas; plus autem in regibus laudatur pietas; nam justitia per se severa est*.

⁹ Cf. remarks on the encyclopedic character of this work in: J. Fontaine, *Isidore de Séville et la mutation de l'encyclopédisme antique*, in: *idem, Tradition et actualité chez Isidore de Séville*, Variorum reprints, London 1988, p. 525. Interesting remarks on the method of etymological analysis can be found in the article

essence of monarchy and the king's office, quite apart from the presentation of the ruler's biography and description of his laudable deeds. Isidore's writings consciously combine a theological discourse on the supernatural status of reality with a search for the material roots of the phenomena he describes, going back to antiquity and Aristotle's thought¹⁰. As a result, under his influence the *speculum* genre gained a dual character: on the one hand the function and office of a Christian ruler was subordinated to God's verdicts and the king was appraised from the point of view of religious principles, on the other Isidore introduced a demand for a rational analysis of royal deeds and moral and political qualifications¹¹.

At the beginning of the Carolingian era the most popular "mirror of the prince" was found in the treatise of the anonymous Irish author of *De XII abusivis saeculi*. It was probably written about the middle of the 7th century, and the author gained the name of Pseudo-Cyprianus¹². The name came from the Bishop of Carthage of the middle of the 3rd century, Caecilius Cyprianus, to whom this work was attributed in the Early Middle Ages and whose writings enjoyed great popularity in those times¹³. Twelve examples of evil that existed in the world were presented in it in the form of twelve successive lectures describing

by the same author, *La situation de la rhétorique dans la culture tardive: observations sur la théorie isidorienne de l'étymologie*, in: *idem, Tradition et actualité, op. cit.*, article XI, pp. 197–205.

¹⁰ Cf. J. Fontaine, *Isidore de Séville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne wisigothique*, Paris 1959, vol. II, p. 822.

¹¹ On the culture of Visigothic Spain and the influence of Isidore on the writings of the 7th and 8th centuries see P. Riché, *Éducation et culture dans l'occident barbare, VIe — VIIIe siècles*, Paris 1962, esp. pp. 401–409.

¹² Pseudo-Cyprianus, *De XII abusivis saeculi*, ed. S. Hellmann, Leipzig 1909 (henceforward: Pseudo-Cyprianus).

¹³ See A. Breen, *The Date, Provenance and Authorship of the Pseudo-Patrician Canonical Materials*, "Zeitschrift der Savigny — Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung", vol. 81 (1995), p. 85. We find there convincing proofs of the Irish origins of the author; just as in H. Anton, *Pseudo-Cyprian. De duodecim abusivis saeculi und sein Einfluss auf den Kontinent, insbesondere auf die karolingischen Fürstenspiegel*, in: *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. H. Löwe, Stuttgart 1982, vol. II, pp. 568–617, *passim*, who backed up and considerably extended S. Hellmann's argumentation contained in the *Introduction* to the source edition (pp. 2–4), concerning the Irish origins of the author of the treatise. H. Löwe specified the date of its creation as the years 630–650, *Die Iren und Europa, op. cit.*, p. 1019. The influence of the Irish monasteries on the continental centres has been discussed by J. Strzelczyk, *Iroszkoci w kulturze średniowiecznej Europy (Irish Scots in the Culture of Medieval Europe)*, Warszawa 1987, esp. pp. 120–207.

the real threat to future salvation. They contained both a theological justification with biblical references, presented in an accessible form, and concise examples from the life of the social groups under discussion that served to formulate definite warnings and severe instructions. The list of the cases opened with the story about a sage and preacher who could not present evidence of his good deeds. His sermons might teach, but he was not able to support them with his actions. Thus the audience could easily reject his teachings, since his actions largely diverged from his words¹⁴. Hence came the lesson that the more somebody had received, the more could be demanded from him, just as from the wise King Solomon who due to his work was able to unite the divided Kingdom of Israel.

Pseudo-Cyprianus did not hesitate to reach for biblical examples that were not directly connected with his moral lesson, but made the aim of his exposition clear, convincing and telling at the same time. The example of the insubordinate youth from the fragment about the rejection of the authority of the elders was illustrated with a fragment of *Exodus*, about Moses, who because of his age and wisdom was a real father to his people¹⁵. Indeed, youth requires discipline and rigour, and the latter cannot be accomplished without obedience which sets all the works in order and is superior to any other evidence of discipline. The best and most moving example of obedience is that of Christ who readily fulfilled His Father's will, sacrificing His life on the Cross. The example of Christ who fulfilled the orders of God the Father till the end closes the chapter about the necessity to respect the authority of the elders.

The next case under consideration, the fourth in succession, was that of a rich man who did not give alms and did not want to share anything with the needy. This meant he was attached to earthly things and rejected the eternal ones. Indeed, everything visible passes quickly, and only the invisible things belong to the eternal order. Therefore one should own only the necessary

¹⁴ Pseudo-Cyprianus, pp. 32–33, *Primus abusionis gradus est si sine operibus sapiens et praedicator fuerit, qui quo sermone docet, actibus explere neglegit. Auditores enim doctrinae dicta facile contemnunt, cum praedicatoris opera a praedicationis verbis discrepare conspiciunt.*

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 36–37, *Tertius abusionis gradus est adolescens si sine oboedientia deprehendatur; (...) Aetate autem pariter et admonitione pater dicitur, cum Moyses in cantico Deuteronomii loquitur: interroga patrem tuum, et adnuntiabit tibi.*

things, while the reward of eternal life has to be sought in giving away the accumulated wealth with no grudge¹⁶. The rich man who due to his temporary acquisitions is for ever damned, cannot reach eternal happiness, while the one who performs charitable deeds will be blessed. Eternal riches can be gained solely through alms-giving, giving one's possessions away, regardless of whether they were hoarded as gold, silver, land, animals, jewels and metals or clothes. The earthly things serve us as long as we stay on earth, but when we pass away we will be able only to benefit from things everlasting. In this way the treatise about damnable behaviour, about evil things deserving condemnation, the necessity of reforming ourselves and conditions of reaching perfection took the form of a sermon, provided with references to the *Bible* and examples taken from everyday life. However, the pathetic and lofty tone of this narration did not prevent its reasonable and precise argumentation.

The examples were set in order according to the degree of harm they caused¹⁷. The first degree of evil existing in the world was represented by the sage who could not confirm his teachings by his deeds, the second by the old man who forsook religion. The third degree of departing from the right way was exemplified by the disobedient youth, and then other cases followed: the rich man who refused alms, an unchaste woman, a disloyal husband, an overrighteous Christian and a proud poor man. The ninth degree of evil was represented by an iniquitous king (*rex iniquus*). More shocking was only the behaviour of a light-hearted bishop, the undisciplined mob and the subjects who did not know the principles of law¹⁸. The case of the iniquitous ruler contained a short analysis of the acts of a good king, and a warning against

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 39, *Quod igitur aliquando per necessitatem amittendum est, pro aeterna remuneratone sponte distribuendum est. Omnia enim quae videntur temporalia sunt, quae autem non videntur aeterna sunt.*

¹⁷ R. Meens, *Politics, Mirrors of Princes and the Bible: Sins, Kings and the Well-being of the Realm*, "Early Medieval Europe", vol. 7 (1998), p. 349, notes that the composition of the whole treatise by Pseudo-Cyprianus was taken from Chapter VII of St. Benedict's Rule who enumerated 12 degrees of humility and discussed them in turn, cf. Św. Benedykt z Nursji, *Regula* (St. Benedict of Nursia, *Rule*), Warszawa 1979, cap. VII, pp. 25-30.

¹⁸ A brief enumeration of successive degrees of offence is found at the beginning of this work, p. 32, *...hoc est: sapiens sine operibus, senex sine religione, adolescens sine oboedientia, dives sine elemosyna, femina sine pudicitia, dominus sine virtute, christianus contentiosus, pauper superbus, rex iniquus, episcopus neglegens, plebs sine disciplina, populus sine lege. Sic suffocatur iustitia.*

the bad way of exercising power. This chapter can be regarded as a short guide for an ideal monarch and at the same time the first “mirror of a prince”¹⁹.

According to Pseudo-Cyprianus the king was to lead his fallible subjects to moral reform. So if his morals were not perfect, if he was wicked himself, he could not even think of correcting the bad deeds committed by his people²⁰. In this context an analogy was drawn between the function of the king and the office of rector, leader and magistrate-guide. The ruler was to correct (*corrigerere*) the errors of all his subjects and the injunction so understood resulted from the close connection between the Latin word for “king” and the term “rector”, the function of rector as a prudent guide endowed with full power²¹. This resembled the postulate of Isidore of Seville who thought that “one cannot rule without correcting, hence only a person who acts honestly may be a king”²².

This etymological exposition, modelled on a great authority, was only the beginning of longer and more developed deliberations of Pseudo-Cyprianus about the duties of the king, and the fragment about doing justice was its continuation. The list of concrete recommendations numbered as many as 23 items and opened with the statement that royal justice does not allow the oppression of anybody on the grounds of the power one represents²³. To preserve impartiality, no trial could be held of cases

¹⁹ No mention of Pseudo-Cyprianus' treatise is made in the reliable article by L. Born, which gives a review of this genre, *The “Specula principis” of the Carolingian Renaissance*, “Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire”, vol. 12 (1933), pp. 582–612. Only short notes that such a work existed at all have been published by W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel*, *op. cit.*, p. 4, note 4 and p. 8, note 3. The treatise is well-discussed, however, in H. Anton's *Fürstenspiegel*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–73.

²⁰ Pseudo-Cyprianus, p. 51, *Nomen enim regis intellectualiter hoc retinet, ut subiectis omnibus rectoris officium procuret. Sed qualiter alios corrigere poterit, qui proprios mores ne iniqui sint non corrigit?*

²¹ On the meaning of the term rector in connection with the royal function see W. Fałkowski, *Admonitio generalis Karola Wielkiego — zapowiedź tworzenia państwa idealnego (Charlemagne's Admonitio Generalis — the Prediction of the Creation of an Ideal State)*, in: *Ludzie, Kościół, wierzenia*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 420–422.

²² Isidore de Séville, *Etymologies*, lib. IX, cap. 3 (4), col. 342, *non autem regit, qui non corrigit. Recte igitur faciendo regis nomen tenetur, peccando amittitur*. Cf. M. Reydellet, *La royauté dans la littérature latine de Sidoine Apollinaire à Isidore de Séville*, “École Française de Rome”, vol. 243, Rome 1981, pp. 550, 576.

²³ Pseudo-Cyprianus, pp. 51–52, *Iustitia vero regis est neminem iniuste per potentiam opprimere (...)*.

involving a close associate of the monarch and somebody unknown to him. At the end of this long enumeration we find an instruction to observe suitable hours for prayer and a warning not to have meals at the same time. The majority of other exhortations entered the canon of good advice for monarchs, together with the injunctions to take care of widows and orphans, to defend the Church, to support the poor with alms, to surround oneself exclusively with wise and pious advisers, not to listen to fortune-tellers, to punish thieves, to keep away from or even banish dishonest people, to trust in God and to defend the country against its enemies. If, however, a kingdom is not ruled according to those commandments, it must meet with many adversities. Here another long enumeration followed, this time of terrible punishments that would befall a country ruled by an ignoble king²⁴.

The breach of the peace among the people was mentioned as the first dispensation of Providence which in such a case would afflict the whole country. Internal disturbances would go hand in hand with poor crops, no revenues from the subjects and many other grievous experiences suffered by the kingdom. Invasion by the enemies could be expected, appearance of cruel beasts, onrush of violent tempests and hurricanes, belated vegetation of plants, and death and mourning will settle in a state governed by an unjust king that will last even during the reign of his successors, sons and relatives²⁵. Because of their ungodly rule God deprived Solomon's sons of his kingdom, while because of the just reign of King David He had left his family stock for ever in Jerusalem. In this way the right rule could last for centuries, and its foundation was justice, understood broadly and associated with the majority of the monarch's works²⁶.

Pseudo-Cyprianus built all his reasoning on a definite opposition between advantages and losses resulting from the way of

²⁴ An analysis of the cases of "God's punishment" can be found in M. Blattmann, "Ein Unglück für sein Volk". *Der Zusammenhang zwischen Fehlverhalten des Königs und Volkswohl in Quellen des 7.-12. Jahrhunderts*, "Frühmittelalterliche Studien", vol. 30 (1996), pp. 80-102.

²⁵ Comparisons from the domain of cultural anthropology have been used in the analysis of the descriptions of natural disasters by R. Meens, *Pollution in the Early Middle Age: the Case of the Ford Regulations in Penitentials*, "Early Medieval Europe", vol. 4 (1995), esp. pp. 13-16.

²⁶ The significance of just rule has been strongly emphasized by H. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, pp. 68-70.

exercising power. His list emphasized the dramatic nature of the choice between the right and wrong way, and deliberately appealed to the emotions of his audience and readers. It was meant to arouse a strong reaction and make them choose the right way, clearly outlined by the author. In this way he emphasized the didactic character of his work which showed the rulers two perspectives: of a good reign followed by a happy end, and another, of an ignoble reign and evil and calamities that might oppress his subjects and afflict his dynasty and the whole people also in the future. Thus, what emerged was a need for a wise, pious, and experienced ruler. "Woe to the land whose king is a boy and where rulers misbehave"²⁷. To emphasize the importance of the existing threat, the guide for the rulers ends with another enumeration of advantages that come from a good and godly rule. It referred to the most serious threat resulting from the king's misrule, that is causing a breach of the peace in his country²⁸. Internal stabilization was presented as a guarantee of the subjects' prosperity, happiness of the whole people, good and favourable weather, good crops, and, an aspect stressed at the end, safe inheritance of the throne within the dynasty, and eternal salvation. In this way the composition of the work was closed, and the accepted thesis expounded with full clarity.

Let us draw attention to the fact that apart from the description of the king's correct behaviour and the presentation of the possible punishments that threatened him and his state, the fragment under analysis contains a clear message concerning the ruler's responsibility. The monarch was bound to be aware that his actions were carefully watched and appraised and that they influenced the fortunes of his state and his subjects. Therefore, in order to perform his functions in accordance with the accepted norms and the interest of the monarchy as a whole, he had to know all his duties and the ways they should be fulfilled. In such

²⁷ Pseudo-Cyprianus, p. 52, *Vae enim terrae, cuius rex est puer et cuius principes mane comedunt*.

²⁸ Cf. R. Meens, *Politics, Mirrors of Princes and the Bible*, op. cit., p. 357, is right when he emphasizes that in the 9th century there was a widespread conviction that individual sins and bad deeds of rulers influenced the fortunes of the whole kingdom. His remarks about the cosmological dimension of the royal function, however, seem unconvincing (this is, how the author interprets Pseudo-Cyprianus's description of such results of good or bad rule as a break of the weather, calm sea, bad crops, and other calamities which were to signify the undermining of the cosmic order).

a situation a need for a written guide, “a mirror of the prince”, composed for the use of the royal families and their court surroundings, became an obvious necessity. Hence the deliberations about good rule ceased being exclusively the domain of the theory of government and were no longer confined to explanations of the nature of the royal office, but changed into a guide with practical advice concerning the monarch’s acts, types of behaviour, and the kinds of danger they entailed. Meticulous enumeration of cases was complemented by a clear indication of possible consequences, and sermonizing zeal was mitigated by the necessities of logical exposition and the need to reach the didactic purpose. The lessons contained in Pseudo-Cyprianus’s work were addressed to the whole élite of power who closely surrounded the ruler and realized his political purposes. Therefore, despite their visible sermonizing bent, the tone of these lessons was that of a well thought-out and carefully edited lecture. The dissertation about the ignoble king was included in a sequence of twelve different cases, carefully analysed and provided by the author with extensive comments. This does not change our opinion that the chapter *Rex iniquus* was in fact the first work fulfilling the requirements of “the mirror of a prince” as a genre.

Let us try to define the characteristics of this genre, so as to be able to take a clear stand in the long-lasting discussion about a few works from the Carolingian era that are the subject of controversy²⁹. *Specula principis*, in our opinion, had three essential features that made them differ from other dissertations about power, monarchy and moral virtues. The first was the didactic character of such a work that was to help instruct the ruler, as a textbook of correct behaviour, and consequently, good rule. The second was its universal character, since it was addressed not only to one chosen person, but to its all potential recipients and

²⁹ We seldom encounter a precise and detailed definition of this genre in the literature. J.-Ph. Genet, *L'évolution du genre*, op. cit., p. 531, says merely that these are texts that portray the ideal ruler or contain advice about good rule. L. Born, *The specula principis*, op. cit., does not present any definition, in the conclusion of his work (p. 610) merely presenting a description of the basic topics discussed by the *specula* and emphasizing the recurrence of threads. W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel*, op. cit., defines “mirrors of princes” as moralizing literature (p. 12). H. Anton, *Lexikon*, op. cit., col. 1041, makes a general statement that this was a work addressed to the king or his regent for moralizing purposes, containing remarks about the ethic norms concerning the person or office of the ruler.

the whole political class of a state³⁰. They received a precise guide that discussed both matters of monarchy and the position of the king and his duties towards his subjects. The third characteristic of “the mirror of the prince” was that it introduced many concrete and very precise items of advice concerning the everyday functioning of the kingdom. This emphasized the practical dimension of the ruler’s reign and showed an ideal monarch in real situations. It showed how the king should act in each of the chosen cases. Thus it should be stressed that the *speculum principis* was not merely a theoretical work, completely detached from the requirements of everyday life, that would exclusively treat of the ideal of a monarch and formulate recommendations that concerned in the first place the heavenly *civitas Dei*. On the contrary, both the treatise by Pseudo-Cyprianus and the subsequent works in this genre were devoted to the principles of governing a state on earth, to matters of a *civitas terrena* well-known to their authors, and which, though it should fulfil the purposes and designs of God, in its everyday toil had to struggle against the adversities and difficulties of life on earth. It was the purpose of “the mirror of the prince” to present his duties that would live up to the expectations of his Maker, but should be performed within the framework of all the realities of the state under his rule.

In the first years of his independent rule Charlemagne received from a learned monk, Cathwulf, a long letter containing many remarks about his reign and comments on the role and duties of a Christian king³¹. Walter Ullmann, who justly saw it as a short treatise on monarchy, called it, perhaps with a little exaggeration, *the embryonic Fürstenspiegel*³². Hubert Anton

³⁰ Our opinion distinctly differs from the proposal of M. Jonsson, *La situation du speculum regale dans la littérature occidentale*, “Études germaniques”, vol. 42 (1987), p. 394, where the following requirements are cited: the treatise had to be written for the king, and dedicated to him, and was to present an ideal ruler, his behaviour, role and position in the world. We do not regard any of those requirements as sufficient and necessary. The author took up an analysis of the Norwegian *Speculum regale* of c. 1280 and noted a lack of dedication, which was contrary to the accepted definition. Her typology of *specula*, distinguishing their four kinds, is not convincing, either, though it is based on examples from the 9th century, beginning with the work of Smaragd of Saint Mihiel (cf. pp. 395–397).

³¹ I have discussed Cathwulf’s letter more extensively in the article: *Uwagi o ideowym programie rządów Karola Wielkiego (Remarks on the Ideological Programme of the Rule of Charlemagne)*, “Roczniki Historyczne”, vol. 70 (2004), pp. 67–70.

³² W. Ullmann, *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship*, London 1969, p. 49.

also defined Cathwulf's letter as "a little mirror of the prince" which presents a Christian-pagan image of the king³³. The letter was written in 775 and referred to the most important decisions of the young ruler from the first period of his reign³⁴. The author, probably a monk from England, who called himself "a humble servant" of Charlemagne, addressed this letter to the King of the Franks, seeing him as the most powerful sovereign of Europe and at the same time the leader of the whole Christian community³⁵. In the first part of the letter we find eight events or signs indicating that God extended a special protection over the Frankish monarch. They are provided with short justifications that are also to recall the latest history of the dynasty. The first proof of its glory was the special dignity conferred on kings and queens. The second fact cited was that Charles was the first-born son of Pepin the Short, and then other information followed: God defended him against the scheming of his brother Carloman; the kingdom was divided between the two brothers on Charles's initiative; the take-over of power after his brother's death followed without bloodshed; the Lombard army was put to flight without a bloody battle; Pavia and the treasury of the Lombards were seized³⁶; finally the author mentions the expedition to Rome, and the seizure of the whole of Italy and the royal treasures³⁷.

³³ H. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, *op. cit.*, p. 75. L. Born, *The specula principis*, *op. cit.*, p. 588, in a short note defined Cathwulf's text as a *speculum* whose form is not mature.

³⁴ The date of this letter and circumstances in which it was written have been discussed in detail by J. Story, *Cathwulf, Kingship, and the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, "Speculum", vol. 74 (1999), pp. 3-8.

³⁵ *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolarum*, vol. IV, *Karolini Aevi*, vol. II, ed. E. Dümmler, Berlin 1895 (henceforward cit.: *Epp.*), N° 7, pp. 502-504; the letter opens with a humble, carefully composed, rhythmical address, *Domino regi pissimo, gratia Dei celsissimo. Carlo vere carissimo, regno Christi rectissimo, ultimus namque Cathwulfus, tamen vester servulus, intimo corde puro in spiritus salutem sancto.*

³⁶ J. Story, *op. cit.*, p. 4, proposes separating these events and dating the war campaign at 773, and connecting the seizure of Pavia and the subjugation of the Lombards with Charlemagne's expedition to Rome in 774, which seems convincing.

³⁷ *Epp.*, p. 502, v. 15-35, (...) *de regis dignitate... sicut Dei placuit, conceptus: quo primogenitus es; ut de fratris tui insidiis in omnibus Deus te conservavit; quo sortisti regnum cum fratri tuo; quo Deus... exaltavit te super omne hoc regnum sine sanguinis effusione; Langobardorum exercitus sine bello publico in fugam conversus; civitatem Papiam cum rege cum omnibus thesauris pius adprehendisti; quo auream et imperialem Romam intrasti et Italiorum regna... accepisti.*

The list of proofs of the special grace of God should be confronted with eight columns of the principles of morals and good rule that are found in the further part of this letter. This part opens with the statement that the king while making decisions of State should strive for truth. Another instruction stresses a need for his showing unceasing patience in explaining the policy that he follows. Other points are generosity in bestowing gifts, ability to convince, necessity of remedying evil and rewarding goodness, reduction of benefits and taxes and justice in deciding cases³⁸. Thus Charlemagne received a carefully prepared exposition that combined his own achievements and the history of his own dynasty with a description of good rule over the people entrusted to the king by God. In fact in the fragment that links both expositions Cathwulf placed very important and meaningful opinions, very complimentary about the young monarch. He calls him a sovereign of the kingdom of Europe (*regnum Europe*), defining his role as that of a deputy of Christ on earth (*in vice illius*), and notes that the king has been elevated to the highest position over the Continent³⁹. The whole exposition is addressed directly to Charlemagne who in this way received arguments in favour of his policy, but above all gained support for his great ambitions and justification of his exceptional position in Christendom. This was a kind of discourse full of raptures and adulation, presented in a lofty tone, full of pathos that should ensure its addressee the greatest possible splendour⁴⁰.

Hence we are dealing here with a work prepared specially for a concrete recipient, adjusted to his needs and taking into account the initiatives he had already taken, a work designed for the benefit of his dynasty and the king himself⁴¹. Cathwulf

³⁸ *Epp.*, p. 503, v. 32–36, *veritas in rebus regalibus; patientia in omni negotio; largitas in muneribus; persuadibilitas in verbis; malorum correctio et constrictio; bonorum elevatio et exaltatio; levitas tributi in populo; aequitas iudicii inter divitem et pauperum.*

³⁹ *Epp.*, p. 503, v. 1–7, *quod ipse [Deus] te exaltavit in honorem glorie regni Europae. (...) Memor esto ergo semper, rex mi. Dei regis tui cum timore et amore, quod tu es in vice illius super omnia membra eius custodire et regere, et rationem reddere in die iudicii, etiam per te. (...) quod Deus tuus dixit tibi, cuius vicem tenes.*

⁴⁰ See M. Garrison, *Letters to a King and Biblical Exempla: the Examples of Cathwulf and Clemens*, "Early Medieval Europe", vol. 7 (1998), p. 310, who was right in pointing out that Cathwulf referred the Psalms directly to Charlemagne, in the same way as to King David and Christ.

⁴¹ Cf. M. E. Moore, *La monarchie carolingienne et les anciennes modèles irlandais*, "Annales HSS", vol. 56 (1996), p. 309, who lays emphasis on the author's personal attitude to the Frankish monarch.

certainly did not write “a mirror of the prince”, since he would offend Charlemagne if he prepared for him a “text-book of good rule”. It was the Frankish monarch who was the source of knowledge about the purposes and methods of reigning, and his privileged position in contacts with the Creator only confirmed the fact that he was the ideal ruler and a model to be followed. Thus any didactic purpose of those expositions must be ruled out; the author does not offer practical advice how to achieve the intended goals, nor does he present badly-known or badly-understood moral principles. The letter under analysis, despite its frequent biblical references and quotations from the Old Testament, refers in the first place to the current actions of the king of the Franks, adopting both the argumentation and the way of exposition suitable for a great sovereign⁴². Cathwulf addressed a powerful and triumphant ruler who did not expect any advice or instruction, but only erudite expositions that would support his reasons and skilfully inscribe themselves in the current discussion about monarchy.

The discussion of the rise of “the mirror of the prince” as a genre should refer to two letters by Alcuin, the first to Aethelred, king of Northumbria, of 793, and the other addressed to Charlemagne, of 799. Both contain opinions about the exercise of good rule⁴³. Both are generally acknowledged as *specula principis*, although this name has not always been used directly in the literature that discussed them⁴⁴. The first letter was addressed not only to the king but also to the patrician Oswald and Prince Osbert and all the brethren and friends, and its tone

⁴² Cf. I. Deug Su, *Cultura e ideologia nella prima età Carolingia*, “Studi Storici”, vol. 146–147, Roma 1984, p. 40–42.

⁴³ From the very abundant literature on Alcuin let me cite two recently published works, both containing an extensive bibliography. A detailed discussion of the source basis can be found in D. Bullough, *Alcuin. Achievement and Reputation*, Brill 2004 (on letters, to Aethelred, pp. 188, 191, 265, 273). Various aspects of the ideological content of many works by Alcuin have been discussed in the collective volume: *Alcuin, de York à Tours. Écriture, pouvoir et réseaux dans l'Europe du haut Moyen Âge*, ed. Ph. Depreux, B. Judic, “Annales de Bretagne”, vol. 111 (2004).

⁴⁴ It is regarded as “the mirror of the prince” by L. Wallach, *Alcuin and Charlemagne*, *op. cit.*, p. 8, who emphasizes the influence of Pseudo-Cyprianus. Of the same opinion is Y. Sasser, *Royauté et idéologie du Moyen Âge*, Paris 2002, p. 146, as well as R. Meens, *Politics, Mirrors of Princes and the Bible*, *op. cit.*, p. 354. L. Born, *The specula principis*, *op. cit.*, p. 590, enumerates as many as 11 letters by Alcuin (including the above-mentioned two), which he considers to be “mirrors of princes”.

is that of a solemn admonition⁴⁵. It opens with a short exposition of the nature of friendship and duties of a real friend. Then 14 bad deeds are cited that make salvation impossible, unless those who commit them are reformed, do long penance and frequently give alms. The next fragment describes good deeds which may let the addressees of the letter go to Heaven. Alcuin enumerated as many as twenty laudable steps on the way to Heaven and Salvation, from love and worship of God, to humility, virtuous morals and doing justice⁴⁶.

The enumerations consisted first of the names of sins, offences and wicked deeds, and in the second place of virtues, qualities and merits. The moral lessons, though confined to admonitions, were however addressed to the whole political class of the kingdom, which was clearly indicated during the exposition⁴⁷. They were supplemented with instructions how the ruler should act in successively presented situations, towards the poor, widows and orphans, at law-court sessions, and also during the session of his Council. "We also read that the king's happiness comes from the prosperity of his people, victory of his army, good weather, plenty of land, blessing of his sons and good health of his people"⁴⁸. Clearly formulated instructions concerning the preservation of internal peace, loyalty and truth as well as the spotlessness of the rulers were to ensure the prosperity of the state and the subjects, as well as the protection of God⁴⁹. Here we may notice the influence of Pseudo-Cyprianus whose treatise must have been read and commented upon both at York and at the Carolingian court. Due to this influence Alcuin's memorandum assumed the form of a classic "mirror of the prince", since it addressed the whole élite of Northumbria and was full of

⁴⁵ *Epp.*, N^o 18, pp. 49–52, *Excellentissimo filio Aedelredo regi et amicis dulcissimis Osbaldo patricio et Osberhto duci et omnibus fraternae dilectionis amicis...*

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 50, v. 11–13, 18–25.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 51, *Non solum vos, viri clarissimi et filii carissimi, his meis ammonéo literulis. Sed et omnes dilectae gentis principes et diversarum dignitatum nomina...*

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 51, *Legimus quoque, quod regis bonitas totius est gentis prosperitas, victoria exercitus, aeris temperies, terrae habundantia, filiorum benedictio, sanitas plebis.*

⁴⁹ Cf. C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c. 650–c. 850*, Leicester 1995, pp. 167–170. An interesting analysis of the creation of legal order and the attempt to control the administrative chaos expanding in England at that time can be found in P. Wormald's article, *In search of Offa's "law-code"*, in: *People and Places in Northern Europe 500–1600*, ed. I. N. Wood, N. Lund, London 1991, pp. 25–45.

morals, warnings and admonitions. The treatise, written in the form of a letter, concerned the state of the kingdom and the duties of the whole ruling group. Moral recommendations are here complemented by practical instructions referring to public activity, and by concrete advice on the way of performing the royal duties. Thus in the part where the letter discusses various aspects of the mission fulfilled by the king, it becomes a short treatise on the functioning of the state and the function of the ruler.

The other letter of Alcuin's termed as a *speculum* was sent to Charlemagne in the summer of 799. The King of the Franks was called in it the pride of the Christian people, the stronghold of the Church and consolation in our life on earth⁵⁰. The learned adviser considered in it the news from Italy, after the attempt on Pope Leon the Third's life and apologized for refusing to go to Rome. At the same time, lavishing praises and flatteries, he reassured the ruler about his role of the leader of the Christian world, defender of the faith, great law-giver and protector of the oppressed. This is precisely the position from which Charlemagne should assess the tragic events in Rome and to establish order in his whole big state. In fact, after settling matters with the Saxons, a possibility emerged to ideally settle the internal matters in his state and to make his reign meet his highest ambitions. Among the ten tasks of the monarch there were: constant travels, management of the kingdoms, doing justice, reforming the Church, reforming the subject people, correct rewarding of persons of merit, defence of the oppressed, establishing the law, supporting the pilgrims, doing justice to everybody and showing the way to eternal life⁵¹. In this context the ruler was called a new David and rector of all the world⁵².

⁵⁰ *Epp.*, No. 177, p. 292, v. 24–25, *O dulcissime, decus populi christiani, o defensio ecclesiarum Christi, consolatio vitae praesentis.*

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 293, v. 10–14, *Et utinam, ut quandoque divina gratia vobis concedat libertatem a populo nefando Saxonum, iter agere, regna gubernare, iustitias facere, ecclesias renovare, populum corrigere, singulis personis ac dignitatibus iusta decernere, opressos defendere, leges statuere, peregrinos consolari et omnibus ubique aequitatis et caelestis vitae viam ostendere.* Both letters by Alcuin require a separate and longer analysis, which I am going to enclose in my work on the ideology of Charlemagne's monarchy which is under preparation.

⁵² Charlemagne started to be called David only after c. 793, cf. H. Fichte n a u, *Byzanz und die Pfalz zu Aachen*, "Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsschreibung", vol. 59 (1951), pp. 28–31.

The letter left no room for doubt that Charles was the supreme sovereign of all the *imperium christianum* and therefore his duties went far beyond the standard version of a ruler's tasks. However, not a single other treatise on the ideal ruler followed, nor any other letter containing well-justified admonitions. In many of his earlier and later epistles Alcuin admonished in a clearly patronizing way, and offered advice to the kings of Mercia, Northumbria, the sons of the ruler of the Franks who had already ascended the thrones, as well as Carolingian court dignitaries and bishops. However, he never did anything like that in his letters sent to Charlemagne. The message in question was part of a long debate conducted between the monarch and his adviser, a discussion divided into successive letters and continuing for months and years. The comments under our analysis were fragments of a learned discourse that considered the affairs of State, faith, personal responsibility of the ruler in face of God, and his position in all the Christian world, but in each case they were addressed only to one recipient. Universal problems referred directly to Charlemagne, and general matters were subjected to his judgement and his decisions. The letter was very personal in tone and viewed all matters exclusively from the perspective of the king of the Franks. It discussed his occupations, but they were the duties of a special ruler, quite exceptional, whose position in face of the Creator was privileged. Thus it was not a "mirror of the prince", since Charlemagne was generally acknowledged as the supreme, unquestioned arbiter and perfect leader. Alcuin's remarks referred to the cultural and ideological context of his reign and were a learned commentary prepared for the use of a monarch who was the leader of the whole Christian world.

A little later, probably soon after 800, Alcuin wrote a longer treatise, made up of 35 chapters, *De virtutibus ac vitiis liber*, which he dedicated to comes Widon, prefect of the March of Brittany⁵³. In the last chapter of the original, he placed a discussion and definitions of four important (Alcuin called them cardi-

⁵³ See P. Lehmann, *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskatalog*, vol. I, München 1918, p. 79. The basic study of this work of Alcuin is chapter XII from L. Wallach's book, *Alcuin and Charlemagne*, op. cit., pp. 231–254. On comes Widon see *Annales Regni Francorum, Scriptores rerum germanicarum in usum scholarum*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895, p. 108 (799 r.), *Wido comes, qui in marcam Britanniae praesidebat, una cum sociis comitibus Britanniam ingressus totamque perlustrans in deditioem accepit*.

nal) virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, as well as a short explanation of the essence of virtue⁵⁴. In his introduction to this work the author explained the reasons why he wrote it. This was to be an answer to the request of comes Widon (*memorandum petitionis tuae et promissionis meae*)⁵⁵, but at the same time he stressed that he formulated in it a long list of recommendations and admonitions which were to serve general instruction and eternal salvation. In this context the treatise was called a sermon, directed to all the potential recipients, both the clergy and laymen, rich and poor, old and young, servants and masters⁵⁶. The definitions and admonitions he presented were to serve all the people and were not confined to the close circle of the most prominent Frankish magnates. The whole had the form of successive short deliberations on virtues, in the second place on the symptoms of correct and damnable behaviour and finally on sins. Thus Alcuin's work fell into three parts⁵⁷.

At the beginning there are reflections upon the four cardinal virtues, that is prudence, faith, love and hope, which are summed up in a separate paragraph devoted to the need for studying the *Holy Writ* and putting its teachings into practice⁵⁸. This is followed by 22 cases of good and bad behaviour which can be encountered in everyday life. These were admonitions, thickly interspersed with biblical parables about the right reaction to the temptations of life on earth and observation of the injunctions of

⁵⁴ The treatise is included in *PL*, vol. 101, col. 613–638. The dedication to comes Widon has also been published in *Epp.*, N° 305, p. 464. The original text had only 35 chapters (in *PL* we find 36), see P. Lehmann, *op. cit.*, p. 79. The definition of virtue, interesting and giving food for thought, is found at the end of this work, col. 637, *Primo sciendum est quid sit virtus. Virtus est animi habitus, naturae decus, vitae ratio, morum pietas, cultus divinitas, honor hominis, aeternae beatitudinis meritum. Cujus partes sunt, ut diximus, quatuor principales: prudentia, justitia, fortitudo, temperantia.*

⁵⁵ L. Wallach, *Alcuin et Charlemagne, op. cit.*, pp. 232–4, correctly remarks that invoking somebody's request was a typical stylistic device which was to justify the author's right to writing on the subject concerned.

⁵⁶ *PL*, vol. 101, col. 613–614, 638.

⁵⁷ We are against the opinions which see only two parts in this text, the first about virtues and another about sins. See H.-M. Rochais, *Le liber de virtutibus et vitis d'Alcuin. Note pour l'étude des sources*, "Revue Mabillon", vol. 41 (1951), pp. 77–86; L. Wallach, *Alcuin et Charlemagne, op. cit.*, p. 235. The current controversy with earlier opinions is not merely a formal debate, but concerns the principle of division which is of essential importance for the interpretation of the whole work.

⁵⁸ *PL*, vol. 101, col. 617, *Sed ille beatissimus est, qui divinas Scripturas legens, verba vertit in opera.*

proper behaviour. On the one hand, Alcuin definitely recommended charity, patience, forgiveness, humility and penance, on the other he warned severely against anger, hatred, deception and lie. He devoted special attention to the need for a fair judgement, and condemned false witnesses who motivated by anger and hatred offended God, the judges, and innocent people. "Who hates is like the Devil through whose hatred man was deprived of the happiness of Paradise"⁵⁹. Among the concrete cases of behaviour he stressed the importance of alms-giving and fasting. The third part of his work is devoted to deliberations on the eight capital sins, enumerated in succession and discussed in detail. Alcuin starts with pride, then passes to gluttony, lust, avarice, wrath, sloth, despondency and vain glory. This part of his work takes the form of nearly philosophical deliberations and a learned discourse about the interrelationships between sin, weakness of human nature and God's injunctions. The three parts of the treatise doubtless referred to the theological and mystical significance of this number connected with the Holy Trinity, but this division was also to stress the practical character of his work which in the first place was to recall the ideals, then to give concrete instructions for reform, and finally to show the impending dangers.

Luitpold Wallach's proposal to distinguish only two parts in this work aimed to stress that its composition was based on the opposition of virtues and sins and to bring out a special kind of symmetry between the part dealing with good traits and evil that fought against them. Due to such a conception the treatise could be interpreted as very theoretical deliberations pervaded by a philosophical attitude to the duality existing in the world. The war between good and evil takes in it the form of a steady conflict between the message from God and the teachings of the Church on the one hand, and the scheming of the Devil and the temptations of life on earth on the other⁶⁰. Such a view would turn

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, col. 630 B, *Qui invidet, diabolo similis est, qui per invidiam hominem de paradisi felicitate deiecit. Magnus vir est, qui invidiam humilitate superat, discordiam charitate destruit.*

⁶⁰ L. Wallach makes use (*op. cit.*, p. 235) of the fragment of Alcuin's letter: *Tu vero pacem cum omnibus habeas, bellum cum vitis* (*Epp.*, N° 209, p. 349, v. 10), which resembles, indeed, the fragment of the treatise under discussion: *Pax cum boris, et bellum cum vitis, semper habenda est* (col. 617, not cited by L. Wallach). Nevertheless the recommendation to actively fight against sins is only one of the many threads of Alcuin's work, in this case found in the chapter

Alcuin's work into an erudite continuation of St. Augustine's thought and a discourse about the differences between the difficult reality on earth, which is full of traps, and an ideal world after which we should strive⁶¹.

On the other hand, the stress on the three-part composition of this work not only weakens the sharpness of this opposition, but above all allows a new interpretation that brings out the practical character of the treatise⁶². In fact its middle, most extensive part is devoted to remarks on behaviour in everyday situations and contains advice addressed directly to all the interested people⁶³. This found its expression either in questions addressed directly to an imaginary recipient, or in an analysis of detailed problems connected with practical matters⁶⁴. In this way the exposition, almost philosophical in parts, took on the characteristics of "the mirror of a prince" genre and became a useful piece of reading for the Carolingian élite of power. Apart from general admonitions it also contained significant instructions concerning the exercise of power, combining theological reason-

"about peace". There is an evident influence of St. Augustine's thought, but this does not exclude more extensive and far-reaching possibilities of interpretation, which presented the duties of the rulers towards their subjects.

⁶¹ Also H. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel*, *op. cit.*, p. 85, emphasizes the contradiction between good and evil and the struggle between them, outlined by Alcuin. We are, however, of the opinion that the practical and utilitarian dimension of his work deserves more attention.

⁶² Let us note that Alcuin himself also clearly separated eight capital sins, mentioned at the end, from other, earlier-mentioned faults and weaknesses. He did it at the beginning of the chapter about pride, emphasizing the eight capital sins, *Octo sunt vitia principalia vel originalia omnium vitiorum* (col. 632 D). Following his example, we propose to isolate the fragment with four cardinal virtues, discussed at the beginning of the treatise, and to separate it from the middle part.

⁶³ The treatise, according to our proposal, falls into three parts. The first embraces the Introduction with the dedication and chapters cap. 1–5, the second cap. 6–26, the third cap. 27–34 and the conclusion, cap. 35, *De virtutibus quatuor*, as well as the final dedication to comes Widon, cap. 36.

⁶⁴ By way of example let us cite the following fragments, cap. *De fraude cavenda*, col. 628, *Quid times pecuniam tuam perdere, et non times ut totus pereas? Pro acquisitione pecuniae falsum testimonium dicis, mentiris, rapis aliena*; Cap. *De eleemosynis*, col. 626, *In vita tua benefac animae tuae, eleemosynas dans miseris, quia post mortem non habes potestatem bene faciendi*; Cap. *De non tardando converti ad Deum*, col. 623, *Prandium longum non vis habere malum, et vitam longam vis habere malam? Villam emis; bonam desideras*; Cap. *De iudicibus*, col. 629, *Non est persona in iudicio consideranda, sed causa*; Cap. *De falsis testibus*, col. 629, *Si falsi testes separantur, mox mendaces inventuntur*; Cap. *De castitate*, col. 627, *Qui mulierem habet legitimam, legitime utatur ea temporibus opportunis, ut benedictionem mereatur filiorum a Deo recipere*.

ing with concrete recommendations referring to detailed problems of government and behaviour in doubtful or difficult situations. At the same time such a way of presenting opinions and teachings differed considerably from the literary conventions adopted by Alcuin in his letters⁶⁵. The review of qualities helpful to the exercise of power and vices that handicapped political dealings became a detailed guide for the whole state élite and at the same time an erudite dissertation on the principles of royal power. Making use of examples from one's earlier works or citing arguments and cases that occurred in other discussions of the ruler's tasks or treatises about the royal road to Salvation was quite natural. It pointed out the old and well-tested patterns and emphasized the essence of the instructions which showed the only right way to a successful reign. The author introduced them into the catalogue of types of public behaviour and provided with unequivocal moral assessment.

When Alcuin's dissertation appeared, "the mirror of the prince" genre acquired its mature form and became well-known among the wide circles of the élite of the Carolingian world. It continued to be in fashion and was used both in dissertations dealing with the theory of monarchy and the social role of the ruler, as well as those that legitimized the position of the monarch and defined his rights and duties. The 9th century which was just beginning was to bring subsequent works about good rule together with descriptions of the way to be followed by a good sovereign⁶⁶. In the last years of the reign of Charlemagne (probably between 811 and 814) Abbot Smaragd of Saint Mihiel wrote his *Via regia*, dedicated to the already appointed successor to the throne, Louis the Pious, who had long been the king of Aquitaine⁶⁷. The next work in this genre was *De institutione regia* by Jonas of Orléans, written in 830–831⁶⁸. In

⁶⁵ On the literary style of Alcuin's letters, see A. Fiske, *Alcuin and Mystical Friendship*, "Studi Medievali", series 3, vol. 2 (1961), pp. 551–575.

⁶⁶ Cf. an interesting essay, J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The "Via regia" of the Carolingian age*, in: *Trends in Medieval Political Thought*, ed. B. Smalley, Oxford 1965, pp. 22–41, containing deliberations not so much on "mirrors of princes", but rather on the nature of the royal duties and their understanding in the first half of the 9th century.

⁶⁷ See, O. Eberhardt, *Via regia: der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds von Saint-Mihiel und seine litterarische Gattung*, München 1977. Cf. the promised new edition of this treatise, *La voie royale de Smaragde de Saint-Mihiel*, ed. A. Dubreucq.

the last phase of Lothair the Second's reign, about the years 855–859, Sedulius Scottus wrote a learned treatise *De rectoribus christianis*, where in twenty chapters he expounded the principles of good rule and leadership in the Christian world⁶⁹. A little later, about 873, Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, created, for the use of Charles the Bald, his work *De regis persona et regis ministerio*⁷⁰. This was the last significant “mirror of the prince” of the Carolingian era.

With the disintegration of the great empire and the complete downfall of the authority of its supreme sovereign and fragmentation of the universal world of the civilization created by Charlemagne and his direct successors, this kind of literature fell into abeyance for three centuries⁷¹. It seems that there were two main reasons for the disappearance of the demand for this kind of literature. Beginning with the 10th century, the role of a learned adviser at the side of the king changed. His duties started to concern mainly the current political events and the play of forces around the sovereign. The work of the ruler's advisers and associates started to be connected with goals that were available in everyday political practice and with the emerging crises and challenges that the monarchy constantly had to face in its internal policy and while repulsing the external pressure. The tasks set to the associates and experts had to be adjusted to the actions of the ruler within his kingdom, a state which was much smaller and incomparably more centred on matters of the region, province and the local communities, than it was the case in the universal Carolingian empire.

At the same time there arose new functions and forms of action of the monarchy, adjusted to the arising estate divisions,

⁶⁸ See Jonas d'Orléans, *Le métier de roi*, ed. A. Dubreucq, Paris 1995, pp. 45–49. Cf. earlier edition, with comments which are still pertinent, J. Reviron, *Les idées politico-religieuses d'un évêque du IX siècle: Jonas d'Orléans et son De institutione regia, étude et texte critique*, Paris 1930, esp. pp. 56–68.

⁶⁹ S. Hellmann, *Sedulius Scottus*, München 1906 (*Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters*, ed. L. Traube, vol. 1, part 1), pp. 4–6. See also J. Strzelczyk, *Iroszkoci*, *op. cit.*, pp. 286–297.

⁷⁰ See H. Schrörs, *Hincmar, Erzbischof von Reims*, Hildesheim 1967 (reprint 1st ed.), pp. 385–387, also J. Devisse, *Hincmar, archévêque de Reims*, Genève 1975, vol. II, pp. 709–712.

⁷¹ M. Jonsson, *La situation du speculum*, *op. cit.*, p. 395, points out the period c. 1180 as the moment of a new tide of those works, but she confines herself to citing this date.

the feudal law and a new royal ideology. Profound social changes brought by the shaping of feudalism essentially changed the ways in which the ruler functioned and his relations with his subjects. This is where we perceive another reason why no more treatises on the improvement of the policy and behaviour of rulers were written in the 10th–12th centuries. The old examples from the Carolingian era became part of a great dynastic legend and changed into an idealized model, too magnificent and remote to be universally followed in the period that was coming. Only after some time elapsed, the changes occurring in society and culture could be taken into account and distinct modifications could be introduced to “the mirror of the prince” as a literary genre, which made it attractive again.

(Translated by Agnieszka Kreczmar)