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Otto III at Aachen*

By Eliza Garrison, Middlebury College

In late January 1002, after the Emperor Otto III's untimely death at the age of 21 at his palace of Paterno north of Rome, his body and the imperial funeral cortège began the long journey to the Palace Chapel of Aachen in time for an Easter Sunday burial.¹ Just after crossing the Alps, and against the historical backdrop of a highly contentious battle over the succession to the crown, the imperial corpse stood in for the body of Christ during Holy Week festivities at crucial sites along the way.² Once the cortège reached the Palace Chapel, Otto III's body was laid to rest before the altar to Mary in the church's lower level, in close proximity to Charlemagne, whose own grave likely stood at the building's western entrance. This final act brought to a close a lifetime of events that were centered at Aachen, and which the history of the palace chapel and its structure had imbued with meaning. For Otto III and those who donated liturgical artworks to the Aachen treasury in his honor, that meaning derived in particular from the site's structural fusion of political and spiritual power and its spoliating imperative. This latter term characterizes the high degree of coordination that the early medieval objects in the

* I wish to thank Karen Blough, Adam Cohen, and Evan Gatti for their thoughtful feedback on earlier drafts of this essay. David Warner also graciously corresponded with me on aspects of Otto III's *renovatio*. Otto Karl Werckmeister kindly presented me with a copy of his own unpublished paper on Otto III's patronage at Aachen. This article derives from my forthcoming book, *Ottonian Imperial Art and Portraiture*. Unless otherwise indicated, translations from German and Latin are my own.

¹ See Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 182-188 for a more detailed description of the events surrounding Otto III's death. Later page references to this book will refer to this edition.

² Lothar Bornscheuer, *Miseriae Regum: Untersuchungen zum Krisen- und Todesgedanken in den herrschaftstheologischen Vorstellungen der ottonisch-salischen Zeit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), 208-211.

Aachen treasury display; like the palace chapel itself, Ottonian works in the treasury all consist to varying degrees of reused precious objects as a way of making clear or establishing the donor's connection to a series of select historical and biblical legacies.

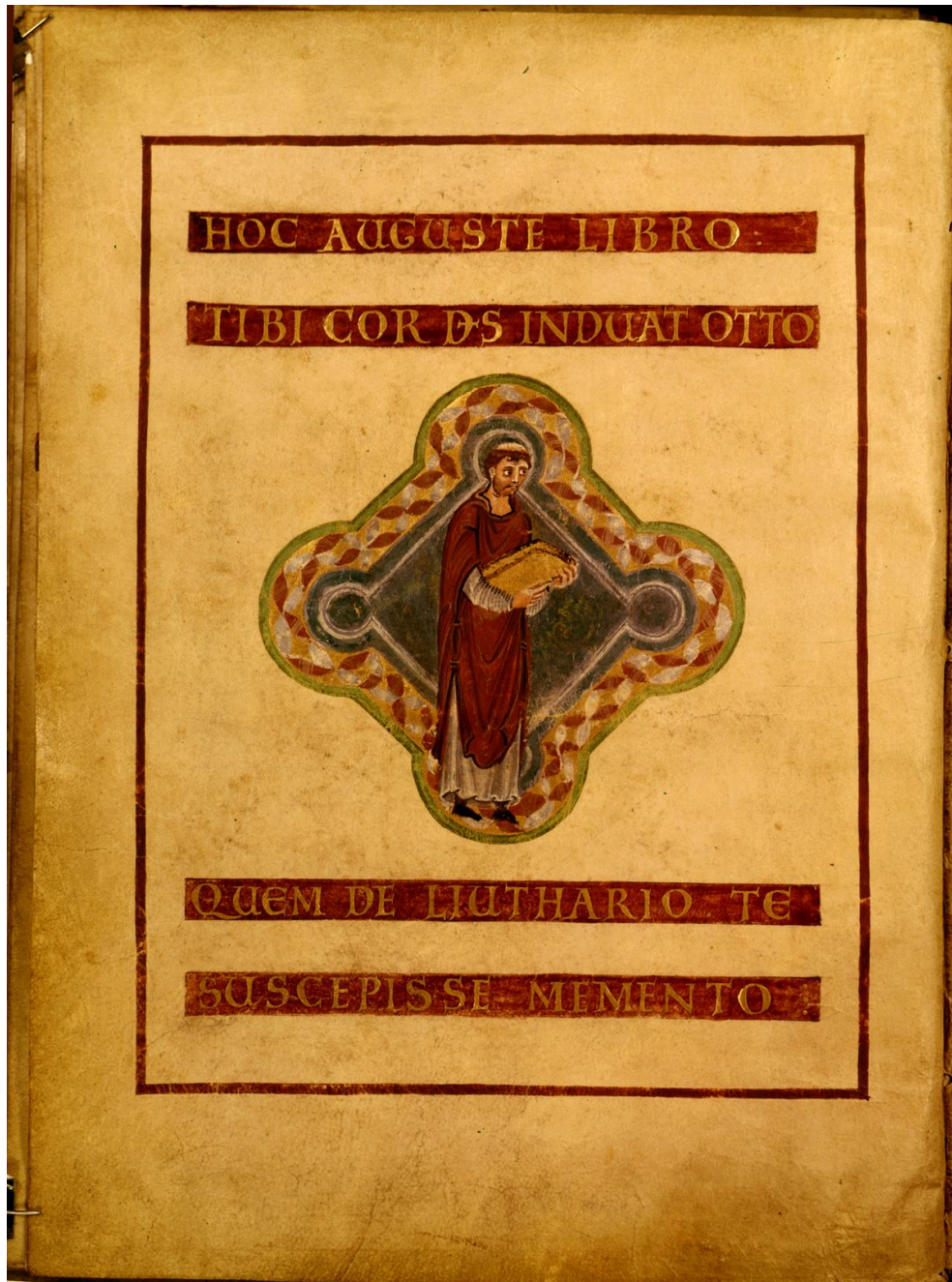


Figure 1. Monk Liuthar and Dedication Inscription, Liuthar Gospels, manuscript, c. 990, 29.8 cm x 21.5cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Folio 15v, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.

The artworks at the center of this essay – the *Liuthar Gospels*, the *Gospels of Otto III* and the *Lothar Cross* (**fig. 1-6**) – arrived in the treasury in celebration of Otto III's coronation on Christmas day 983 or on the occasion of his invention of Charlemagne's tomb at Pentecost 1000.³ The visual programs of the individual objects and the circumstances surrounding their donation to the treasury were part of a larger material dialogue that Otto III – both as king and emperor – carried out at this site. Much of the symbolic meaning of this dialogue, which ultimately culminated in his burial on the day of Christ's Resurrection, was shaped both by the reuse of antique and Carolingian objects and by the mimicry of historical events from Antiquity and from the recent past.

This mimicry, I argue, stood in a mutually conditional relationship to the use of consistent types to represent the ruler. Otto III's residencies at Aachen and his donations to the Palace Chapel treasury, therefore, took much of their meaning from their replicative function, indeed from their real and imagined connection to historical events and personages. Moreover, considered as a body of material, Otto III's donations to the treasury were intended to function as material proof of his internalization of the ideals of his predecessors' reigns. The propagation of this in visual and material terms depended in large part upon the works' representational significance, both on their own and in the aggregate. All of the objects at the center of this essay

³ Though not a comprehensive bibliography, the following studies are foundational points of reference for all of these works: Wilhelm Messerer, *Zum Kaiserbild des Aachener Ottonenkodex* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1959); Percy Ernst Schramm and Florentine Mutherich, *Denkmale der deutschen Könige und Kaiser* (Munich: Prestel, 1968); Ernst Günther Grimme, *Der Aachener Domschatz* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1972); Stephen G. Nichols, *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography* (New Haven: Yale University Press); Johannes Fried, *Otto III. und Boleslaw Chrobry* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989); Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis Jestice (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Ilene Forsyth, "Art with History: The Role of *Spolia* in the Cumulative Work of Art," in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. Doula Mouriki et al (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 153-162; David Warner, "Ideals and Action in the Reign of Otto III," *Journal of Medieval History* 25/1 (1999): 1-18; *Das Evangeliar Ottos III.: Clm 4453 der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München*, ed. Florentine Mutherich and Karl Dachs (Munich: Prestel, 2001); David Warner, trans., *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); David Ganz, *Medien der Offenbarung: Visionsdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Reimer, 2008).

thereby respond in polyvalent ways to the presence of an *imago*, or a pre-established series of representational and ideological norms, which the young ruler embodied in word, image and deed.⁴



Figure 2. Otto III enthroned, Liuthar Gospels, manuscript, c. 990, 29.8 cm x 21.5cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Folio 16r, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.

⁴ The bibliography on the *imago* is extensive. I cite therefore studies that have informed the argument presented here: Caroline Walker Bynum, "Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31/ 1 (January, 1980): 1-17; Thomas E.A. Dale, "The Individual, the Resurrected Body, and Romanesque Portraiture: The Tomb of Rudolf von Schwaben in Merseburg," *Speculum* 77/3 (July 2002): 707-743; Jean-Claude Schmitt, "La culture de l'*imago*," *Annales* 51/1 (1996): 3-36; Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, "Medieval Identity: A Sign and a Concept," *The American Historical Review* 105/5 (December, 2000): 1489-1533; Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, "Replica: Images of Identity and the Identity of Images in Prescholastic France," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 46-64.



Figure 3. Cover, Gospels of Otto III, c. 1000, manuscript, 34.7 cm x 24.5 cm. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Clm. 4453.



Figure 4. Otto III Enthroned, Approached by Personifications of His Subject Territories, Gospels of Otto III, c. 1000, manuscript, 33.4 cm x 24.2 cm. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Clm. 4453, Folios 23v and 24r.



Figure 5. Lothar Cross, jeweled side (“Front”), c. 1000, gold, gilt silver and gems over a wood core, 49.8 cm x 38.8 cm x 2.3 cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.



Figure 6. Lothar Cross, engraved side (“Back”), c. 1000, gold, gilt silver and gems over a wood core, 49.8 cm x 38.8 cm x 2.3 cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.

The Coronation of 983 and the Liuthar Gospels

Otto III's coronation took place at Aachen on Christmas day, 983, nearly three weeks after his father Otto II's death in Rome.⁵ The new king was but three years old and would not take over the reigns of government until 994. Originally scheduled as an elevation to co-rulership, the plans for the coronation ceremony were laid soon after Otto III's election as co-ruler in Verona earlier that year. According to reports of the event, news of Otto II's death reached his son and his caretakers either while the ceremony was underway or just after its completion; whatever the case may be, it is clear that this news immediately changed the meaning of the coronation rite. The date of Christ's own birth was particularly auspicious, for it corresponded not only exactly to Otto II's coronation as co-emperor in Rome in 967, but also to Charlemagne's own imperial coronation in the holy city in 800. The Aachen palace was perhaps the most hallowed royal residence in the Ottonian empire, and Otto III's coronation at the palace chapel likewise aligned him and his rule with his grandfather Otto I, the first Saxon king to renew the coronation tradition there. As embodied in the figures of Archbishops Willigis of Mainz and Johannes of Ravenna, who led the ritual, the ceremony was a display of the unity of the empire. Such a display was, of course, of particular import as 983 drew to a close, for Otto II's own residence in Italy was occasioned by protracted military activity against Islamic forces on the peninsula.⁶

Certainly a number of precious objects for liturgical use were presented in Otto III's honor on this day, yet the *Liuthar Gospels* is the only work to survive (**figs. 1-2**). Made at Reichenau around 983 (and now missing its original cover), the work contains one of the most

⁵ For details on this event, see Althoff, *Otto III*, 29-30; Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 3:26, in Warner, *Ottonian Germany*, 147-148.

⁶ Althoff, *Otto III*, 29-30.

famous dedication scenes in the history of Ottonian art.⁷ As Stephen Beissel and Klaus Gereon Beuckers have suggested, the manuscript was destined for ceremonial use and was probably made as part of an initial round of official donations to the palace chapel treasury.⁸ Mutherich's short essay on the dating of the *Liuthar Gospels* implicitly connects its creation to the coronation of 983, which was originally planned as an elevation to co-rulership; even if the book was not made in time for presentation to the Palace Chapel treasury on the date of Otto III's royal coronation, the dedication series was certainly intended to commemorate the event.⁹

⁷ Questions relating to its proper dating have dominated the literature on this manuscript for quite some time, and my own analysis of this work will take as its point of departure Florentine Mutherich's suggested range of 983-990 as the correct one for the work's date of production. It should be said that this dating is still a matter of debate and some scholars associate this image with the time of Otto III's imperial coronation in 996, which took place in Rome. I agree with Mutherich's analysis, however: the term "august" in the inscription on folio 15v points to a subject whose eventual rule as emperor is anticipated. Some stylistic analyses point to dates of production in the 980s, likely on the heels of the *Egbert Codex*, whose creator, the so-called "Gregory Master" from Trier, clearly was in contact with the illuminators of this and other manuscripts painted at Reichenau. It is also significant that the ruler is not referred to as emperor, which would not be entirely fitting for a manuscript created in honor of (or on the heels of) and imperial coronation. See Florentine Mutherich, "Zur Datierung des Aachener ottonischen Evangeliars," *Aachener Kunstblätter* 32 (1966): 66-69. On the *Egbert Codex*, see the essays and reproductions in Gunther Franz, ed., *Der Egbert Codex: Ein Höhepunkt der Buchmalerei vor 1000 Jahren. Handschrift 24 der Stadtbibliothek Trier* (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2005).

For more recent studies and for references to the rest of the literature, see: Ulrich Kuder, "Die Ottonen in der ottonischen Buchmalerei," in *Herrschaftspräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, ed. Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1998), 137-234. Harmut Hoffmann, whose *Buchkunst und Königtum* provides paleographic analyses of a number of Ottonian manuscripts, has offered slightly problematic dates for this manuscript. Indeed, falling back on art-historical analyses that date the work to the year 1000, he offers dates from between 990-1000. This later dating is connected to the dating of the ruler image. See Hartmut Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum*, 38, 72, 307. Ernst Kantorowicz's foundational if problematic analysis of the dedication image should also not go without mention: idem., *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 61-78.

⁸ Stephen Beissel, *Die Bilder der Handschrift des Kaisers Otto im Münster zu Aachen* (Aachen: Rudolph Barth, 1886), 2; Klaus Gereon Beuckers, "Das ottonische Stifterbild," in *Die Ottonen: Kunst, Architektur, Geschichte*, ed. Klaus Gereon Beuckers et al (Petersberg: Imhof, 2006), 97.

⁹ Mutherich, "Die Datierung des Aachener ottonischen Evangeliars," 66. Mutherich's argument here relies on Werner Ohnsorge, "Das Mitkaisertum in der abendländischen Geschichte des früheren Mittelalters," in *Abendland und Byzanz: gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte der byzantinisch-abendländischen Beziehungen und des Kaisertums* (Darmstadt: Gentner, 1958), 268-272. Ohnsorge argues that members of the imperial family were referred to as "augustus" or "augusta" at court. This title, Ohnsorge notes, was frequently used in reference to the co-regent. For his discussion of this see "Das Mitkaisertum," 261-268. Such a title would have been entirely appropriate within the pages of a manuscript that was originally created for an elevation to co-rulership. Though tempting, speculation about the book's original patron is ultimately unknowable.

The singular iconography of the dedication series, which stands as the visual gateway to the gospel text and is the only two-folio scene in the entire manuscript, has inspired many analyses by historians and art historians alike.¹⁰ Like the dedication image in the Gospels of Otto III (**fig. 4**), Otto III's later manuscript donation to the Aachen treasury, the scene appears as a moment frozen both in time and outside of it; its composition immediately makes clear that it is to represent some eternal "truth" about the structure of Otto III's reign.

The tonsured figure of the monk Liuthar appears on the left (fol. 15v): the namesake of an entire school of manuscript painting at Reichenau and Trier, he may have been the book's scribe, illuminator, or both. He grips the very manuscript in which his own image is included in his hands as he approaches the king's figure on the facing page. In a bird's eye-view that approximates the king's own perspective from the throne loge at the Palace Chapel, Liuthar's image is set against a large rectangular quatrefoil that recalls an *opus sectile* marble floor.¹¹

The golden inscription – a memento of the act of presentation – is divided into two sets of two lines of text. In keeping with the physical separation of Liuthar and the king within the structure of the Palace Chapel, Otto's name appears in the upper reaches of the inscription, while Liuthar's is placed at the bottom. It reads:

May God clothe your heart
with this book,
O august Otto,
Remember Liuthar
from whom you received it.¹²

¹⁰ Johannes Fried, *Otto III. und Boleslaw Chrobry: Das Widmungsbild des Aachener Evangeliars, der 'Akt von Gnesen' und das frühe polnische Königtum* (Stuttgart, Steiner, 2001); Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 61-78.

¹¹ It is tempting to see this pattern as a reproduction of the floor of the Palace Chapel's interior octagon, yet there is no study known to me that could confirm this. The pattern of the early twentieth century marble floor of the central octagon, however, recalls the background that the monk Liuthar stands against.

¹² Hoc auguste libro/Tibi cor d[eu]s induat Otto/Quem de Liuthario te/Suscepisse memento



Figure 7. Interior View of Aachen Palace Chapel with view toward altars to Christ (second story) and Mary (ground floor) in East, photo Torsten Reimann.

On folio 16 recto, Otto III sits enthroned, his body enclosed within a golden mandorla. Here the perspective shifts to a cross-section of the palace chapel's glittering interior in a cutaway view that recalls, if schematically, Liuthar's own position (**fig. 7**). The images on each folio, therefore, reproduce in a chiastic fashion the reciprocal views of both Liuthar and the king. The ruler portrait likewise provides a generalized impression of the coronation event, with the young ruler's elevation on Charlemagne's throne, in an architectural space where heaven and earth were believed to converge.

Static yet simultaneously in motion, Otto III's figure was modeled on Carolingian images of Christ in Majesty, and likely bears a resemblance to the Carolingian mosaic of the enthroned Christ of the Second Coming that once stood at the center of the Chapel's shimmering cupola.¹³ Otto III's pose is strikingly christomimetic: with the royal orb clutched in his right hand, his arms are extended outward as if mimicking Christ on the Cross. A crouching grisaille figure of *Terra* supports the weight of his throne and emphasizes Otto III's position between Heaven and Earth, and the king appears consequently both heavy and weightless. In the midst of an image that is often called an apotheosis, Otto III's figure nonetheless remains motionless: he is an object moved by an external force.

The reason for the king's elevation to the upper reaches of the image is his coronation by God's own hand. Framed by a blue clipeus and set against a golden cross, the Hand of God creates a formal model for the image of the king below. God's hand penetrates the king's golden mandorla from outside of the miniature's deep red frame and places a crown on Otto III's head. In the segment of the coronation rite that follows the ruler's enthronement and precedes his

¹³ The current mosaic of the Second Coming dates from 1882 and is a reconstruction of that scene in the chapel's dome. This replaced an earlier mosaic from 1165, when the image was rearranged to suit the installation of Frederick Barbarossa's octagonal chandelier. This mid-twelfth century cupola mosaic replaced and reproduced a Carolingian mosaic image with the same iconography.

receipt of the crown, the officiating archbishop reminds the participants that the ruler's power derives "from the authority of the omnipotent God and our established tradition."¹⁴ Winged symbols of the Four Evangelists hover on either side of Otto III's figure; together they hold aloft a blank, uncut piece of parchment that indeed covers his heart. On either side of the king's throne two noble figures - both men are crowned and clothed much like Otto III - stand at attention and gesture toward the event in the center. Still a matter of scholarly debate, their identity remains uncertain, yet it is possible that they are a shorthand version of Otto III's lineage; they could be generalized representations of dukes or perhaps images of his father and grandfather, who make way for his ascension to the throne. In either case, these noble figures visually embody the segments of the coronation ritual that stress the importance of lineage and tradition.¹⁵ Below the coronation scene, two pairs of representatives from the ecclesiastical and military realms stand at attention, and their placement here reproduces an idealized political hierarchy. Overall, this image visually summons much of the symbolic language of the coronation ritual, which, like the structure of the Palace Chapel, was intended to reify a collusion of heaven and earth.¹⁶

The facing inscription makes clear that Otto is to use the knowledge contained in the gospel text to clothe, or shape, his heart, the receptacle for God's love, the seat of the soul and, in platonic thought, the seat of the mind.¹⁷ By creating connections between the dedication series,

¹⁴ "per auctoritatem Dei omnipotentis et praesentem traditionem nostram." See Schramm, *Kaiser, Könige und Päpste*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1968-1971), 82.

¹⁵ Johannes Fried has proposed that these two figures represent Boleslaw Chrobry and Stephan of Hungary, and that this manuscript image should be considered in relation to Otto III's meeting with Chrobry in Gnesen/Gniezno during Lent of 1000. Fried is perhaps not wrong in identifying these figures as royalty, but the inscription is not suitable for an imperial recipient. See Fried, *Otto III. und Boleslaw Chrobry*, passim.

¹⁶ Schramm, *Kaiser, Könige und Päpste*, 59-87.

¹⁷ Wilhelm Messerer was the first to propose a reading of this image that relates the "induere" in the image to the impression of the message of the gospels on the king's heart. My interpretation of the image takes Messerer's argument as a point of departure. See Wilhelm Messerer, *Zum Kaiserbild des Ottonencodex* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1959).

the building and the ceremony the book commemorates, the *Liuthar Gospels* was a critical object among many that incorporated the king's memory and image into the material history of the site.

The Ruler Image and the *imago*

Otto III's figure is derived from typological ruler images prevalent on Ottonian seals and coins and also from representations of Christ in Majesty found in Carolingian bibles present in the library at Reichenau.¹⁸ Typological portraits such as this image were important visual tools in the projection of political permanence and solidity. Using prior considerations of the history of the individual as crucial points of departure, Caroline Walker Bynum has looked closely at the emergence of new ways of thinking about the self in relation to a larger group from about 1050 onward, noting in particular that "twelfth century people tended to write about themselves and others as types."¹⁹ Studies that have built upon the interpretive framework Bynum offered in her analysis have also attended to medieval theories of selfhood, paying special attention to the belief that the adherence to an established model, an *imago*, could properly shape one's own spirit.²⁰ The faithful observance of a representational canon, therefore, had the capacity to mold or shape one's character and public image; the *imago* thus had a material aspect, and it could

¹⁸ Compare this image of Otto III to that of Christ in Majesty from the *Vivian Bible* (also called the *First Bible of Charles the Bald*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Lat. 1). On the library at Reichenau, see Albert Boeckler, "Bildvorlagen der Reichenau," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 12 (1949): 17-20; Anton von Euw, "Die Darmstädter Gero-Codex und die künstlerisch verwandten Reichenauer Prachthandschriften," in *Kaiserin Theophanu: Begegnung des Ostens und Westens um die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends*, vol. 1, eds. Anton von Euw and Peter Schreiner (Cologne: Schnütgen Museum, 1991), 197-204.

¹⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum, "Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31/1 (January, 1980): 9. Bynum's study built upon the following analyses, among others: R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 219-257; Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); John Benton, "Individualism and Conformity in Medieval Western Europe," in *Individualism and Conformity in Classical Islam*, eds. Amin Banani and Speros Vryonis (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977), 145-158.

²⁰ Thomas E.A. Dale, "The Individual, the Resurrected Body, and Romanesque Portraiture," 707-743; Jean-Claude Schmitt, "La culture de l'*imago*," 3-36.

likewise define the way in which an individual was remembered. In short, the steady sameness of typological images in the early medieval period reinforced their representational functions.

Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak's own considerations of early medieval seals and semiotics have addressed the ways in which the act of creating typological imagery, in what she calls the "prescholastic" era of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, lent meaning to the images themselves.²¹ Her investigations of early medieval seal imagery have established that the relationship between a model and its copy (or a seal and its imprint) was conceived of in religious terms and likened to the relationship between Christ and God. Further, the process of making typological imagery included the creation of a physical relationship between the owner of the seal and his impression.²² When considering portraits that derived from types on official seals like that of Otto III, it stands to reason that their meanings must be closely related, if not the same. Indeed, the ruler image of Otto III in the *Liuthar Gospels*, when compared to contemporary seals, appears to have been modeled in part from a seal matrix: where seal imprints show the ruler with the royal orb in his left hand and the scepter in his right, the *Liuthar Gospels* image appears as a partial reverse of the seal, as if it were itself an imprint (**figs. 2, 9**). Taking Bedos-Rezak's arguments into consideration, the use of a type derived from both official seals and images of Christ in Majesty could guarantee the ruler's presence even in his physical absence and potentially could reify the elision of ruler and Christ that was laid out in the very structure of the Palace Chapel, with the altar to Christ in the upper level directly facing the throne loge (**fig. 8**).

²¹ Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, "Replica: Images of Identity and the Identity of Images in Prescholastic France," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 47.

²² Bedos-Rezak, "Replica: Images of Identity," 48, 54.

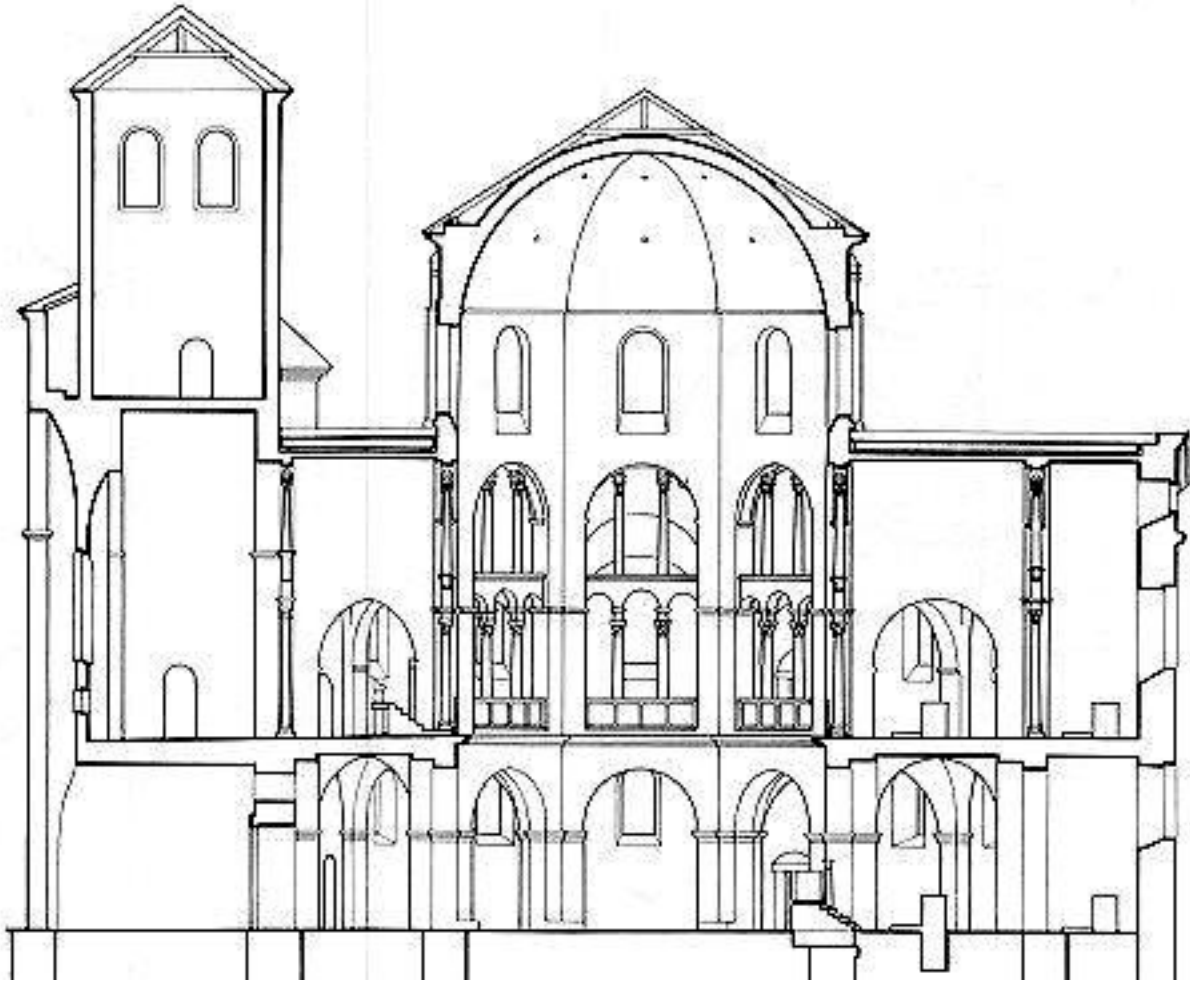


Figure 8. Transverse Section of Palace Chapel with view of throne loge in west (on left) and altars to Mary and Christ in east (on right), Aachen, image in the public domain.



Figure 9. Seal of Otto III, used between 985 and 996, image in the public domain.

The dedication miniature on folio 16 recto renders the coronation ceremony as a physical and spiritual elevation of the king, who, like his father and grandfather before him, is presented with the texts of the gospels as a guide to proper government. Since this book was not destined for Otto III's personal use and edification, it was not a traditional "mirror of princes"; it was rather a holy object whose use by the canons of the palace chapel made ever more concrete the

connections between the earthly and spiritual hierarchies visualized within the book's pages. Thus, the spiritual and political benefits Otto III derived from this book were as passive as his image in the upper level of the dedication miniature. Here, the king remains static in the midst of the four evangelist symbols who, together, hold a blank length of uncut parchment over his heart. Here, the "clothing" of the king's heart with the book is an act of which Otto III is the focus, but he is not its motivating force.

By virtue of its similarity to other images, the ruler portrait in the *Liuthar Gospels* referenced Otto III's likeness to his predecessors as well as his likeness to Christ.²³ In turn, the rest of the manuscript's iconographic program formally harnessed essential aspects of the chapel's structure: like the ruler image, each of the miniatures is placed within a tall, rounded frame that recalls a cutaway view of the Palace Chapel. This series of correlations connects the realm of the ruler with that of biblical experience; it likewise makes clear that the Palace Chapel is a site where this connection is reified.²⁴ Here, the projection of the king's Christ-likeness assured that the Gospels would clothe his heart, just as the work could testify to the king's formation after his father's image. In the same way that a seal imprint could carry with it an authorization of the ruler's presence, the "seal type" visible in the ruler image in the *Liuthar Gospels*, placed at the gateway to the Word itself, also had the power to form the young ruler.

²³ I thank Evan Gatti for encouraging me to consider the priestly nature of Otto III's *christomimesis* here. A fuller consideration of this connection will be a part of the book-length study on Ottonian ruler imagery from which this essay derives.

²⁴ Otto Karl Werckmeister has discussed this at some length in an unpublished paper entitled "The Donations of Otto III to the Imperial Chapel at Aachen." Werckmeister writes of this correlation: "Comparisons such as this [i.e. between buildings and images] are validated by the observation, established long ago by authors such as Krautheimer and Bandmann, that analogies between medieval buildings which establish model-copy relationships and other filiations, usually rest on no more than one or two points of structural similarity, rather than on detailed imitations of the visual appearance of the architecture. A comparison between the architectonic compositions of a building and a manuscript will furthermore have to take into account the fundamental aesthetic difference between the simultaneity of architecture and the sequential unfolding of structure in a codex." I thank Karl Werckmeister for providing me with a copy of this paper.

The “clothing” of the ruler in the dedication image stands in a direct relationship to the curious evangelist portraits that introduce each of the gospels (**figs. 10-13**). All of the evangelist portraits – whose figures derive from Byzantine prototypes – show their subjects as larger-than-life. Each sits in his study, which, like the dedication image and all of the other images in the



Figure 10. Evangelist Matthew, Liuthar Gospels, manuscript, c. 990, 29.8 cm x 21.5cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Folio 21v, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.



Figure 11. Evangelist Mark, Liuthar Gospels, manuscript, c. 990, 29.8 cm x 21.5cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Folio 80v, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.



Figure 12. Evangelist Luke, Liuthar Gospels, manuscript, c. 990, 29.8 cm x 21.5cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Folio 122v, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.



Figure 13. Evangelist John, Liuthar Gospels, manuscript, c. 990, 29.8 cm x 21.5cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Folio 190v, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.

Liuthar Gospels, appears as a cutaway view of the Palace Chapel interior. Both the king and the evangelists receive their knowledge of the Word in analogous processes of “clothing.” In these portraits, the transmission of the Word to each of the evangelists includes their physical connection to blank scrolls of parchment that frame their haloes and which their respective symbols display frontally to the viewer.²⁵

The coordination of the entire illumination cycle with the structure of the Palace Chapel is especially clear in two miniatures in the gospel of Luke that contain additional visual references to the tripartite division of the arches in the upper level of the chapel (**figs. 14-15**). Christ’s figure is at the center of both: the Presentation in the Temple (129v) and Christ in the House of Mary and Martha (151v). In the Presentation image, the viewer is presented with a cross-section of the temple in Jerusalem that is set inside the larger arcade of the miniature’s frame. The temple’s structure approximates a transverse section of the Palace Chapel, with its octagonal double-shell plan and its high rounded cupola.

The Presentation, f. 129v, directly follows that of the Nativity, f. 128r, (**fig. 16**); the scene for the Christmas feast is organized in two tiers, with the swaddled Christ child at the center and Joseph and Mary to either side. Like their royal analogues in the dedication miniature, Joseph and Mary raise their hands in wonder as two groups of angels announce the birth to two groups of shepherds assembled below. In the scene of Christ in the House of Mary and Martha (f. 151v), Christ’s figure – with his outstretched arms and his elevation above Mary, whose body supports

²⁵ Just as the vesting of the king and that of the evangelists with the Word are presented here as related processes, there is a similar consistency between the formal arrangement of the coronation image and a number of the biblical scenes in the rest of the book. Ultimately this correlation strengthens further the intended connections between Christ and king. In his unpublished paper on Otto III’s donations to Aachen, Karl Werckmeister has proposed that the consistent visual evocation of the physical structure of the building and the composition of the miniatures in the *Liuthar Gospels* is an attempt to recreate the simultaneity of the experience of an architectural space that itself embodies and contains the Word. This experience, as Werckmeister notes, is rendered sequentially in the gospel scenes. Thus, the assembly of images is to be taken in as a totality; their meanings could be transferred, through the book’s use at the palace chapel, to the king both during his lifetime and after his death.

Christ's feet – closely recalls the combined image of Otto III and *Terra*. As we will see, the sole extant work associated with Otto III's 983 coronation stands at the beginning of material and artistic trajectories to which his later donations responded. That is, Otto III's later gifts to the treasury made clear that the expectations laid out in the visual program of the *Liuthar Gospels* were fulfilled.



Figure 14. Presentation in the Temple, Liuthar Gospels, manuscript, c. 990, 29.8 cm x 21.5cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Folio 129v, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.



Figure 15. Christ in the House of Mary and Martha, Liuthar Gospels, manuscript, c. 990, 29.8 cm x 21.5cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Folio 151v, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.



Figure 16. Nativity, Liuthar Gospels, manuscript, c. 990, 29.8 cm x 21.5cm. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Folio 128r, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.



Figure 17. Ivory *situla*, c. 1000, 17.7 cm tall. Cathedral Treasury, Aachen, Photo by Ann Münchnow, photo ©: Domkapitel Aachen.

Pentecost 1000 and the Response to the Liuthar Gospels in the Gospels of Otto III

Otto III's next extant group of donations, which comprised in part the *Gospels of Otto III*, the *Lothar Cross*, and an ivory holy water vessel, arrived in the Palace Chapel treasury on the occasion of Otto III's celebration of Pentecost at Aachen in 1000 (**figs. 3-6, 17**). Otto III arrived in Aachen from Quedlinburg, where he had celebrated Easter and visited with his sister Adelheid, the abbess of St. Servatius. The emperor had spent the last days of the Lenten season in Poland, where he had been a guest at the court of the Polish duke Boleslaw Chrobry. Both rulers established at this time a formal *amicitia*, which included the elevation of the Polish town of Gniezno to an archbishopric. Gniezno's elevation was occasioned by Bishop Adalbert of Prague's (d. 997) canonization and this meeting was more generally a public celebration of a reinvigoration of the Christian mission in the east, in the service of which Adalbert had lost his life. The meeting did in fact establish a short-lived measure of peace between the empire and Poland, while it likewise celebrated the connections both Chrobry and Otto III in particular had to Adalbert himself.²⁶ If we can consider this pact's importance as a renewal of Christ's own mission to the Apostles, the renewed commitment to the Christian mission east of the Elbe must have inflected the overall message of Otto III's later celebration of the Pentecost feast at Aachen.²⁷ Otto III's support of the conversion effort in Poland depended upon his diplomatic

²⁶ Chrobry had purchased Adalbert's remains from the pagan Prussians (the group responsible for Adalbert's death) and interred the missionary's body in Gniezno, the center of Chrobry's own territory; Adalbert's remains, as the story goes, immediately began to work miracles that occasioned his canonization only three years later. Otto III, for his part, had been on friendly terms with Adalbert; during an interruption from his Episcopal duties, Adalbert took on monk's robes at St. Bonifazio and Alessio in Rome. Otto III is known to have visited him at both places with relative frequency. See Johannes Fried, *Otto III. und Boleslaw Chrobry*, 13-20.

²⁷ Matthew Gabriele has come to some conclusions about Otto III's visit to Aachen in 1000 that are at points similar to mine. Gabriele's arguments are based on his scrutiny of Otto III's diplomas in the period leading up to this visit. By contrast, mine are based primarily on a consideration of the art-historical evidence, and were reached prior to reading Gabriele's essay. See Matthew Gabriele, "Otto III, Charlemagne, and Pentecost A.D. 1000: A Reconsideration Using Diplomatic Evidence," in *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Palgrave/MacMillan, 2002), 111-132.

relationship with Boleslaw Chrobry, particularly since the emperor had chosen to reside primarily on the Italian peninsula.²⁸

By the time of his arrival at Aachen in 1000, the twenty-year old Otto III had been emperor for roughly four years and likely had been ruling his territory independently for six. He had also been residing in Rome since February 998 in his palace on the Palatine hill, which itself stood on the rubble of the palace of the Emperor Augustus.²⁹ Otto III's return to Rome was occasioned by revolt of Roman patricians and the anti-pope Johannes Philagothos. From this point onward, Otto III's imperial seal included the device *renovatio imperii romanorum*, whose meanings numerous historians, beginning with Percy Ernst Schramm, have attempted to define.³⁰ Otto III's teacher and political advisor, Pope Sylvester II, the former Gerbert of Aurillac (also known as Gerbert of Reims), likely worked closely with the emperor in propagating the idea of the *renovatio*. One of the most learned men of his time, Gerbert of Aurillac had entered the imperial circle as Otto III's tutor in 997. It was Gerbert who expanded the emperor's familiarity with a range of foundational works of classical philosophy and history.³¹

Regardless of the success or failure of the *renovatio*, both the Pope and the emperor, as the first millennium came to a close, were interested in elevating Rome as the center of political

²⁸ Henry II's relationship to Chrobry was outwardly antagonistic by comparison.

²⁹ Percy Ernst Schramm, *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio*, 2nd ed (Darmstadt: Gentner, 1957), 102, 108-109, and 108, notes 2 and 3. Carlrichard Brühl has provided secure evidence for the palace's location on the Palatine as opposed to the Aventine. See Brühl, "Die Kaiserpfalz bei St. Peter und die Pfalz Ottos III. auf dem Palatin (Neufassung 1983)," in *Aus Mittelalter und Diplomatie. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, vol. 1 (Hildesheim; Munich: Weidmann, 1989), 20-31. David Warner provides a succinct and clear analysis of the historical significance of this palace in "Ideals and Action in the Reign of Otto III," 14-15, and notes 72-79. On the uprising of Johannes Crescentius and Otto III's capture of Rome in 998, see Althoff, *Otto III*, 100-114.

³⁰ Percy Ernst Schramm, *Kaiser Rom und Renovatio*, 117-118; Althoff, *Otto III*, 114-125; Knut Görich, *Otto III. Romanus Saxicus et Italicus. Kaiserliche Rompolitik und sächsische Historiographie* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1993); David Warner, "Ideals and Action in the Reign of Otto III," 1-18.

³¹ Percy Ernst Schramm, *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio*, 97-99.

and spiritual power that it had been under the emperor Constantine and the first Pope Silvester. That is, all evidence seems to point to an intended “return” to the originary constellation of empire and Church, and, though cut short by Otto III’s unexpected death in 1002, both the pope and the emperor were engaged in the promotion of this renewal as a visual and rhetorical program. The specters of both an Antique ideal and Charlemagne’s own reputation as the political successor to a roman imperial legacy informed the appearance of Otto III’s second set of donations to the Palace Chapel treasury. In particular, the emperor’s ritual discovery of Charlemagne’s tomb at Pentecost, which he performed in direct imitation of Augustus’ own invention of Alexander the Great’s grave, is an indication of the lengths to which Otto III would go in order to display his internalization of antique history and his concomitant embodiment of imperial ideals.³²

The pastiche of historical influence and the direct engagement with biblical and historical narratives at Pentecost 1000 directly influenced the form and content of Otto III’s gifts to the Aachen treasury. On the *Lothar Cross*, the emperor’s total absorption of the past went hand in hand with the incorporation of precious *spolia* from the Augustan and Carolingian eras (**figs. 5-6**). In a like manner, the ruler’s assimilation of a Christian imperial ideal on the model of Constantine is a defining theme of the cycle of imagery in the Gospels of Otto III (**fig. 4**). As in the first round of donations, the perpetuation of a standardized ruler type and the incorporation of older objects into new works belonged to the same category of cultural practice as the ritualized, performative mimicry of historical and biblical events. Indeed, both the mimicry of historical events and the use of a Constantinian type in the Gospels of Otto III are informed by the very historical and spiritual concerns that gave meaning to the *spolia* on the Lothar Cross. In this

³² Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, Book 2, Chapter 18, trans. Alexander Thomson (Williamstown: Corner House, 1978), 87-88.

instance, mimetic practices ultimately relied on the combination of multi-layered material and performative signs that could function all at once, all the time, in combinations that gained meaning from the collusion of sacred and secular, of the beginning of Christian time and its end. Such meanings are indeed germane to the sacredness of Pentecost itself. Moreover, and as is consistent with many of the other early medieval objects in the Palace Chapel treasury, these works solidified the emperor's own place in the center of that constellation as the figure to whom all blessings first flow.

The scholarship devoted to Otto III's invention and probable plunder of Charlemagne's grave in 1000 generally acknowledges that this was likely part of a grander plan to elevate Charlemagne to sainthood, which eventually happened in 1165 under the direction of Frederick Barbarossa and the anti-pope Paschal III.³³ Contemporary chroniclers relate the story of the first invention of Charlemagne's grave in slightly divergent ways, yet these authors and their subject – Otto III – relied plainly on Suetonius' *Life of Augustus* as a template. In its own time, then, Otto III's celebration of Pentecost at Aachen was steeped in symbolic significance. Suetonius' brief account of this event in chapter 18 of his biography bears repeating. He writes:

At this time [Augustus] had a desire to see the sarcophagus and body of Alexander the Great, which, for that purpose, were taken out of the cell in which they rested; and after viewing them for some time, he paid honors to the memory of that prince, by offering a golden crown, and scattering flowers upon the body.³⁴

Suetonius' text thus functioned as the defining *imago* that had the potential to shape the meaning of the event far into the future. This short narrative provided the chroniclers of Otto III's

³³ The scholarship on Otto III's trip to Aachen in 1000 is broad. For an overview and references to the earlier literature, see Knut Görich, "Otto III. öffnet das Karlsgrab in Aachen. Überlegungen zu Heiligenverehrung, Heiligsprechung und Traditionsbildung," in *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, eds. Gerd Althoff and Ernst Schubert (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1998), 381-430; Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, 148-152. In 1165, as part of the celebration of Charlemagne's canonization, Barbarossa himself copied Otto III's imitation in his own invention of Charlemagne's tomb.

³⁴ Suetonius, *Live of the Twelve Caesars*, Book 2, Chapter 18, trans. Thomson, 87.

invention with a basic template for their stories' arcs: each medieval author relates Otto III's discovery of Charlemagne's tomb and the emperor's subsequent honoring of the corpse in a ritualized way. Although all of the three early eleventh-century sources to relate Otto III's discovery of Charlemagne's tomb - Thietmar of Merseburg, Adémar of Chabannes and Otto of Lomello – embellish their model differently, the chroniclers are consistent in relating basic elements of the invention and that it happened.³⁵

Some of these elements bear repeating, for they can help account for the conceptual links between the performative mimicry of historical events and the works Otto III presented at the Pentecost feast in 1000. Thietmar of Merseburg situates his account of the invention in direct relation to his desire “to renew the ancient custom of the Romans,” and related that the emperor, though first unsure of the location of Charlemagne's tomb, eventually found it.³⁶ Upon reaching Charlemagne's body, Thietmar recalls, Otto III removed a golden cross from the corpse's neck along with the remnants of Charlemagne's clothing, and then proceeded to seal up the tomb. Count Otto of Lomello, who claimed to have been an eyewitness to the invention, relayed more information than his Saxon contemporary. Count Otto reported that the emperor and his entourage, having uncovered the tomb, knelt before Charlemagne's corpse. Charlemagne was seated “like a living person” and his body had not decayed, save for the tip of his nose, which Otto III replaced handily with a gold prosthesis, but not until he had removed one of

³⁵ All three of these accounts were penned between roughly 1015 and 1030. Thietmar's *Chronicon* was the first to relate the event. Though apparently an eyewitness to the invention, Otto of Lomello wrote his account of the event in the *Chronicon Novaliciense* around 1026. Adémar of Chabannes penned his report around the year 1030. See Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 4: 47 in Warner, *Ottoman Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, 185; *Chronicon Novaliciense*, 3:32 in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. 7; Adémar de Chabannes, *Chronique*, ed. Jules Chavanon (Paris: Picard, 1897), 153-54. Adémar's account can also be found in Wolfgang Lautemann, *Geschichte in Quellen*, vol. 2 (Munich: Bayerischer Schulbuch-Verlag, 1970), 213.

³⁶ Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 4: 47 in Warner, *Ottoman Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, 185.

Charlemagne's teeth.³⁷ In return for the relics Otto III procured from Charlemagne's body, he also presented Charlemagne with a new set of white robes (appropriate for Pentecost), clipped his fingernails and, finally, tidied up the rest of the tomb.

Where Thietmar's and Otto of Lomello's accounts seem to follow closely the structure and content of Suetonius' model, Adémar of Chabannes enlivened his version of the event by incorporating biblical models.³⁸ Adémar's approach drew inspiration from the physical and historical context of Otto III's invention; indeed, the fusion of the sacred and the secular in the Palace Chapel and in the *renovatio imperii* as a concept motivate the tone of his narrative. As Stephen Nichols has proposed, Adémar of Chabannes rhetorically aligned Otto III's search for Charlemagne's grave with that of the invention of the Christ's Tomb on Easter Sunday. Such a connection, according to Nichols, would have been especially clear at Aachen, a site modeled in part on the structure of the Holy Sepulchre itself.³⁹ Adémar's report further re-imagines the significance of the Pentecost feast as a moment when the Trinity is revealed to man or, in the event of the donations of 1000, to Otto III, who functions in the story as the conduit of this connection.⁴⁰ The fusion of Christ and Emperor in accounts of Otto III's invention of Charlemagne's tomb was therefore entirely in keeping with the overall program of the Palace chapel's upper level, with the structural configuration of the altar to Christ the Redeemer facing

³⁷ *Chronicon Novalinciense*, book III, chapter 32 in Lautemann, *Geschichte in Quellen*, vol. 2, 213.

³⁸ Stephen Nichols, *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 66-82.

³⁹ Stephen Nichols, *Romanesque Signs*, 66-82. On the significance of architectural copies in the Middle Ages, see Richard Krautheimer, "Introduction to an Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942): 1-33.

⁴⁰ Stephen Nichols, *Romanesque Signs*, 76-82.

the Carolingian throne loge, both of which were structurally united by the mosaic of the Second Coming in the cupola.

The ruler portrait in the Gospels of Otto III responds to and expands the spiritual and political ideals embedded into the very structure of the Palace Chapel and pictured in the dedication series in the *Liuthar Gospels* (**fig. 4**). Like the ruler portrait in the *Liuthar Gospels*, the dedication image of Otto III is situated as a monumental frontispiece to the text of the four gospels, and it is spread out over two folios. The cycle of illuminations that follows this image is remarkably similar to that in the *Liuthar Gospels*; both cycles point to spiritual constancy and the significance of Christ as the supreme imperial model.⁴¹

Whereas the earlier royal portrait reveals to the viewer a ruler whose heart is to be clothed with the texts of the gospels, the ruler image in the *Gospels of Otto III* is that of an impassive emperor whose alert gaze addresses the viewer as a suppliant. As on his seals, Otto III grips the royal orb in his left hand and the imperial scepter in his right. Much like his other portrait in the *Liuthar Gospels*, Otto III appears here as a static object and is therefore rightly styled as such: underneath his rich green cloak we see his deep purple tunic whose seams are encrusted with gems and lined with gold thread. The stones placed on the hem of his tunic are consistent with those that stud his crown; the emperor's adornment indeed nearly exactly corresponds to the arrangement and selection of the stones on both the manuscript's cover and on the *Lothar Cross* (**figs. 3, 5-6**). In the book's use in processions and at the altar to Mary on the ground level of the Palace Chapel, the gospels would have functioned as a material extension of

⁴¹ Stephan Beissel's monograph remains the only publication dealing solely with the *Liuthar Gospels*' cycle of illumination. See Stephan Beissel, S.J., *Die Bilder der Handschrift des Kaisers Otto im Münster zu Aachen* (Aachen: Rudolph Barth, 1886). The entire cycle of illumination in the Gospels of Otto III is more easily consulted. See *Das Evangeliar Ottos III.: Clm 4453 der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München*, eds. Florentine Mutherich and Karl Dachs (Munich: Prestel, 2001).

the emperor's presence and as a reproduction of Christ's own return. What the viewer sees and holds is thus a true extension of the emperor himself.⁴²

Otto III's static figure imparts a certain calm to those who surround him and pay him homage. Four female personifications of the subject territories approach him on his right and bear him gifts while representatives from the ecclesiastical and military realms flank him on either side of his imposing throne. Where the elder leader of the military to the emperor's left raises his right hand in approbation, the gray-haired ecclesiastic on Otto III's favored side clutches a codex in one hand and props up the imperial throne with the other. The organization of the subject territories on the facing folio is likewise a roster of his political priorities at this point in his reign: *Roma* approaches him first and she presents the emperor with a golden bowl lined with pearls and filled with gems. Compared to those of the other territories, *Roma*'s offering is the most precious, for she shields it from her touch with a swathe of cloth as she displays it to the emperor, whose stony gaze does not meet hers. Though the ruler type chosen for this image retains certain elements of the type used in the *Liuthar Gospels*, the emperor's figure in the *Gospels of Otto III* has much in common with Late Antique ruler imagery.⁴³ The setting of this dedication scene is likewise Roman in inspiration, and indeed was representative enough that it was reproduced on an octagonal ivory holy water vessel that Otto III probably also presented to Aachen in 1000: the emperor and his entourage (which may include a portrait of Silvester II) hold court in front of individual palaces and city gates whose designs are Roman in inspiration (**fig. 17**). As Roman as they appear, however, these buildings could be anywhere, and this is in

⁴² The *Gospels of Otto III* only remained in the Palace Chapel treasury for several years after its original donation. Henry II, Otto III's successor, removed it and other Carolingian and Ottonian objects and presented them to the Bamberg cathedral treasury on May 6, 1012. This series of events is a focus of the book project from which this essay derives.

⁴³ For example, compare the face and comportment of Otto III to the fragments of the monumental seated statue of Constantine now at the Capitoline Museum in Rome.

keeping with Otto III's and Pope Sylvester II's claims to the renewal of a Roman Empire on the models of both Constantine and Charlemagne.

Compared to the dedication series in the *Liuthar Gospels*, the composition of the later scene is simplified; the later image lent the proposed new direction of Otto III's empire a visual form (**figs. 1, 2, 4**). In the *Liuthar Gospels*, the concept of being "clothed" with the Word indicates that aspects of the king's life had yet to be carried out and fulfilled. The visual program of the *Gospels of Otto III* presents a resolution to the spiritual and political expectations laid out for the king in the earlier manuscript. In both cases, of course, the political hierarchy is itself holy, and the ruler's importance is Christ-like. Yet in the *Liuthar Gospels*, the king's role is interpreted thaumaturgically, and the images that follow are to shape him. By contrast, the emperor in the *Gospels of Otto III* is a figure already imbued with the spirit, and the cycle of imagery that follows highlights his complete assimilation of a range of Old and New Testament models.⁴⁴

The composition of this dedication image takes as much from imperial triumphal imagery as it does from gospel scenes of the Epiphany, and this is consistent with the artful combination of political and spiritual hierarchies visible in other works made for Ottonian patrons.⁴⁵ Both types of imagery disclose political or spiritual "truths" to the viewer and they both are meant to inculcate a given range of proper responses, and this partially explains the markedly similar

⁴⁴ Since Otto III's trip to Aachen was certainly planned far in advance (both the feast and the millennial year being of critical significance), it would seem that the emperor's advisors and artists working at Reichenau were interested in creating artworks that reinforced the spiritual meanings of the Pentecost feast. Although the accounts of the emperor's invention of Charlemagne's tomb make the event appear spontaneous, it is likely that this was also planned. It is impossible to know whether the artists who created the cycle of illumination in the *Gospels of Otto III* were aware of this plan, but the argument presented about the meanings of the book's program does not stand or fall on the discovery of Charlemagne's remains.

⁴⁵ For an impression of the way in which Ottonian imperial artworks combine spiritual and political ideals, see Percy Ernst Schramm and Florentine Mutherich, *Denkmale der deutschen Könige und Kaiser: Ein Beitrag zur Herrschergeschichte von Karl dem Großen bis Friedrich II.* (Munich: Prestel, 1962), *passim*.



Figure 18. The Adoration of the Magi, Gospels of Otto III, c. 1000, manuscript, 33.4 cm x 24.2 cm. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Clm. 4453, Folio 29r.

compositions of the dedication series and the scene of the Epiphany on folio 29r (**figs. 4, 18**). Like the subject territories who approach the emperor with their gifts, the three kings bow to Mary and Child and extend their offerings to them. Pictured here as an embodiment of the Incarnation, the Virgin and Child are seated as one in a schematically rendered church interior and their figures are elevated above the kings as if on an altar. In the clear visual correlation between the donor image and that of the Epiphany, the creators of the *Gospels of Otto III* aimed to equate political subservience with spiritual faith. Similarly, this image recalls the significance of Otto III's own presentation of the book to the altar of Mary. David Ganz has further characterized the closing of the book as "a material realization" of the presentation.⁴⁶ While the donor image may make clear that the emperor is the recipient of numerous blessings, his own gifts are directed back to the Church.⁴⁷

The ruler portrait in the *Gospels of Otto III* likewise proclaims the emperor's assimilation of Christian precepts. Seated at the gateway to the gospels, the portrait of Otto III is an embodiment of the ideals projected in the *Liuthar Gospels*, and the viewer is presented with visual proof of the presence of the divine in the secular. As in the *Liuthar Gospels*, the evidence for the ruler's internalization of the Word is elaborated in the evangelist portraits, yet in the earlier work this is depicted as an as-yet-unfinished process. In the later work, this process is

⁴⁶ David Ganz, *Medien der Offenbarung: Visionsdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Reimer, 2008), 163-165. Though he does not explain this in any more detail, Ganz's implication is that the closure of the book activates the process of giving that we see in the dedication image.

⁴⁷ A similar process of giving and receiving is also evident in the tenth-century Byzantine ivory of the Virgin's death that graces the front cover of the Gospels (**fig. 3**). Indeed, this image, like the Epiphany scene, was likely chosen because of its relationship to salient elements of the Palace Chapel's structure, with its placement of the altar to Christ above the altar to Mary. Mary's body stretches across the lower portion of the work, her figure surrounded by the mourning apostles. Christ stands at the center and, looking down at his mother, takes her spirit into his hands and offers it up to two angels who hover at the top of the composition. His figure formally unites the upper and lower realms of the image, and Mary's swaddled spirit is awaited as a precious gift.

complete. With their penetrating gazes and their rigid frontality, the evangelists in the *Gospels of Otto III* are cut from the same cloth as the ruler himself.⁴⁸

The scholarship on the “visionary evangelists” of the *Gospels of Otto III* has presented a number of plausible lines of interpretation for these figures (**figs. 19-22**); perhaps the most widely accepted view sees in this series of portraits references to the four stages in the Life of Christ and, naturally, to the typological relationship between the Old and New Testaments.⁴⁹ Most studies have noted the placement of major and minor Old Testament prophets and kings inside clouds that hover either above the evangelists’ heads or around their figures more generally. Unlike more traditional depictions that show the authors of the gospels as monks in their studies, these evangelists are frontally enthroned on apocalyptic rainbows and framed in mandorlas of varying shapes. The clouds that surround them appear to move; they are filled with rays of light that illuminate the small bust-length figures of Old Testament prophets and Kings who display their scrolls to the viewer. Each of these Old Testament figures dons a royal robe and a crown, and each king appears as the spiritual predecessor of the emperor Otto III.⁵⁰ In the evangelist portraits, these prophets and kings are “seers,” for they saw the Lord when others did

⁴⁸ If in the *Liuthar Gospels* the evangelists were derived from Byzantine models, the Evangelists of the *Gospels of Otto III* derive much of their appearance from classical “atalantes.”

⁴⁹ See Konrad Hoffmann, “Die Evangelistenbilder des Münchener Otto-Evangeliars (CLM 4453),” *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft* 20 (1966): 17-46. Florentine Mutherich’s essay on these portraits presents a clear summary of the major points raised in the extensive scholarship. See Florentine Mutherich, “Die Evangelistenbilder,” in *Das Evangeliar Ottos III*, 39-45. See also Hubert Schrader, “Zu den Evangelistenbildern des Münchener Otto-Evangeliars,” in *Beträge zur schwäbischen Kunstgeschichte: Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Werner Fleischhauer* (Konstanz: Thorbecke, 1964), 9-34; Bernhard Bischoff, “Das biblische Thema der Reichenauer ‘Visionären Evangelisten,’” in *Liturgie: Gestalt und Vollzug: Festschrift J. Pascher*, ed. W. Dürig (Regensburg, 1963), 25-32; Charles de Tolnay, “The Visionary Evangelists of the Reichenau School,” *Burlington Magazine*, 69 (1936): 257-263.

⁵⁰ Konrad Hoffmann noted the similarity between the ruler image and the Old Testament figures in the *Gospels of Otto III*, though he did not offer an interpretation of these figures in relation to dedication portrait. See Hoffmann, “Die Evangelistenbilder,” 17.

not.⁵¹ As Hubert Schrade has pointed out, the physical disproportion of the prophets and kings to the full monumental figures of the evangelists underscores the unfulfilled aspects of their prophecies.⁵²

Like the image of the emperor on folio 24r, the evangelists' gazes are directed squarely at the viewer, and the Old Testament figures all look expectantly to the authors of the New Law. All of the figures in the evangelist portraits actively see, and these representations of sight equate vision with internalized knowledge.⁵³ These exemplars of an idealized process of spiritual viewing indeed directly face monumental initial pages; this juxtaposition makes clear that the Word itself can be assimilated in an almost physical way. Inscriptions that run along the bottom of each evangelist portrait tell the viewer alternately what to see and how to see it or remind her that one's knowledge of God can be sensorily apprehended. Indeed, Luke's figure, which grips in both hands a roiling cloud mass, makes especially clear that knowledge of God is something that can be touched; the two lambs that drink from the rivers beneath his throne indeed imply that his gospel can be imbibed and physically taken in (**fig. 21**).⁵⁴ Matthew, for his part, mimics the gesture of an *orant*, while the inscription beneath his portrait exhorts the viewer to "See how Matthew is shown (*notari*) by a faithful image of himself" (fig. 19). Mark's portrait shows the evangelist clothed with his gospel, and the inscription compares the strength of his lion with the

⁵¹ Paraphrased from Jerome, *Epistolae*, 53. See also Herbert Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 164, note 59. Margot Fassler has offered an interpretation of the Royal Portal of Chartres Cathedral that is based in part on this passage from Jerome. See Margot Fassler, "Liturgy and Sacred History in the Twelfth Century Tympana at Chartres," *Art Bulletin* 75/3 (September, 1993): 499 – 520.

⁵² Hubert Schrade, "Zu den Evangelistenbildern," 10.

⁵³ For an analysis of this type of vision in the Carolingian era, see Herbert Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*, 149-189.

⁵⁴ Hubert Schrade, "Zu den Evangelistenbildern," 22-24. Schrade cites the representation of the Pentecost in the Wolfenbüttel Lectionary (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August Bibliothek, MS 2870). Schrade does not make note of the folio on which this image appears. The inscription that accompanies Luke's portrait in the *Aachen Gospels* reads: "Fonte partum ductas bos agnis elicit undas" "The bull calls forth the streams from the font of the fathers to which the lambs are led."

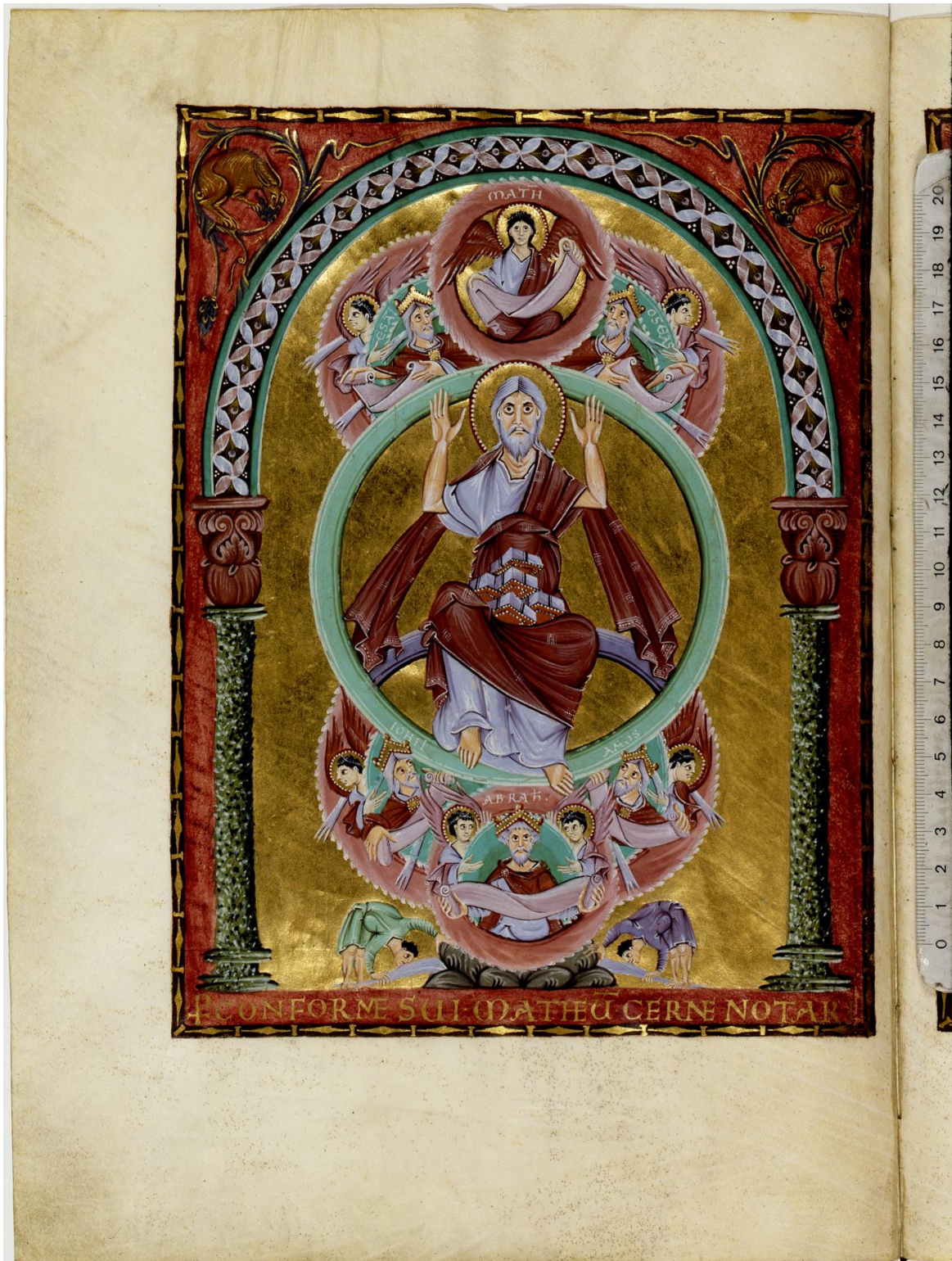


Figure 19. Evangelist Matthew, Gospels of Otto III, c. 1000, manuscript, 33.4 cm x 24.2 cm. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Clm. 4453, Folio 25v.



Figure 20. Evangelist Mark, Gospels of Otto III, c. 1000, manuscript, 33.4 cm x 24.2 cm. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Clm. 4453, Folio 94v.



Figure 21. Evangelist Luke, Gospels of Otto III, c. 1000, manuscript, 33.4 cm x 24.2 cm. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Clm. 4453, Folio 139v.

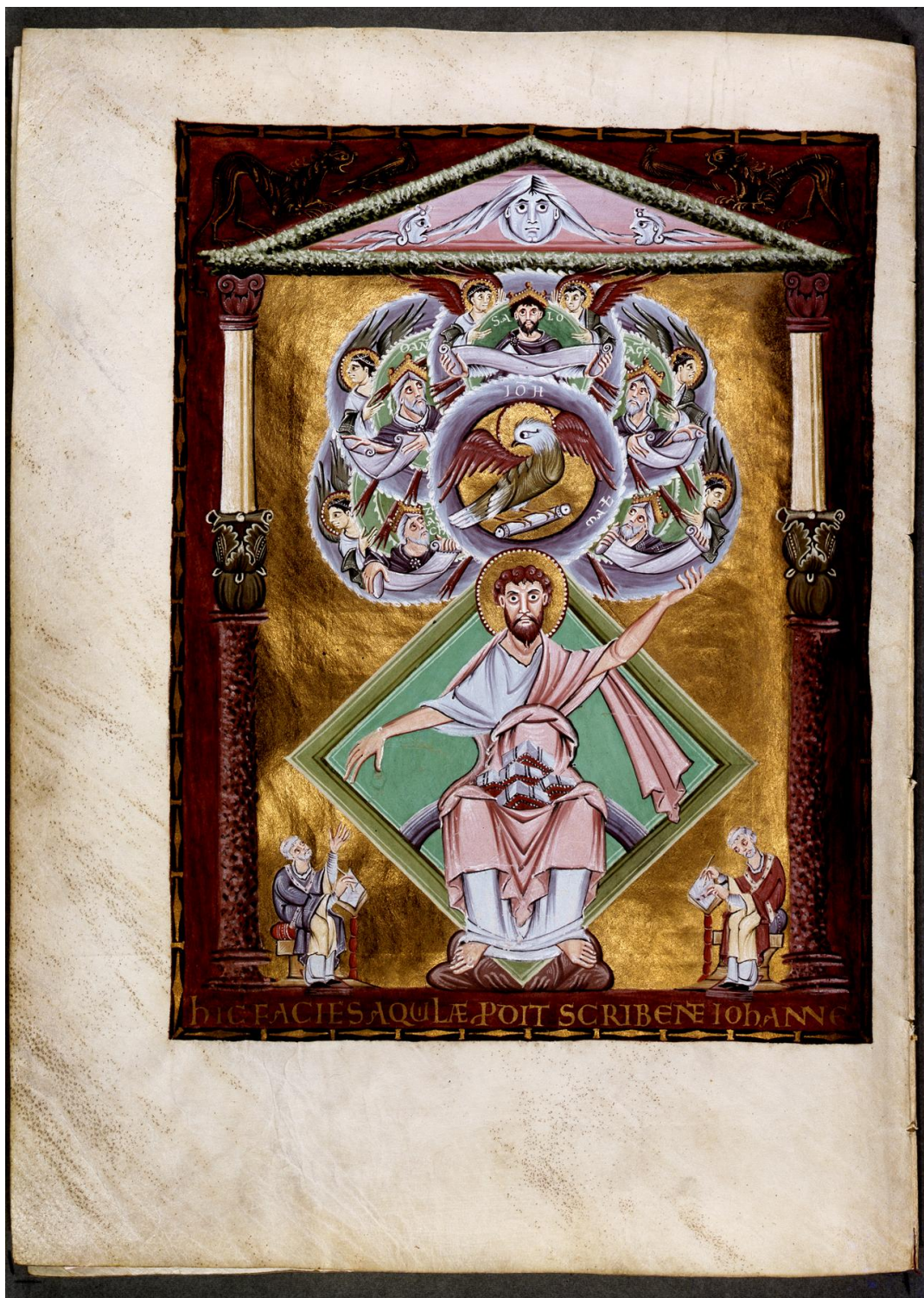


Figure 22. Evangelist John, Gospels of Otto III, c. 1000, manuscript, 33.4 cm x 24.2 cm. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Clm. 4453, Folio 206v.

strength of Christ's deeds: "This man, who is pictured as a lion, announces the strong deeds [of Christ]" (**fig. 20**).⁵⁵ John grips his prophetic cloud with his left hand and gestures with his right toward a diminutive, but receptive scribe in bishop's robes (**fig. 22**). In each case, the viewer is reminded differently of the absolute truth of the gospels and the evangelists' fixed expressions indicate their full internalization of Old Testament prophecy and their completion of it.

In combination with the other elements in these portraits, the distinctive cloud iconography is set in a direct relationship to processes of divine revelation. Hubert Schrade noted that the only clear iconographic precedents for the light-emitting clouds of the evangelist images are found in other Reichenau depictions of the Pentecost.⁵⁶ In these contexts, they represent the transmission of the Spirit to the Apostles. The clouds in the evangelist images operate in precisely the same manner, and the close relationship between the "visionary evangelists" and the ruler image is a reminder of the political and spiritual revelations Otto III experienced during his celebration of Pentecost at Aachen in 1000.

The various reports of Otto III's invention of Charlemagne's tomb are thematically linked by the significance of Otto III's search for and ultimate discovery of Charlemagne's body, and, not least, his acts of exchange with his model: the trimming of his nails, the removal of the tip of his nose, the cleaning of the tomb, the clothing of the body in Pentecost robes. Indeed, the significance of Otto III's physical encounter with Charlemagne is connected to the importance of Pentecost as a time when the faithful ideally can witness the divine; it is likewise a moment when the presence of the spirit inspires others, in a mimetic process, to undergo a similar process of revelation and, in turn, to pass on the knowledge of God. In the portraits of Otto III and the

⁵⁵ The inscription reads: "Iste leo factus fortes denuntiat actus."

⁵⁶ Schrade, "Zu den Evangelistenbildern," 23-24.

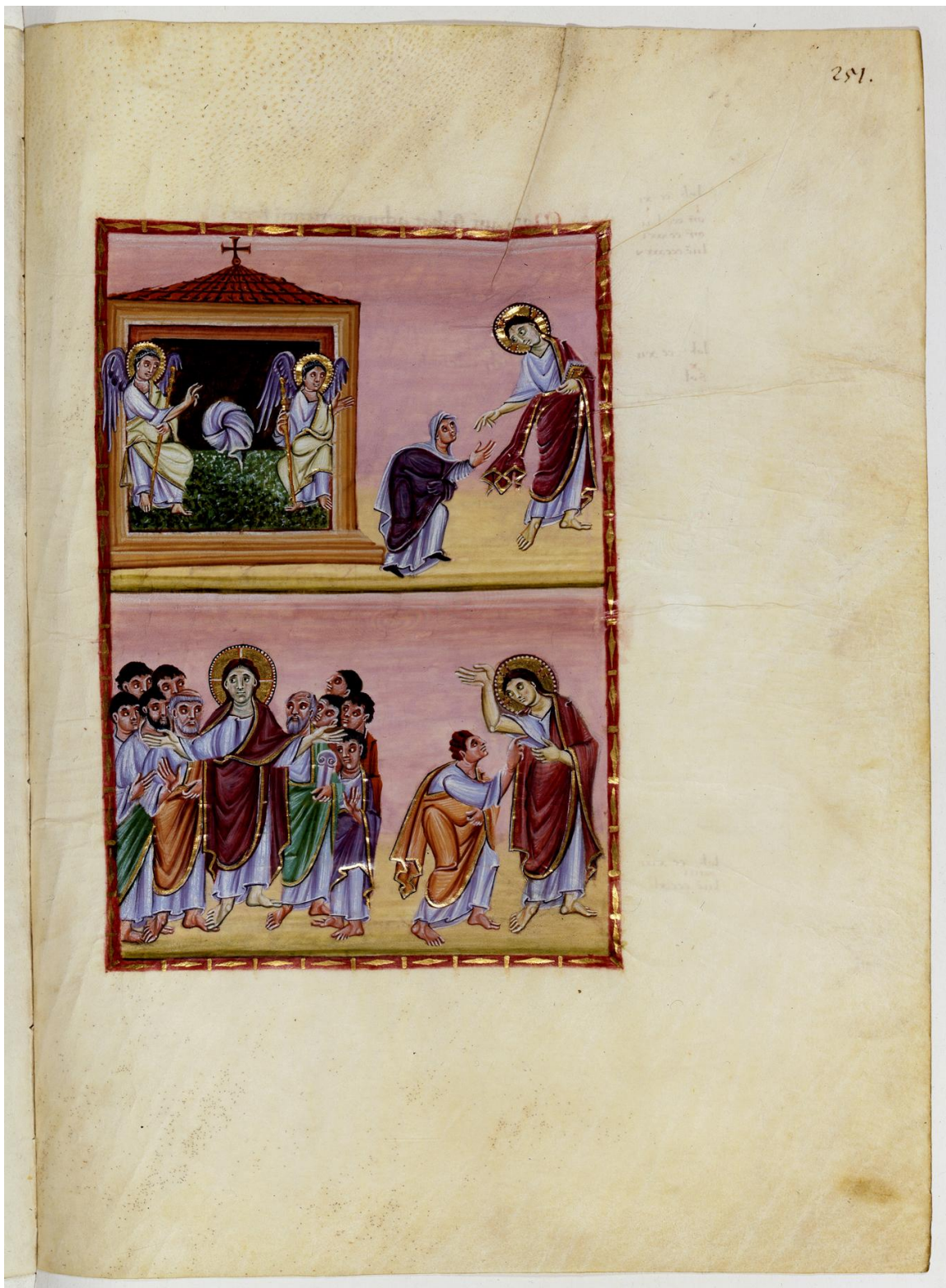


Figure 23. Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Gospels of Otto III, c. 1000, manuscript, 33.4 cm x 24.2 cm. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Clm. 4453, Folio 251r.

evangelists, we see figures that are filled with the spirit and witness it; their penetrating gazes challenge the viewer to do the same.

The final illumination in the Gospels comprises four scenes taken from the twentieth chapter of John (**fig. 23**). Arranged in two horizontal registers, each of these vignettes reinforces the connection between vision and faith, and the human need to see in order to know. Here, the two registers offer the viewer a number of oppositions related to seeing and believing. The upper register is devoted to Christ's Resurrection, his appearance to Mary Magdalene and his Ascension. On the left, the two angels placed at Christ's empty tomb gesture toward the scene of the *Noli me tangere* on the right. Mary Magdalene kneels, extending her right hand to an ascending Christ. The empty space between their hands seems to indicate the strength of an encounter that goes beyond corporeal processes of vision and touch. This central narrative of the Easter feast, much like the reports of Otto III's invention of Charlemagne's tomb, describes a search for a sacred body that reveals itself through faith.

As Mary Magdalene searches and sees in the Easter miniatures, the two vignettes devoted to the Pentecost celebration present modes of witnessing the divine that are decidedly more physical. On the left, Christ, who has ascended to Heaven and returned to his disciples, displays his wounds. The apostles stand back and look at him; they are transfixed and, as they look, they raise their hands in benediction. In the final scene, a clear formal complement to the *Noli me tangere* directly above it, Thomas pokes his finger into Christ's side to verify his return. He is the embodiment of the person who needs to see things with his eyes in order to believe, even as this segment of John's gospel praises those who "have not seen and yet believe." Where Mary Magdalene looks to Christ and he directly returns her gaze, he remains firmly out of her reach; the reality of his presence is revealed to her through an ideal faith. Thomas, on the other hand,

squints and, though Christ looks to him, the disciple needs physically to touch in order to see. By virtue of the hierarchy between the two images, the artist made plain the preferable mode of viewing.⁵⁷

The Pentecost, as these final images in the *Gospels of Otto III* make clear, is both a celebration of the presence of the spirit in man and his encounter with the divine. It likewise brings with it the promise of Christ's return, as Christ himself foretold in Matthew (24:29-30), when, shortly before the final judgment, the cross, as the "sign of the son of man," will appear in the heavens with "much power and majesty." If much of the visual cycle of the Gospels can be said to remind the viewer of the ways in which the presence of the Spirit can be apprehended, the *Lothar Cross* is partially a material visualization of his Second Coming (**figs. 5-6**). Here, the incorporation of royal and imperial spolia into the work is a projection of the emperor's place in this string of events; the spolia indeed place him in line with the ultimate Christian imperial model, Constantine, whose own vision of the "sign of the son of man" on the night before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge sealed his fate.

The clearest visual and material connections the cross establishes, of course, are those between the emperor and Christ and the emperor and Augustus.⁵⁸ Josef Déer, in his foundational analysis of this object, proposed that the designers of the cross, who likely worked at an imperial goldsmith workshop in Cologne, adapted and reversed a Byzantine custom whereby liturgical crosses were outfitted with images of the crucified Christ on one side and donor portraits on the

⁵⁷ For a rich and provocative discussion of the pairing of these two modes of viewing in the early medieval period, see Robert Deshman, "Another Look at the Disappearing Christ: Corporeal and Spiritual Vision in Early Medieval Images," *Art Bulletin* 79/3 (1997): 533-537.

⁵⁸ Like other members of the Saxon nobility, Otto III had enjoyed a rich and varied education both as a child and as an adult. Given his education under the most learned men of his time – Bernward of Hildesheim and, later, Gerbert of Aurillac – it is clear that he was familiar with Antique texts. See Althoff, *Otto III*.



Figure 24. Mathilde Cross, “donor side,” Essen Cathedral Treasury, Reproduced with the permission of Essen Cathedral Treasury.

other.⁵⁹ Another product of the Cologne workshop that created both the cross and the cover of the *Gospels of Otto III*, the liturgical cross of Abbess Mathilde of Essen (c. 980), likewise combines portraits of the abbess and her brother Duke Otto of Swabia and Bavaria with a relief image of the crucified Christ (**fig. 24**).⁶⁰ If on the *Mathilde Cross* these realms are visually united, on the *Lothar Cross* they remain separate; figures of the ruler and Christ each receive their own side. Although exact details of its use in processions are unclear, Ernst Günther Grimme has suggested that the “Christ” side was directed outward and the “Emperor” side would be directed at the Bishop himself.⁶¹ By contrast, more recent scholarship indicates that the manner in which the cross was displayed in processions could vary in accordance with the demands of a specific feast or other liturgical event.⁶² Its iconography suggests that it was destined for use in connection with the altar to Christ the Redeemer in the upper storey of the Palace Chapel; Ernst Günther Grimme has proposed that it was used in coronation rituals.⁶³

In lieu of a traditional donor portrait as on the *Mathilde Cross*, Otto III is represented by a large, slightly oval sardonyx cameo of the Emperor Augustus at the center of the cross’s

⁵⁹ Schramm, *Die deutschen Kaiser und Könige in Bildern ihrer Zeit*, 2nd ed., 80; Josef Déer, “Das Kaiserbild im Kreuz,” *Schweizer Beiträge zur allgemeinen Geschichte*, 13 (1955): 48-110.

⁶⁰ Like Otto III, both Abbess Mathilde and her brother Duke Otto of Swabia were grandchildren of Otto I and thus also members of the imperial house. The convent of Essen, like that Quedlinburg for example, was also a site devoted in large part to the ritual commemoration of the imperial family. This cross and others in the Essen treasury were therefore also important instruments in the preservation and promotion of the imperial cult, and it is not surprising that the hierarchies they present the viewer with are so strikingly similar. I thank Karen Blough for reminding me of this point.

⁶¹ Ernst Günther Grimme, *Der Aachener Domschatz*, 25.

⁶² Beatrice Kitzinger (Harvard University) will present this argument in her forthcoming dissertation. I thank her for sharing it with me.

⁶³ Ernst Günther Grimme, *Der Aachener Domschatz*, 25.

“jeweled” side (**fig. 5**).⁶⁴ The reuse of this object as an official portrait of Otto III stands at the center of the work as verification of his assimilation of an Augustan ideal. Roughly three inches tall by slightly less than three inches wide, the cameo is the work’s most prominent element, and the smaller stones, intaglios and gold filigree that surround it provide it with movement.

Augustus is shown from the left; he is crowned with a laurel wreath whose ribbons appear to flutter in the wind. With his right hand he lightly grips an eagle scepter that closely resembles that which Otto III displays to the viewer in the *Gospels of Otto III*. The conceptual, if not visual, correlation between these two images was close enough for Josef Déer to surmise in 1955 that the cameo was a model for the manuscript image.⁶⁵ A smaller quartz crystal seal matrix of the Carolingian ruler Lothar II (r. 855-869) is nestled among the gems in the lower arm of the cross; both rulers cast their respective gazes in the same direction, as if Lothar is clearly following the cues of his Roman model, and as if Otto III, as Augustus, likewise relies on the physical support of his Carolingian predecessor.⁶⁶ The combination of stones on this side is also entirely in keeping with the collusion of political and spiritual power at Aachen: where the quartz of Lothar’s seal matrix recalled Christ’s purity, sardonyx stones were believed to be particularly well suited to imperial subjects.

The “Crucifixion” side contains a dramatic, indeed naturalistic image of the crucified Christ, who hangs limply from the cross as personifications of the sun and the moon weep for him (**fig. 6**). In his unpublished analysis of Otto III’s presence at Aachen, Karl Werckmeister has

⁶⁴ See Schramm, *Die deutschen Kaiser und Könige*, 2nd ed., 80; Josef Déer, “Das Kaiserbild im Kreuz,” 48-110; Ernst Günther Grimme, *Der Aachener Domschatz*, 25. For a different interpretation of the meaning of the cameo see Theo Jülich, “Gemmenkreuze: Die Farbigkeit ihres Edelsteinbesatzes bis zum 12. Jahrhundert,” *Aachener Kunstblätter* 54/55 (1986/87): 99-258.

⁶⁵ Josef Déer, “Das Kaiserbild im Kreuz,” 55.

⁶⁶ See Genevra Kornbluth, “The Seal of Lothar II: Model and Copy,” *Francia* 17 (1990): 55-68.

suggested that these two figures likely strike model poses of liturgical mourning, and thereby set up visual cues for the viewer to follow.⁶⁷ In this way the cross was completely tailored to the Palace Chapel's spoliating imperative, for, like the building, the figures of Sol and Luna not only mimic, they also demand further mimicry in order for the object's messages to be conveyed properly.

If the "jeweled" side of the cross is decidedly sculptural, therefore, with the color and texture of the precious materials enlivening the image of the apotheosized emperor, the niello engraving of the Crucifixion more closely resembles a two-dimensional sketch.⁶⁸ As Karl Werckmeister has pointed out, this opposition is entirely in keeping with other visual antitheses between life and death in Carolingian works in the Aachen treasury; thus, the jeweled side speaks to the material world and the world of the emperor, where the minimal beauty of the reverse evokes the most holy death in Christian history. Such antithetical concepts are indeed crucial to the meanings of the Pentecost feast, itself a celebration of the possibility of a resurrection after one's physical death. Above Christ's head appears the Hand of God, bearing a laurel wreath that encircles the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove; this bears a deliberate resemblance to the eagle on Augustus' scepter and to the eagle scepter that Otto III grips in the *Munich Gospels* (figs. 4,5,6). Indeed, the emphasis on coronation and apotheosis is a further visual reference to the coronation scene in the *Liuthar Gospels* (figs. 1-2).

In combination, the varied iconography of victory equates the importance of political and spiritual conquests, and both sides of the cross depict two successive moments in the act of a

⁶⁷ Werckmeister, "The Donations of Emperor Otto III to the Imperial Chapel at Aachen." See also idem, "The First Romanesque Beatus Manuscripts and the Liturgy of Death," in *Actas del Simposio para el estudio de los codices al Apocalipsis de Beato de Liébana* vol. 2 (Madrid, 1976), 165-200.

⁶⁸ Formally, the image of the crucified Christ is derived from the dramatic *Gero Cross*, with which the makers of this object would have been very familiar.

triumphal coronation, where Christ's coronation at the moment of his death is succeeded by the appearance of the crowned Augustus.⁶⁹ On the *Lothar Cross*, therefore, it is an imperial figure that completes the story that the Crucifixion set in motion; the two sides of the cross therefore respond to the unification of the emperor and Christ on the upper floor of the Palace Chapel, in which the altar to Christ and the throne loge face each other along the building's east-west axis.

The act of the *Lothar Cross*'s donation as a material testimony to the opening of Charlemagne's tomb enfolded Otto III more completely into a legendary structure that had the potential, over time, to bring him ever closer to the political and spiritual exemplars whose own histories provided this Pentecost celebration with meaning. Moreover, the use of *spolia* from the Roman and Carolingian eras was crucial to this enterprise, for they gave form to a conception of the historical past that was discursive and narrational, where contemporary events responded to and were determined by older ones, and these, in turn, were activated through performative, material, and textual dialogues. Further, *spolia* and the mimetic copying of historical events visualized a conception of history as something that the ruler himself could construct.

As Cynthia Hahn has pointed out, medieval treasuries constituted narratives whose endings corresponded to the end of the world itself; the objects they contained could indeed "objectify history."⁷⁰ At Aachen, this narrative began with the complex itself, built as it was using spoliated materials from Rome and Ravenna and whose structure fused sacred and secular models, like those of the Holy Sepulchre, the Forum of Trajan, and San Vitale. The site's spoliating imperative was itself tied to the reification of antique ideals, and this understanding of antiquity ultimately served political goals. In the resulting material and performative dialogue

⁶⁹ Whether this connection was activated in a performative way in the work's liturgical use is unclear.

⁷⁰ Cynthia Hahn, "The Meaning of Early Medieval Treasuries," in *Reliquiare im Mittelalter*, eds. Bruno Reudenbach and Gia Toussaint (Berlin: Akademie, 2005), 2-3.

that the site engendered, therefore, it was critical to display and otherwise testify to one's complete assimilation and embodiment of these ideals. In his recreation of the act of Augustus' invention of Alexander's tomb at the time of his donation of the *Gospels of Otto III* and the *Lothar Cross*, the emperor marked his physical engagement with and complete awareness of these programs. The objects themselves thus embedded Otto III's memory more completely into the site's mythical structure. At his burial on Easter Sunday of 1002, this process was complete.