

# Abbot Smaragdus of St. Mihiel's *Via Regia*

## Edition and Commentary

James LePree and Matthew Ponesse

We intend to produce a critical edition and translation of Smaragdus of St Mihiel's *Via regia*, a work composed in the early ninth century as a book of advice for Charlemagne's son, King Louis of Aquitaine. The volume will include an introduction to the author and historical circumstances surrounding the composition of the text, as well as a discussion of the manuscript evidence and the textual work involved in producing the critical edition. The edition will be supplemented with a facing-page English translation, commentary in footnotes, bibliography, and appendices.

The *Via regia* is among the first "mirrors of princes" composed in the Western tradition. It has received considerable attention in modern scholarship for the information it provides about Carolingian kingship and the life of a prominent scholar of the court. The *Via regia* is divided into thirty-two chapters on the proper conduct expected of a Christian king, addressing such topics as the necessity of peace, justice and good judgment. While Smaragdus' contemporaries are known to have developed sophisticated theories of government, the value of his own work lies in its biblical model for kingship, and its emphasis on the cultivation of the virtues. Preliminary research indicates that Smaragdus drew on such sources as the 7<sup>th</sup> century *Liber scintillarum*, Cyprian of Carthage's *De opera et eleemosynis* and the 5<sup>th</sup> century *Institutes and Conferences* of John Cassian, Isidore's *Sententiae* and Augustine's *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*. These sources as well as others will be identified and discussed in the textual commentary. Smaragdus' original exegetical methodology in manipulating his sources so that they become personal models for the future emperor Louis the Pious will also be highlighted in the text.

The text of the *Via regia* survives today in three manuscripts: Madrid, Archivo Historico Nacional 1007 B; Vienna 956; Vienna 2356. A fourth witness is preserved by Migne, who based his text on the now lost Vaticanus Reginensis Latinus 190. This recension leaves out a dedicatory letter that is present in the three existing manuscripts, a notable omission given the controversies that have arisen surrounding the attribution of the text. A modern critical edition would not only reconcile the numerous textual problems contained in Migne's edition, but it would help us come closer in confirming the identity of Smaragdus' reader and realizing the history of the text's composition. The *Via regia* has been yet to be made available in a modern English translation.