Thomas A. E. Greene, PhD

SALTY SAINTS AND SWEET SEEDS: EMBODIED EXPERIENCE, EXEGESIS, AND THE CAROLINGIAN SENSORIUM

In this paper I explore the way that sensory experience served as a conduit for knowledge for Carolingian elites. I focus specifically on the sense of taste, which scholars of later periods have investigated but which remains uncharted for the early Middle Ages. Carolingian authors used taste as a means of explaining the sacred; that is, taste was a tool for exegesis. I contend that descriptions of taste and flavor did more than supply exegetes with a stock of metaphors to deploy when explaining scripture. These descriptions linked specific scriptural interpretations to specific sensory experiences. Knowledge may well be power, as the cliché goes, but the way that knowledge is obtained is a means of exercising power. By involving the body in their interpretation of sacred texts, the link between taste and memory meant that Carolingians could rely on the body in turn to reinforce orthodoxy.

In October of 827, on his Michelstadt estate, Einhard awaited the arrival of the relics of the Roman martyrs Marcellinus and Peter. He had already received reports that the sacred treasure had reached Francia, and of the enthusiastic reception that greeted them upon their arrival at *Caput-laci* (modern-day Villeneuve, Switzerland). His own initial encounter, however, was underwhelming, for the quality of their container met with his disapproval. He commissioned a new reliquary, and as he unwrapped the relics a bloody liquid began to pour out of them. To understand the miracle, Einhard and his followers turned not on theology but to their bodies. Specifically, they relied on the senses of sight, touch, and taste to comprehend the phenomenon they had witnessed. As it turns out, sanctity, in this case at least, tasted salty.[1]

Einhard was not the only one for whom the body, specifically the sense of taste, served as a means of knowing or understanding. Ninth-century exegetes also depended on the bodily experiences of their readers (and their auditors) to aid in their understanding of scripture. I suggest that using the body to better understand the divine is part of what Paul Dutton has called "the Carolingian religious tendency to materialize the holy,"[2] even though he was thinking about relics and reliquaries, architecture, art, and the like. For as Dutton also notes, quoting Eriugena in the same essay on the visible and the invisible, "'there is nothing,' he said, 'of visible and corporeal things, I believe, that does not signify something incorporeal and intelligible'."[3]

[1] Dutton, xxiv (dating), 78-9

[2] Paul Dutton, "Carolingian Invisibles and Eriugena's *Lost Vision of God*," in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, 474.

[3] Dutton, "Carolingian Invisibles," 466.

Eriugena was not alone in thinking about the nature of materiality. The prominent Eucharistic and predestination controversies of the mid-ninth century obscure less well-known arguments, such as one over the nature of the visible that Celia Chazelle identifies as lying at the core of the dispute between Amalarius and the Lyonnais clergy.[4] Although the hostility of Agobard and Florus is often summarized as springing from Amalarius's overly allegorical exegesis of the liturgy, Chazelle rightly refocuses our attention to differing notions of the relationship between the material and the divine. In contrast to Amalarius's more optimistic theology, his opponents believed in "the restricted possibility, for a living mortal, of contact with the spiritual."[5] Far from being simply a theological controversy, the argument about materiality and spirituality echoed at the highest level of Carolingian power, and affected directly the Carolingian mission of perfecting the earthly *ecclesia*. A necessary corollary to what Chazelle calls "the general growth of interest, during the ninth century, in the relationship between the physical senses and the Christian search to access the sacred"[6] was the harnessing of the Carolingian sensorium.

The term *sensorium* can refer to two different things. First, and most commonly, the *sensorium* means the collective data received through all of the senses. This usage, and indeed the term itself, is important because it reminds us that the study of the senses should range beyond what Mark Smith, a historian of the antebellum U.S. South, called the "Enlightenment conceit with visuality"[7] that dominates sensory history. But s*ensorium* is also useful as a term for thinking about the power relations inherent in the ordering of the sensory world. In this usage, the *sensorium* is the mechanism of power, it is the medium through which power can be claimed, negotiated, exerted, or resisted. Our senses serve an epistemological role. To control how sensory data is interpreted, or to control the discourse in which it is understood and expressed, is to control the way that humans experience and construe the world. In ninth-century Francia, this meant using the flavor of foods to promote something like a gustatory orthodoxy.

I have two goals in this paper. The first is historiographic. The material that I have collected demonstrates that in the early Middle Ages, the discourse surrounding taste was not exclusively about gluttony. The content of both secular and religious texts argues against the prevailing view among sensory historians about the early medieval obsession with this particular sin. Second, I will argue that by using specific gustatory experiences to help their lectors and auditors understand scriptural passages, Carolingian exegetes and homilists

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[4] Celia Chazelle, "Amalarius's *Liber Officialis*: Spirit and Vision in Carolingian Liturgical Thought," in *Seeing the Invisible*, 327-358.

[5] Chazelle, "Amalarius's *Liber Officialis*," 349.

[6] Chazelle, "Amalarius's *Liber Officialis*," 355.

[7] Smith, "Making Sense," 167.

linked those tastes to proper belief. The effect was to reinforce the "correct" interpretation of scripture through quotidian activities such as eating.

By meeting the first goal I hope to contribute to the small but growing scholarship on the history of taste. Competing narratives about taste exist in the scholarship on sensory history. In one, the French Enlightenment rescues taste from the condemnation supposedly heaped upon it by medieval theologians. In *From Gluttony to Enlightenment: The World of Taste in Early Modern Europe*, Viktoria von Hoffman describes a slow-moving but totalizing discursive revolution in the cultural valence of taste. It is her starting point that interests me today, not her analysis of early modern sources. Before this time, she claims, "the leading representation of taste was that of a disorder, revealing the permeability of the borderss between humanity and animality."[8] Taste was inimical to "virtue, health, intelligence, and even to sensory pleasures themselves, threatening the order of God, of the world, and of the men and women affected by the bestial and demonic universes."[9]

In the other narrative, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries perform the same function as the Enlightenment, during which time (the claim goes) a renewed, human-centered, experiential and affective piety privileged sensory phenomena. Here William of Auxerre emerges as a key figure, specifically the interpretation of the spiritual senses found in his *Summa aurea*. In this text, William argues for parallel sensory experiences, one earthly and bodily and one heavenly and spiritual. The existence of a beatified sensorium, it seems, opens up the possibility that the carnal senses also offer opportunities for knowing God while alive. As Boyd Taylor Coolman argues, the integration of these two sensoria serves as the foundation for William of Auxerre's theology.[10]

Coolman notes that the renewed importance of the senses for scholastic theology is not limited just to William, but emerges in the thought of many other twelfth- and thirteenth-century theologians, including Bonaventure, Albertus Magnus, Bacon, and Aquinas. William is the first, though, and Coolman posits that even though the spiritual senses do not originate with him, before he wrote the *Summa aurea*, "one must go back as far as Origen of Alexandria to find a similarly extensive treatment of this theme."[11] While all of the senses figure prominently in William's *Summa*, taste holds a special place. Drawing upon the etymology of *sapientia*, William links taste and wisdom to describe the fullest knowledge of God, "immediate, intimate, direct, delectably experiential, with minimal distance and

[8] Viktoria von Hoffman, From Gluttony to Enlightenment, 173.

[9] Viktoria von Hoffman, From Gluttony to Enlightenment, 173.

[10] Boyd Taylor Coolman, *Knowing God*, 2-6.

[11] Coolman, *Knowing God*, 2.

maximal apprehension between taster and tasted," as Coolman summarizes it.[12] "Knowledge of God," he asserts, is "a spiritual apprehension of God – both a *scientia* and a *sapientia* – and thus a 'tasted knowledge', a knowledge of God by experience."[13]

Both of these narratives marginalize the early medieval period. It becomes an undesirable starting point that was suspicious of, if not outright hostile to, taste as an experience. There is no doubt that medieval authors, including those from the ninth century, wrote about the perils of gluttony. But this well-documented clerical preoccupation was not the only way that early medieval authors wrote about food and taste. To understand the important role that taste played in Carolingian culture, consider in more detail Einhard's reaction during his first encounter with the relics of Marcellinus and Peter. Einhard, remember from the opening, found the quality of the container in which the remains of the purloined saints arrived poor. When the workmen whom he ordered to make a new reliquary removed the linen that covered the old one, they discovered it covered in a bloody liquid. After three days of fasting and prayer, the liquid dried up as miraculously as it had appeared. Only the cloth, stained with the residue of the holy liquid, remained as witness to the event. These stains reveal as much about the interpretation of the miracle as the prayers and fasting. To close his description of the miracle of the bloody reliquary Einhard focused not on the heavenly but the worldly. Everyone agreed, he reported, that while the liquid was the color of blood, it felt like water and tasted like tears.[14]

Taste, then, along with other sensory experiences (in this case sight and touch), was epistemological. It facilitated a judgment of "miraculous". The liquid looked like one thing, felt like something else, and tasted like yet a third substance. These discordant sensory data signaled to Einhard that he witnessed a miraculous, rather than natural, phenomenon. Just as it played an interpretive role for Einhard, taste served as an exegetical tool for unlocking the literal meaning of a text for Carolingian exegetes. As a starting point for a larger project, today I will talk in detail about Haimo of Auxerre, since he is most familiar to me, but I want to make it clear that he is neither alone nor exceptional among clerical authors in the way that he wrote about taste.

For example, Isaiah 28.25-27 references a type of plant called *gith*. This plant is mentioned in the context of a number of other agricultural products, along with both prescriptions and proscriptions about threshing techniques. *Gith*, according to Haimo, is "a type of pulse, having seeds of a greater size than cumin, but black, and it tends to be placed in bread

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[12] Coolman, *Knowing God*, 213-14.

[13] Coolman, *Knowing God*, 239.

[14] Constat enim humorem illum saporis fuisse subsalsi, ad lacrymarum videlicet qualitatem, et tenuitatem quidem aquae, colorem autem veri sanguinis habuisse.
http://www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/xanfang.php?tabelle=Eginhardus_cps2&corpus=2&allow_download=0&lang=0

because of its sweet taste."[15] The other plants get no such treatment. This could be because he thought that *gith*, which we call black cumin, might have been unfamiliar to everyone reading his text. But as *gith* appears in the *Capitulare de villis*, it certainly was known in the Carolingian world.[16] Regardless, whether familiar or unfamiliar to his lectors, Haimo chose the sensory aspects of the usable part of the plant, the way it looked and tasted, to ensure that everyone knew what *gith* was.

Since it is Haimo's exegetical style to start with a literal explanation and move to an allegorical one, *gith* reappears later in his explanation of the same passage. Haimo interpreted planting, harvesting, and threshing all as allegories for human behavior, in particular the kind of errors that necessitate penance. In developing this explanation, Haimo lumped together all of the "bread corn" mentioned by the passage (wheat, barley) and explained the symbolism of bread itself instead of the individual grains that could be used to make it. *Gith* and cumin he then singled out, writing that "By cumin and *gith* the common and simple [people] each are understood, who by evil living have corrupted the faith of the Holy Trinity and the baptism of renewal, who unless they will be washed with tears and penance, will be handed over to the tortures of gehenna."[17] Even though the specific taste of *gith* does not factor into the allegorical explanation of the plant, Haimo knew what it tasted like and expected his audience to know as well.

Haimo again used taste as an exegetical vehicle in his commentary on Romans 11,16 (*For if the firstfruit be holy, so is the lump also: and if the root be holy so are the branches*). Haimo relied on taste to explain the relationship of the part to the whole. He explained that "firstfruits" were like "when a part is taken from a mass of gathered flour and tasted in advance, the rest should be of the same taste. For it is natural that a thing which is of all one substance, divided into parts, in each that nature remains, and it ought to be of one quality and taste, just as the grain is recognized in the leavened bread."[18] Once again, after using this quotidian example to ensure that his readers understood the literal meaning of the passage, Haimo moved on to an allegorical interpretation that included the second part of the verse. The fathers of the Old Testament were the roots, and the apostles the branches. "Therefore," concluded Haimo, "just as good roots spread good sap through their branches, where there are fruits of good taste" so too the apostles were good and holy

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[15] Haimo, In Isaiam, 854. Gith genus est leguminis, tantae magnitudinis habens grana ut cyminum, sed nigra, et solet poni in pane propter dulcorationis saporem.

[16] Capitulare de villis, 52. On a list of plants, under the variant spelling "git".

[17] Haimo, in Isaiam, 855. Per cyminum autem et gith populares et simplices quique intelliguntur, qui fidem sanctae Trinitatis et baptismum regenerationis male vivendo corrumpunt, qui nisi lacrymis et poenitentia abluti fuerint, tradendi sunt suppliciis gehennae.

[18] Haimo, In Divi Pauli, 461-62. "quando particula accipitur ex massa conspersae farinae, et praegustatur cuius saporis sit reliqua. Nam naturale est ut omnis res quae unius substantiae est, divisa per partes, in eadem permaneat natura, et unius saporis et qualitatis sit: sicut ex fermento farina dignoscitur

because of their connection to the Old Testament fathers.[19] In both of these instances, drawing upon the reader's sensory experiences facilitated Haimo's exegetical efforts.

I would like to briefly frame the evidence from the Haimonian corpus with material from other ninth-century exegetes. I have chosen one example each from Hrabanus Maurus and Christian of Stavelot, who were Haimo's near contemporaries.

Like Haimo, Hrabanus also used the familiarity of certain foods as an exegetical strategy. In *De universo*, he devoted Chapter 6 of Book 19 to the names of trees. As he traced the derivation of the different names, he pointed to place of origin or the size and shape of leaves or similar characteristics. For the *melimelum* (honey-apple), however, his explanation was different. The honey-apple, he wrote, "is named by its sweetness, or because the fruit has the flavor of honey, or because it is served with honey." The combination of apple and honey had an allegorical interpretation as well. "This apple," according to Hrabanus, "allegorically signifies the lord Christ, as the bride in the Song of Songs says: *As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired: and his fruit was sweet to my palate*."[20] The apple distinguishes itself by its odor and taste, Hrabanus continued, just as Christ distinguished himself from all of the other saints, even though they could be called sons of God. Even if the *melimelum* itself was unknown in Francia, the combination of apple and honey, or indeed any sweet varietal of apple, would have carried this association.

For Christian of Stavelot, it was not a specific food but a seasoning – salt – that proved useful. When explaining Matthew 5,18 (*You are the salt of the earth*) Christian connected flavor and holy instruction. Salt, necessary for all food, gives flavor to *pulmentis* (which has multiple potential translations, including some kind of meat-based relish) and "rouses longing and desire in all foods; obviously because of this food [is] the height of delight and enjoyment."[21] It also was able to preserve flesh, which is how I take Christian's use of

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[19] Haimo, In divi Pauli, 462: Sicut ergo radix bona bonum succum diffundit per ramos ubi sunt fructus boni saporis, ita apostoli, qui originem duxerunt a sanctis patribus et eorum fidem imitati sunt, sancti et boni fuerunt."

[20] Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*, PL 111, 512: Melimelum a dulcedine appellatum, vel quod fructus eius mellis saporem habeat, vel quod in melle servetur. Malum autem allegorice significat Dominum Christum: unde sponsa in Cantico canticorum dicit: *Sicut malus inter ligna silvarum, sic dilectus meus inter filias: sub umbra illius quem desiderabam sedi: et fructus eius dulcis gutturi meo*; hoc est, sicut malum visu, odore et gustu antecedit ligna silvestria: sic Christus antecellit omnes sanctos, qui filii Dei dicuntur

[21] Christianus Druthmarus, *Expositio in Matthaeum*, PL 106, 1305: *Vos estis sal terrae*. Sal dictum est, eo quod igne exsiliat. Sunt autem multa genera salis. Est tamen naturalis, necessarium ad omnem escam. Pulmentis enim saporem dat, excitat aviditatem et appetitum in omnibus cibis: ex eo quippe omnis victus delectatio et summa hilaritas. Omnes pecudes si semel gustaverint delectantur eum.

corpora in this context, so that it does not succumb to putrefaction.[22] But it was not gustatory pleasure nor preservative power that made Christian so interested in salt, but rather its interpretive potential. All of the characteristics of salt on Christin's list come together, he says, to add up to a spiritual interpretation of the doctors of the church. The patristic fathers, according to Christian, were like salt in that they made people desirous of "the food of scripture" which they had previously despised. It stimulated their appetite for doctrine, and imitated spiritually the preservative properties of salt. If that wasn't enough, "it drives away flies, that is, devils."[23]

All of the examples I presented today use *sapor, saporis*, which I have translated as "taste" or "flavor". Examples of similar food references that choose *gusto, -are* for taste certainly exist, but my admittedly impressionistic sense is that such examples are isolated rather than common. To me, this means that the mechanical action "to taste" in the sense of "to eat" was less important than the experiential consequences of consuming food, its taste or flavor. Even as it helped the auditors of homilies and readers of exegetical works understand better, then, it conditioned in turn those same everyday experiences. Knowing what *gith* tasted like helped Haimo explain passages from Isaiah. But for those who read his exegesis, tasting bread made with black cumin thereafter would call to mind Haimo's interpretation. The *lectio divina*, the specific style of reading ingrained into monastic practice, formed the bridge between metaphor and experience. I would like to close today by briefly considering the implications of meditative reading, bodily experience, and religious orthodoxy.

As Jean Leclercq noted long ago, medieval reading was a whole-body activity. The practice of audible reading, even if in a whisper to oneself, meant that reading engaged both vision and hearing. But more than this, medieval monastic reading was *meditatio*, a word that encompasses so much more than its English cognate "meditation". To read in this way was, as Leclercq put it, "to learn it "by heart" in the fullest sense of this expression, that is, with one's whole being: with the body, since the mouth pronounced it, with the memory which fixes it, with the intelligence that understands its meaning, and with the will that desires to put it into practice."[24] From late antiquity forward, "*lectio* and *meditatio*, in tension yet

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[22] Christianus Druthmarus, *Expositio in Matthaeum*, PL 106, 1305: Corpora astringit et siccat: defuncta etiam a putrescendi labe vindicat, ut durent.

[23] Christianus Druthmarus, *Expositio in Matthaeum*, PL 106, 1305-1306: Omnis ista natura spiritaliter convenit doctoribus; faciunt enim doctoribus aviditatem spiritalis cibi scripturae, quae ante viles nobis erant; eorum reseratione delectabiles nobis fiunt; appetitur ab omnibus animalibus, quia et doctrina apostolorum suscipitur ab omnibus gentibus. Restringit corpora sicut fit per doctrinam, vel luxuriosi casti fiunt; fugat muscas, id est diabolos.

[24] Leclercq, Love of Learning, 19-22.

complementary, were the two poles of the monastic life, the former pole supporting the latter,"[25] as Celia Chazelle put it.

It is certainly a coincidence, but a happy one, that taste features prominently in the *lectio* tradition. As Leclercq described it, the meditative approach of the *lectio divina* required the reader "to attach oneself closely to the sentence being recited and weigh all of its words in order to sound the depths of their full meaning. It means assimilating the content of a text by means of a kind of mastication which releases its full flavor."[26] Leclercq came by this metaphor honestly, for late antique and early medieval authors, starting with Cassian, used it as well.[27] Haimo, too, knew this language, and wrote about the importance not just of meditative reading, but of doing it properly.

Chapter 55 of Isaiah opens with a summons to "the waters", followed by the command to "buy and eat."[28] Haimo's interpretation of this part of the verse is straightforward enough, and includes a précis of *lectio divina*. The summons is meant for the faithful, and the waters are the "gifts of the Holy Spirit and the waters of baptism, the cost not of gold or silver or other such things but in believing and living well. And eat the same water, namely the spiritual instruction or the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by listening, by reading, by meditating, by retaining in the heart."[29] But here Haimo paused to consider a potential confusion caused by a literal reading of the text. "In what way," he asked, "are we able to eat water?"[30] The solution lay in the nature of scripture itself, for at times readers found it difficult, and at times easy to understand. So, Haimo concluded, "where it is grasped with difficulty, it is food. Where it has an easy interpretation, it is drink."[31] Both of these relate back to *lectio* and, indirectly, to taste, where the difference between the consumption of food and drink relates to the amount of effort needed to unlock the meaning of scripture.

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[25] Celia Chazelle, "Amalarius's *Liber officialis*," 333.

[26] Leclercq, Love of Learning, 90.

[27] Prominent later authors who used this language include Caesarius of Arles and Bede. See Duncan Robertson, *Lectio divina: The Medieval Experience of Reading*, 81-103 esp. 97-98.

[28] Isaiah 55,1: *All you that thirst, come to the waters: and you that have no money make haste, buy, and eat* (Omnes sitientes, venite ad aquas; et qui non habetis argentum, properate, emite, et comedite).

[29] Haimo, In Isaiam, 1001: Emite, dona Spiritus sancti et aquam baptismatis, non pretio auri aut argenti vel aliquo huiuscemodi, sed credendo et bene vivendo. Et comedite ipsam aquam, doctrinam scilicet spiritualem vel dona Spiritus sancti, audiendo, legendo, meditando, corde retinendo.

[30] Haimo, In Isaiam, 1001: Quomodo ergo possumus aquam comidere?

[31] Haimo, In Isaiam, 1001: Sacra Scriptura quibusdam in locis est cibus, quibusdam potus. Ubicunque cum difficultate capitur, cibus est. Ubi vero facilem habet intelligentiam, potus est. This allows Haimo to move seamlessly to the second part of Isaiah 55,1, where wine and milk stand in for food and water, and therefore difficult and easy passages, respectively. Haimo hangs all of these interpretations on 1 Corinthians 3,2 (*I gave you milk to drink, not meat; for you were not able as yet*).

This could work in the opposite direction as well. Both heretics and Jews, according to Haimo, failed to ruminate properly, and thus were unable to discern the flavor – that is, the truth – of scripture. When he reached the last sentence of Hosea 7,16 (*this is their derision in the land of Egypt*), Haimo repeated the relationship between food, drink, and the difficulty of scriptural interpretation. This time scripture was either wheat (difficult) or wine (easier). After noting the obvious connection also to the sacramental bread and wine offered at mass, Haimo remarked that "heretics stumble over this wheat or wine, unworthily receiving the body and blood of the Lord, and interpreting divine scripture with a perverse understanding. Although reading assiduously, and meditating on the law and the other scriptures, they pretend to eat, because in [their] understanding they ruminate badly."[32] And again when explaining the land of Sennaar mentioned in Zacharias 5,11. The name Sennaar, he wrote, "is interpreted by the shaking out of teeth, or the foulness of them."[33] It is interpreted this way because "it signifies that the reprobate have shaken out and lost teeth, with which they ought to chew the word of God, that is, they ought to meditate, and therefore they are ruined, because they cannot pass the food of divine speech into the stomach of their memory."[34]

Here we need to think back to the wider context, to the ninth century concern with materiality, and the relation between the worldly and the spiritual. As Chazelle reminds us in her essay on Amalarius's *Liber officialis*, exegesis was just one avenue for the ninth-century mind to follow when seeking the divine. Art, pilgrimage, and the liturgy all depend on sensory experiences, and all "were widely assumed to induce memory of scripture's teachings and inspire inner contemplation of heavenly things."[35] In this context, Cynthia Hahn's description of reliquaries also is instructive. Medieval viewers, she argues, both looked through and looked at elaborately decorated reliquaries. While the gold and jewels certainly mattered, the luxury of these containers was not an end unto itself. "The senses" of the viewer, she argues, "here are not, as one might think, bedazzled by the jewels and thereby distracted by their glittering earthly presence." Rather, they knew that the precious materials had "the

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[32] Haimo, Enarratio in duodecim prophetas minores, PL 117, 58-59: Spiritualiter vero per triticum et vinum possumus intelligere mysteria corporis et sanguinis Christi, sive etiam Scripturam sacram, quae in locis obscurioribus cibum, in facilioribus autem potum nobis praestat. Super hoc triticum vel vinum haeretici corruunt, indigne corpus et sanguinem Domini sumentes, et Scripturam divinam perverso intellectu interpretantes. (0059A) Legentes enim assidue, et meditantes legem caeterasque Scripturas, comedere simulant, quod male intelligendo ruminant.

[33] Haimo, Enarratio in duodecim prophetas minores, PL 117, 237: Sennaar interpretatur dentium excussio, vel fetor eorum.

[34] Haimo, Enarratio in duodecim prophetas minores, PL 117, 237: Quod vero Sennaar excussio dentium dicitur, significat quia reprobi excussos et perditos habent dentes, quibus verba Dei molere, hoc est, meditari debuerant, et ideo pereunt, quia cibum divini eloquii in ventrem memoriae non transmittunt.

[35] Chazelle, "Amalarius's *Liber officialis*," 334.

capability of lifting the mind to higher things."[36] I suggest that the same holds true for food. Whether luxurious or ordinary, the materiality of foods in the form of its taste and flavor, while important, could also serve as a vehicle for contemplation and understanding.

Carolingian exegetes wrote using food metaphors, certainly. But the connections forged by these authors between taste and exegesis proved to be powerful beyond the rhetorical potency of metaphor. The sweet taste that *gith* gave to Haimo's bread, or Hrabanus's honeyed apples, or even Einhard's salty saints, like the shapes of reliquaries suggested by metaphors that Hahn studied, I contend, were part of the "continuity of the mundane and the sacred" that Chazelle demonstrates was "in a sense replicated in the individual Christian."[37] Knowledge may well be power, as the cliché goes, but the way that knowledge is obtained is a means of exercising power. Involving the body in their interpretation of sacred texts meant that Carolingians could rely on the body in turn to reinforce orthodoxy.

[36] Cynthia Hahn, "Metaphor and Meaning in Early Medieval Reliquaries", in *Seeing the Invisible*, 251.

[37] Chazelle, "Amalarius's *Liber officialis*," 340.