

## **The Exemption that Proves the Rule Alcuin, Theodulf and Charlemagne in Conflict (802)**

Paper Proposal – Religious Exemption and the State 400-1300  
Rutger Kramer – Institute for Medieval Research, ÖAW, Vienna  
[rutger.kramer@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:rutger.kramer@oeaw.ac.at)

In the year 802, bishop Theodulf of Orléans found one of his clerics guilty of an otherwise unknown misdeed. The cleric, however, promptly escaped his capturers, and took refuge in the abbey church of Saint-Martin in Tours, which at the time fell under the abbacy of the Anglo-Saxon deacon Alcuin. From there, things escalated quickly, leading to a conflict between bishop and abbot, which touched upon matters of church asylum, episcopal and abbatial rights, and even the nature of crime, sin and punishment. Eventually, even Charlemagne got involved, as both parties in this conflict ended up taking their case to the highest court of appeal: the imperial court in Aachen.

While the conflict between Alcuin and Theodulf has been studied, for example, for the ideas on penance it contained, or the rules on church asylum that were developed in its wake, this presentation aims to shed light on the way each of the parties in the conflict argued their case by referring to the various levels of responsibility that intersected when abbacy, diocese and court collided. What was at stake, in the end, went beyond the question of who held authority in cases like this, and where were the limits of imperial power *vis à vis* episcopal or monastic autonomy. As such, this conflict came to encompass not only the question what should be decided by whom, but also under which circumstances one would be exempt from such a decision, or its consequences.