

Alcuin must have been the punster-in-chief of Charlemagne's court. Mary Garrison has studied his elaborate system of nicknames for members of the royal family, the court,

and his wide circle of friends. This paper focuses upon a single figure and a single letter; the letter to Dogwulfus, Alcuin's punning name (by *adnominatio*) for Dagulf, the scribe-archivist (*scriniarius*, as Alcuin calls him) of the court, who is most famous for the beautiful Dagulf Psalter (today Vienna, Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek lat. 1861; its original ivory binding boards are preserved in the Louvre), a book prepared for Charlemagne to present to Pope Hadrian (+795).

The letter (MGH *Epistolae IV* (1895), ed. Duemmler, p. 115) is based upon allusions to a biblical passage (Matt. 7 --the climax of the Sermon on the Mount, with its references to dogs and to wolves) and a classical passage (Ovid, *Met.* 1, especially lines 237-241--the story of Jupiter's punishment of Lycaon, turned into a wolf). The subtlety of the letter's allusions is studied here. Not only the addressee, but the theme of the letter itself rests upon word-play; this theme is the doctrine of *caritas*, and in Alcuin's appeal this is linked with the very physical letter itself (*cartula*, from *carta*). This subject is also derived from Matthew 7, where the law of charity is set forth in the Great Commandment ("mandatum magnum").

In addition, a more radical question is put forward here: what was the *quid pro quo* of this little letter? Is it merely a bit of funniness? It is certainly funny, in its gorgeous word-play. I propose that, in addition, the pun upon *cartula* and *caritas* points to Alcuin's unstated request: the archivist of Charlemagne's court should have the "charity" to preserve Alcuin's "little chart" --this one and all the other letters that Alcuin wrote, so --seemingly--miraculously saved for us, a subject Donald Bullough has recently discussed. I argue that Dagulf understood the underlying serious appeal in Alcuin's comic letter and that he kept his side of the bargain.