

Ideas and narrative in Otto of Freising's *Gesta Frederici*

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Abstract

This article discusses the inner coherence of Otto of Freising's *Gesta Frederici* and, by implication, the wider question of the 'mode of perception' in medieval historiography. Is there any connection between the philosophical and theological reflections expressed in digressions and explicit statements, and the apparently scattered and disconnected entries in his narrative? The answer to this question is positive. *Gesta Frederici* is carefully composed around a number of key episodes, connected to one another on the allegorical and typological level, which bring out Otto's central message about Frederick restoring the right order of the world. Book I describes the crisis in Church and Empire while Book II shows how Frederick heals this crisis by bringing peace in the Empire, governing in close cooperation with the princes, and uniting pope and emperor in close friendship for the benefit of the Church.

Introduction

The present article deals with the internal unity and coherence of Otto of Freising's *Gesta Frederici*.¹ Such an examination is not primarily a literary enterprise but aims at understanding Otto's ideas about history, society, and human actions and is ultimately intended as a contribution to the discussion of medieval mentalities or 'modes of perception'.

There have been two main attitudes to these problems among students of medieval historiography. The German school of the history of ideas which, from the 1930s

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¹*Otonis et Rahewini Gesta Friderici I. Imperatoris*, ed. G. Waitz and B. von Simson, MGH *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum*, vol. 46, 3rd ed. (Hannover and Leipzig, 1912), reprinted *Gesta Frederici seu rectius Chronica*, ed. F. J. Schmale (Darmstadt, 1965). References in the following are to books and chapters, without title. For the title, which is probably not authentic but generally used for practical and conventional reasons, see Schmale, 'Einleitung', 75–6 and K. F. Werner, 'Gott, Herrscher und Historiograph', in: *Deus qui mutat tempora. Festschrift Alfons Becker*, ed. E.-D. Diehl, H. Seibert and F. Staab (Sigmaringen, 1987), 8.

onwards, largely revolutionised the study of medieval historiography,² regards Otto as an author with a general philosophical and Christian interpretation of history and with independent views on contemporary issues—in addition to his attachment to Frederick Barbarossa and the Roman Empire. According to Josef Koch, Otto is not only the greatest philosopher of history in the Middle Ages, he is also the first, as Augustine's *De civitate Dei* should not be regarded as philosophy of history.³

By contrast, the tradition of *histoire de mentalité* has often regarded medieval thought as primitive and archaic. This tradition has not, however, been particularly concerned with historiography. The most important contributions to the field so far have been by William Brandt, August Nitschke, and Georges Duby, of whom Brandt is the most important in our context.⁴ Brandt distinguishes between a secular and a clerical tradition, finding very little understanding of the aims and intentions of the actors and very little connection between the various events narrated in either of them. The aim of the secular or aristocratic author is 'to celebrate, not to explain'. The clerical author, who represents a different mental outlook from that of his aristocratic counterpart, does try to explain but hardly in a way that makes sense of the events from a political and military point of view. To a medieval clerical historian, the world is essentially static, and historical events are temporary changes in the normal order of things. The explanation of these changes are usually sought in particular qualities in the persons or objects that bring them about and thus tend to be tautological.⁵ In Brandt's opinion, both the aristocratic and the clerical way of writing history are thus evidence of a 'mode of perception' totally different from our own.

Brandt does not directly treat Otto of Freising, but large parts of Otto's narrative apparently conform perfectly to his description of medieval clerical historiography. They are terse and dry, and, above all, disconnected; one looks in vain for explanations or

²J. Spörl, 'Das mittelalterliche Geschichtsdanken als Forschungsaufgabe', in: *Geschichtsdanken und Geschichtsbild im Mittelalter*, ed. W. Lammers (Darmstadt, 1965), 1–29, which originally appeared in 1933, is generally considered the start of a new movement, although Spörl gives a number of references to earlier works discussing similar problems. For later studies within this tradition, see the collection *Geschichtsdanken und Geschichtsbild*, quoted above. See also F.-J. Schmale, *Funktion und Formen mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung* (Darmstadt, 1985). The importance of this German tradition is emphasised by R. D. Ray, 'Medieval historiography through the twelfth century: Problems and progress of research', *Viator*, 5 (1974), 33–60. For a parallel to the German tradition in the English-speaking world, see the classic by R. W. Southern, 'Aspects of the European tradition of historical writing', 1–4, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 20 (1970), 173–201; 21 (1971), 159–79; 22 (1972), 159–81; 23 (1973), 243–65.

³J. Koch, 'Die Grundlagen der Geschichtsphilosophie Ottos von Freising', in: *Geschichtsdanken*, 321–2. See also E. F. Otto, 'Otto von Freising und Friedrich Barbarossa', *Geschichtsdanken*, 247–77; J. Spörl, 'Die Grundlagen der Geschichtsphilosophie Ottos von Freising', *Geschichtsdanken*, 321–49; and H.-W. Goetz, *Das Geschichtsbild Ottos von Freising* (Cologne, 1984). By contrast, N. Staubach, 'Geschichte als Lebenstrost. Bemerkungen zur historiographischen Konzeption Ottos von Freising', *Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch*, 23 (1988), 46–75, draws a sharper line of distinction between history and theology, criticising the theological interpretations of medieval historiography.

⁴W. J. Brandt, *The shape of medieval history* (New Haven, 1966); A. Nitschke, *Naturerkenntnis und politisches Handeln im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1967); G. Duby, *Guillaume le maréchal. Le meilleur chevalier du monde* (Paris, 1984). Duby and Nitschke are primarily interested in the relationship between historiography and actual, political and military behaviour, Duby in addition confining himself to secular historiography. For some comments on their works, see S. Bagge, *Society and politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley and London, 1991), 161–73.

⁵Brandt, *Shape*, 33 ff., 59 ff.

concrete links between the events. By contrast, the German historians' conclusion about Otto's and other medieval historians' greatness is based almost exclusively on particular philosophical passages. *Gesta Frederici* has never been read in order to examine exactly how Otto links his general philosophical and theological ideas to his narrative as a whole. Does he carefully select and arrange his facts in accordance with these ideas or in order to argue for specific solutions to social and political problems? Or is he essentially a philosopher and theologian who records a scattered number of events which his contemporaries find remarkable and then occasionally exploits the opportunity to give comments on higher principles? Only by answering these questions, shall we be able to choose between the two contrasting interpretations of medieval historiography.

Clearly, whatever coherence and unity there may be in Otto's work as a whole, they are not of a literal and causal nature but must be sought on the typological and analogical level. One possible method of uncovering this kind of unity is to start from Otto's philosophical digressions and try to trace similar ideas in the narrative. However, there are only three such digressions in the *Gesta*, all of which are fairly abstract.⁶ They are mainly concerned with the contrast between God's constancy, eternity, and absolute goodness on the one hand, and the composite and relative character of everything on earth on the other. These digressions are no doubt intended to give a general perspective on the work, but they are hardly able to explain Otto's selection and representation of events in any detail. However, there is also a number of other digressions of a less abstract character which John O. Ward has used in his analysis of the composition of Book I of the *Gesta*. A medieval digression was not necessarily the same as a modern one; it might be more an elaboration on a particular theme than a departure from the main line in the argument or narrative. Thus, Otto's digressions 'provide an interlace narrative pattern rather than a pattern of theme and (in the modern sense) secondary digression (or departure from theme)'.⁷ In addition to the passages that Otto explicitly marks as digressions, there are stories told in greater detail, with more drama, or including direct speech or even formal speeches or lengthy quotations from letters,⁸ which differ from the usually very terse and condensed narrative. It would seem a reasonable assumption that these stories also have special importance, possibly also that there is some connection between them on the typological and analogical level. In the

⁶They are the following: on the composite and the uncomposite, corresponding to the difference between God and the world (I.5), on universal and individual substances, in connection with Gilbert de la Porrée's doctrine on the Trinity (I.56, 242–46), and on absolute and relative goodness, in connection with the outcome of the Second Crusade (I.66). See K. F. Morrison, 'Otto of Freising's quest for the hermeneutic circle', *Speculum*, 55 (1980), 222–33.

⁷J. O. Ward, 'Some principles of rhetorical historiography in the twelfth century', *Classical rhetoric and medieval historiography*, ed. E. Breisach (Kalamazoo, 1985), 103–65, 113. See also C. Clover, *The medieval saga* (Ithaca, 1982), 51 with reference to Geoffrey of Vinsauf's distinction between two kinds of digressions: one developing the theme under discussion, the other introducing a new one. On interlacement or stranding, which clearly plays an important part in *Gesta Frederici*, see, in addition to Ward's article, E. Vinaver, *The rise of romance* (Oxford, 1971).

⁸Letters in narrative sources have often been regarded mainly as documentary evidence which they of course are to modern historians. However, we cannot take for granted that medieval historians included them for this reason. As for *Gesta Frederici*, it seems difficult to explain why Otto should want to adduce evidence on the particular—and relatively few—events where he quotes letters. I therefore find it more likely that he used them in a similar way as speeches and extended narrative, to underline important points and make his narrative more detailed and vivid.

following I shall take my point of departure in a number of such stories and digressions and see how far they can throw light on the narrative as a whole.

No doubt there are dangers in such a procedure: passages may be picked at random and linked together in a way that distorts the author's meaning. Two principles which were also applied in the Middle Ages may protect us against the worst failures: the typological or allegorical meaning should not contradict the literal one, and it should preferably solve problems of interpretation that cannot be solved by a literal reading. In addition, it is important to pay attention to context. Tracing the unity of a work through a typological interpretation usually means finding connections between passages belonging in different parts of the work and to different narrative sequences. But it is also important to consider the immediate context of these crucial passages. Does this context also receive additional meaning through the typological interpretation? And can it contribute to our understanding of the 'typological' passages? The final test of the success of this kind of interpretation must be to what extent it can give meaning and coherence, not only to isolated passages but to larger parts of the narrative.

Book I: the relationship between Hohenstaufen and Imperial history

Otto only managed to finish two books of *Gesta Frederici*. While Book II shows a certain thematic unity in the sense that it is strictly confined to the actions of Frederick Barbarossa during the first four years of his reign (1152–56), Book I deals with a variety of topics over a period of nearly eighty years. Otto declares in the prologue that he will start his history of Frederick by going back to his grandfather and father, so that his deeds will appear even more brilliant through the brilliance of those of his ancestors.⁹ However, the book contains a variety of information apparently without direct relevance to Frederick and his ancestors. Some scholars have actually regarded it as a revision of the *Chronica*, in accordance with Otto's new and more optimistic view of human history and the greater importance of the Hohenstaufen family after Frederick's accession to the throne.¹⁰

More specifically, the attempt to find a unity in Book I meets with the following

⁹*per clara clariora que de tua persona dicenda fuerint, appareant (Gesta, prologus, 118).*

¹⁰For the idea of *Gesta Frederici* as a continuation of *Chronica* or a revised version of its last part (Book VII), see C. Mierow, 'Otto von Freising: A medieval historian at work', *Philological Quarterly*, 14 (1935), 348; Werner, 'Gott', 8; and Schmale, 'Einleitung', 3, 18–21. Schmale suggests that Book I is largely based on the revision of the *Chronica* Otto was planning, according to his prologue (*stilum vertere cogitaram, iamque scribere ceperam, sed . . . ceptum proieci opus*). This hypothesis cannot be rejected, although I do not find it very likely. In any case, no hypothesis about the 'prehistory' of the *Gesta* can excuse us from examining the connection between the various parts of Book I in the form Otto finally gave it. As for the relationship between *Chronica* and *Gesta* in general, which I shall not discuss in the following, the main tendency in German historiography has been to note the differences in detail, while trying to trace a common philosophy of history in both works. For an attempt to show the difference between the works, based on the idea of different genres, see A. Lhotsky, 'Die Historiographie Ottos von Freising', *Aufsätze und Vorträge*, 1 (Vienna and Munich, 1970), 49–63; 'Otto von Freising. Seine Weltanschauung', *Aufsätze und Vorträge*, 64–81; 'Fuga et electio', *Aufsätze und Vorträge*, 82–91; and E. Mégier, 'Tamquam lux post tenebras, oder: Ottos von Freising Weg von der Chronik zu den Gesta Frederici', *Mediävistik*, 3 (1990), 131–267. See also Morrison, 'Quest', who points to inconsistencies and differences between the two works as well as within each of them.

problems. Firstly, the first part of the work, dealing with the period before the Hohenstaufen ascended to the throne, i.e. the reigns of Henry IV (Chap. 1–10), Henry V (Chap. 10–16), and Lothar III (Chap. 17–22), contains imperial as well as Hohenstaufen history, with the main emphasis on the latter. Otto does mention that the Hohenstaufen rise to ascendancy had already started under Henry IV, but does not really try to show the connection between the Hohenstaufen and the Empire and their gradual progress towards imperial power. Both Hohenstaufen and imperial history seem to fall apart in a number of separate episodes. Secondly, when Hohenstaufen and imperial history are united in the reign of Conrad III (Chap. 23–71), the account of which is more than twice as long as that of the three other reigns together, neither the Hohenstaufen nor the Empire seem to play a very prominent part. The main topics in this part of Book I (I.36–66) are the Second Crusade and the doctrinal conflicts within the Church, above all the conflict between Bernard of Clairvaux and Gilbert de la Porrée (I.49–62).

In his analysis of Book I, Ward makes two important observations. He shows that the opening words set the tone of the whole book, introducing the major theme of the contrast between chaos and order: the Empire is torn apart by inner strife and hurt by the pope's unprecedented excommunication of the emperor.¹¹ Ward correctly states that chaos as well as order are present in Book I.¹² The general impression created by the book is nevertheless gloomy, and the contrast between chaos and order is therefore mainly to be found, not within Book I but between Books I and II. Characteristically, the latter book opens with a picture of peace and joy. This contrast seems to confirm Ward's second observation, that Book I is 'a massive book-long introduction' to the deeds of Frederick, an introduction the author was prevented from making use of by his death soon afterwards.¹³ In his actual analysis of the book, Ward shows the intricacy of its composition and connections and parallels between certain passages but does not really attack the problem of the coherence between its major themes. In my opinion, this problem cannot be solved through an analysis of Book I but only by assuming a connection between Book I and Book II on the typological level.

Apart from the problems attached to typological interpretations already mentioned, this hypothesis may easily appear immune to falsification. As Otto only managed to finish one more book of *Gesta Frederici*, any disconnected episode in Book I may be explained as the preparation for some future treatment. I believe, however, that there is a sufficient number of fairly clear parallels between Books I and II to make such a hypothesis likely. The possible objection that a consistent composition is unlikely to be found in an unfinished work, may be answered by the observation that Otto probably did complete Book II and further, that he seems to have started writing it after the events

¹¹*Cum sub imperatore Heinrico . . . imperium gravissime scissum fuisset parteque maxima optimatum principi suo rebellante tota pene regni latitudo ferro, flamma fedaretur, Gregorius septimus . . . eundem imperatorem . . . anathematis gladio ferendum decrevit. Cuius rei novitatem eo vehementius indignatione motum suscepit imperium, quo numquam ante hec tempora huiusmodi sententiam in principem Romanorum promulgatam cognoverat (Gesta I.1).* See Ward, 'Principles', 111–2. Ward's observation may in addition serve as a warning against neglecting the apparently condensed lists of events. It also suggests that a closer study of Otto's syntax and use of rhetorical figures may give interesting results. However, I shall not attempt such a study here.

¹²Ward, 'Principles', 111, 115.

¹³Ward, 'Principles', 116.

recorded there had taken place. Consequently, Otto was able to arrange his narrative according to a preconceived plan.¹⁴ Thus, the fact that *Gesta Frederici* is unfinished does not prevent us from treating it largely as an organised whole.

In analysing the composition of Book I and its connection to Book II, I shall take my point of departure in the beginning of Book II, which deals with Frederick's election and coronation. These are crucial events in Otto's narrative, marking the transition from the long period of gloom and internal unrest in the Empire to the peace and glory under the leadership of the brilliant new king. At the end of Book I (I.71), Otto praises Conrad III for his unselfishness and concern for the Empire in preferring his nephew Frederick as his successor instead of his own son who was a minor. He opens Book II by briefly recording the unanimous election of Frederick by princes and great men who had been able to assemble in Frankfurt at short notice, adding a short comment on the Roman Empire being elective and not hereditary. Considering the contrast between this election and some earlier ones, as well as the complicated negotiations,¹⁵ no doubt known to Otto, who may have been one of the electors himself, this is a strange way of presenting such an important decision. Admittedly, Otto adds a brief passage on the background to the election, explaining that Frederick was preferred, not only because of his great virtues, but also because he was related to the Welf as well as to the Waiblingen (the Staufen) and thus might be able to end the enmity between the two families. Thus, the princes' decision to bypass Conrad's son was not the result of hatred towards the latter, but caused by concern for the common good (II.2). Otto continues with a brief account of Frederick's passage from Frankfurt to Aachen and his coronation there, giving the exact dates of these events and adding a brief comment on the joy and solemnity accompanying these ceremonies. Then he introduces the new king in his narrative by referring to two episodes that took place on the day of his coronation (II.3).

A man who has been disgraced approaches him, hoping that Frederick on this day of glory will be so full of joy that he will easily forgive him. But Frederick is unyielding, stating that the man had been disgraced, not because of hatred, but because of justice.¹⁶

¹⁴See Otto's comment at the end of Book II: *Quare huic secundo operi terminus detur, ut ad ea que dicenda restant tertio locis seruetur volumini* (II.58). This passage also seems to indicate that Otto was only planning one more book (Schmale, 'Einleitung', 33). By contrast, P. Munz, *Frederick Barbarossa. A study in medieval politics* (London, 1969), 130, suggests that Otto had planned two more books, corresponding to Rahewin's continuation. At the end of his narrative, Rahewin states that he does not want the number of books in the work to exceed that of the gospels (IV.85, 708). However, as Rahewin's work differs considerably from Otto's in many respects (Schmale, 'Einleitung', 32–48), the four books may equally well have been Rahewin's own idea. In any case, Rahewin clearly regarded his work as finished, which suggests that neither he nor Otto was planning a full-scale biography of Frederick. The fact that Otto's account is based in its outline on Frederick's own list of his exploits (see below), which he cannot have received before April/May 1157, suggests that Otto started writing *Gesta* after this date (Schmale, 'Einleitung', 2–3, 13–5). Morrison, 'Quest' 210, suggests that the lack of philosophical digressions in Book II is so unusual as to indicate that Otto cannot have completed it, and further, that Rahewin may have changed Otto's text after his death. However, these objections hardly carry the same weight as Otto's own statement at the end of the book. The final decision in the matter depends on an examination of the contents of Otto's work.

¹⁵See e.g. Schmale's notes in the edition.

¹⁶T. Reuter, 'The medieval German *Sonderweg*?', in: *Kings and kingship in medieval Europe*, ed. A. Duggan, King's College London Medieval Studies (London, 1993), 208, suggests that Otto intends his story about Frederick as a contrast to Wipo's description of Conrad II doing justice to supplicants on his way to be crowned and forgiving those who had done him injuries before he became king. See Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi*, Chap. 3, in: *Wiponis Opera*, ed. H. Bresslau, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum germanicarum* (Hannover, 1915), 20–3. This is possible but, as will be seen, I believe that there is a closer parallel in the *Gesta* itself.

Thus, he shows a remarkable *constantia* in such a young man while at the same time emphasising that as a ruler he is the guardian of justice.¹⁷ Otto continues his account by pointing to the remarkable coincidence between Frederick's coronation and the consecration of the Bishop of Münster, whose name was also Frederick, in the same church and on the same day. To Otto this coincidence points to the future, because it signifies that the highest king and priest, i.e. Christ, was also present at the consecration of these two persons, the only ones to receive the sacrament of unction and rightly to be called the Lord's Anointed (*Christi Domini*).¹⁸

Compared to the major political events that have just taken place, these two events receive disproportionately large space. They serve as Otto's comments on the true, spiritual importance of Frederick's election and coronation, in contrast to his fairly brief and terse 'literal' narrative. I shall try to show in the following that these two episodes actually indicate the two main themes of Frederick's reign as described in Book II: royal justice, in internal as well as external matters, and the relationship between the temporal and spiritual leaders of the Church. But they also serve as the key to the interpretation of Book I, and to establish the link between the two books.

The first real story in Book I—apart from the condensed passage on the Investiture Contest—concerns the Saxon rebellion, which is the turning-point in the history of the Empire, inaugurating the period of crisis and decline that lasted until Frederick's accession nearly eighty years later. Otto explains its outbreak by Henry IV's arrogance in believing himself invincible. Henry boasts to the Saxons that no one dares to rebel against him, explaining their quiet by lack of courage rather than loyalty. This boasting leads to the Saxon rebellion which is followed by others (I.4). As a historical explanation, this story does not seem very convincing, certainly not to us and possibly not even to Otto and his contemporaries.¹⁹ After all, young princes are often imprudent or thoughtless in their utterances without such consequences. Otto's explanation must therefore primarily be understood in a moral and typological sense. A medieval reader of this passage about a young prince in the beginning of his reign could hardly avoid thinking of another young prince, Frederick himself. While Henry acts in youthful irresponsibility, Frederick shows the *constantia* of a much older man. Thus, the two stories serve to underline the contrast between two rulers whose reigns both marked a turning-point in imperial history, one introducing a period of decline, the other a period of revival.

In the subsequent philosophical passage (I.5) Otto reflects over the difference between God's eternal unity and the composite nature of everything on earth which leads to a constant change between good and bad conditions: everything on earth is composite and will dissolve. From this follows that everything reaching the summit will inevitably decline. It is not quite clear whether Otto means that Henry could have avoided—or at

¹⁷*constantie sue omnibus nobis non parvum dedit indicium* (II.3).

¹⁸*ut revera summus rex et sacerdos presenti iocunditati hoc quasi prognostico interesse crederetur, quia in una ecclesia una dies . . . duarum personarum, que sole . . . sacramentaliter unguuntur et christi Domini rite dicuntur, vidit unctionem* (II.3).

¹⁹In *Chronica* VI.34, Otto explains the Saxon rebellion as the result of Gregory VII's accusations against Henry IV.

least postponed—disaster by a different behaviour, or it would have struck anyway.²⁰ In any case, his story of Henry's boasting clearly has a moral purpose, urging the prince always to remain humble and never boast of his luck.

In contrasting Henry's youthful boasting with Frederick's *constantia*, Otto probably intends to make a further point, which is made clearer by his philosophical digression. The great contrast between God and the human and temporal world is exactly the contrast between *constantia* and *inconstantia*. No human being can imitate God's *constantia*, but the ruler, who more than anyone else should imitate God (see below), must try to do it to some extent. Therefore, *constantia* is the supreme virtue of the ruler, a virtue that has its main practical application in the field of justice, where the ruler should also imitate God. The link between the ruler and God—the ruler in general as well as Frederick in particular—is further emphasised in the episode of the two *Christi Domini*.

Otto includes one more story about a representative of the old dynasty, this time about Henry's son and successor Henry V. This is the only story Otto tells about Henry in his account of his reign, which mostly deals with the Hohenstaufen. Having captured Bar-le-Duc and taken Count Reginald captive, Henry threatens to hang him unless his men surrender Mouzon. When they refuse, he takes steps to carry out his threat, commenting to those who warn him that God will punish such an act: *Caelum caeli domino, terram autem dedit filiis hominum* (Ps. 113,16). In the end, however, he abstains from the crime he is about to commit (I.11). This episode is an addition to the account in *Chronica* VII.15 which only mentions that Henry captured Bar-le-Duc and took the count captive. The quotation *Caelum caeli . . .* is an important expression of the idea of monarchy as the result of Creation and of the relative autonomy of the king.²¹ God has delegated His power on earth to man; man is by definition a ruler; and the king represents this 'essential humanity' *par excellence*.²² Otto no doubt shares these ideas, even to the extent that he regards the king as not responsible to other men but only to

²⁰Besides, Otto takes care not to attach unnecessary blame to the rulers of the old dynasty. Thus, a story he tells about Henry a little later may be intended to modify the impression created by this one. Being asked how he could tolerate that his enemy, the anti-king Rudolf of Rheinfelden, was buried in such a magnificent tomb, Henry replies that he would wish that all his enemies were so well buried (I.7). The story may simply have been included because it was a good one, bringing some humour into Otto's otherwise deadly serious narrative, but it may also be intended to show that Henry, despite his youthful boasting, eventually developed a certain philosophical attitude that allowed him to joke about his adversities.

²¹A century later than Otto, Bracton uses this quotation to draw the line of division between the pope and the clergy on the one hand and the king on the other: *Ad papam et ad sacerdotium quidem pertinent ea quae spiritualia sunt, ad regem vero et ad regnum ea quae sunt temporalia, juxta illud, Caelum caeli Domino, terram autem dedit filiis hominum*, Henry of Bracton, *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliæ*, V.5.19.2, ed. T. Twiss, *Rerum Britannicarum mediæ ævi scriptores* (London, 1857), 296. It is used in a similar way in *The King's Mirror*, a royalist treatise written in Norway in the 1250s, see S. Bagge, *The political thought of The King's Mirror* (Odense, 1987), 140–1. A further example, which forms a closer parallel to Henry V's use of the quotation, is Ezzelino da Romano, the tyrant of Verona, who used it to justify his ruthless behaviour. See E. Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich II* (Berlin, 1928–31), 1, 560 and 2, 231.

²²See W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Schriften* 2 (Leipzig, 1938), 26–7; E. Kantorowicz, 'Deus per naturam, Deus per gratiam', *Harvard Theological Review*, 45 (1952), 263–77; H. H. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit* (Bonn, 1968), 248, 373; Bagge, *The Political Thought*, 22–6, 93. Otto expresses this idea himself in the speech of the clergy of Tortona (see below): *Imitetur princeps terre principem caeli* (II.26, 332).

God.²³ Nevertheless, he evidently regards Henry's use of the quotation as unwarranted, perhaps even blasphemous.

In describing how Henry repents and abstains from his evil plan, Otto portrays him as coming to his senses, giving up his irrational behaviour.²⁴ In addition to denying any conflict between rationality and morality, Otto may intend this passage as an excuse for Henry: he is not really an evil man, only carried away by his temper. The use of the word *augustus* about Henry V possibly points in the same direction: Otto may be referring, not only to the usual title of the Roman emperor²⁵ but also to the original sense of the word, 'venerable'. By controlling his temper, Henry shows his truly imperial character.

So far, the story gives a fairly favourable impression of Henry. However, Henry clearly falls short of Frederick's high standards regarding *constantia*. While Frederick exercises impersonal justice in such a way as to astonish those surrounding him, Henry has to be prevailed upon by his men to abstain from his immoral and irrational intentions. Further, Henry almost oversteps the boundary between the temporal and the spiritual power by his blasphemous use of the quotation *Caelum caeli . . .*, while Frederick's coronation signifies the perfect relationship between these two rulers of Christendom. Thus, in the same way as the previous story of Henry IV, this one is intended to show the moral superiority of the Hohenstaufen compared to the rulers of the old dynasty.

The rest of the more detailed stories of Book I all deal with the Hohenstaufen. The link between them and imperial history is made in the reign of Henry IV, with the 'vocation' of Frederick's grandfather, Frederick, Count of Staufen.²⁶ Frederick, who is *consilio providus, armis strenuus*, fights faithfully on Henry's side. Aware of the difficult situation of the kingdom, Henry sends for Frederick in secret, gives him his only daughter in marriage, and appoints him duke of Swabia. Henry accompanies these acts by a fairly long speech, the first in the *Gesta*, describing the general chaos, dissolution, and immorality in the kingdom; pointing to Frederick as the most brave and loyal of his men; and urging him to stand up against all these evils and fight against the enemies of the Empire. Thus, in the midst of disaster, the Hohenstaufen are chosen by an emperor of the current dynasty to save the Empire. The importance of this episode, even from an literal and causal point of view, is obvious. The Hohenstaufen are now introduced in the story, and the background to their accession to the throne is explained.

Once the Hohenstaufen are introduced, they play an increasingly prominent part in Otto's narrative. Otto's account of the rest of the reign of Henry IV and that of Henry V is largely devoted to Hohenstaufen history. The death of Henry V is a turning-point. Otto implies that Duke Frederick II, maternal grandson of Henry IV, would be the obvious

²³ . . . *soli reges, utpote constituti supra leges, divino examini reservati seculi legibus non cohibentur. Unde est illud tam regis quam prophetae testimonium: Tibi soli peccavi* (Letter to Frederick, *Chronica*, 2).

²⁴ *irrationabili motu defervescente, cunctorum precibus augustus inclinatus a mortis sententia animum revocavit* (I.11).

²⁵ The title was commonly applied to medieval emperors from the time of Charlemagne onwards. See R. L. Benson, 'Political *renovatio*: Two models from Roman antiquity', in: *Renaissance and renewal in the twelfth century*, ed. R. L. Benson and G. Constable (Toronto, 1982), 373.

²⁶ I.8, see Schmale, 'Einleitung', 8–9, comparing the account of *Gesta* to that of *Chronica* where Duke Frederick is barely mentioned.

candidate to the throne, but through the intrigues of Archbishop Adalbert of Mainz, Lothar, Duke of Saxony, is elected instead. Lothar persecutes the Hohenstaufen who thus become the enemies of the ruling king.²⁷ The ensuing war covers most of Otto's account of Lothar's reign.

In this account, one story stands out, not in the sense that it breaks off the continuous narrative by introducing another subject, but in the sense that it is told in exceptionally great detail and very vividly, and that it clearly has a moral significance. Frederick's father, Duke Frederick of Swabia, was persecuted by Lothar and had to fight a number of enemies, one of whom was Henry the Proud, Duke of Bavaria. Having been defeated by Frederick in an open fight, Henry resorts to treason, feigning friendship with Frederick and promising to act as an intermediary between Frederick and the emperor. Trusting him, Frederick arrives with few men. Otto now creates a dramatic story, told in the high style, of how Frederick is attacked at night in a monastery by his enemies, the night symbolising darkness and evil forces. Frederick in his distress turns to God and is shown by heaven (*celitus ostensa*) a passage leading to the church. The enemies search the monastery, even threatening to set fire to it. At sunrise, however, Frederick is saved. He discovers from the tower of the church that his men are arriving and, returning good for evil, warns Henry of them.

This episode shows God's special protection of the Hohenstaufen, together with their moral superiority over their enemies. A noble German prince tries to take Frederick captive by treason. Otto does mention, however, that some people excused Henry for this act because Frederick and Henry were enemies and further, that Henry acted in the interest of the Empire, trying to restore peace. As appears from his comment on morality and rationality in the episode about Henry V, Otto himself hardly shares this opinion. This episode thus continues the moral lessons brought forward in the former one, while at the same time showing God's protection of the Hohenstaufen dynasty.

The part of Book I dealing with the reign of Conrad III, which otherwise does not include very much Hohenstaufen history, is important in introducing Frederick Barbarossa. Otto relates two stories about him, both of which stand out from their context. The first one is inserted between Conrad's correspondence with the Byzantine emperor and the account of the Roman embassy to Conrad, i.e. in truly imperial surroundings, as well as connected to themes of major importance in Otto's work. Having grown up and received the knight's belt, Frederick shows promise of even greater nobility than his noble father (I.27). He conducts a war against the Bavarians with great energy, defeating them in a surprise attack outside the walls of one of their castles. The Count of Dachau, who has carelessly remained outside the walls for too long, is taken captive. Urged by many men in his army to extort a big ransom, Frederick, out of his noble nature, declines this evil counsel, declaring that the count, who had been taken captive by chance, should also receive his freedom without ransom.²⁸ Next, Frederick defeats Conrad, son of his grandfather's old enemy, Berthold of Zähringen, forcing him to ask for peace. People are

²⁷I.17. See Schmale's comment, 8–9, on Otto's bias in favour of the Hohenstaufen in his account of the election and the following conflict, and 'Einleitung', 11, on his more favourable attitude to the Hohenstaufen in *Gesta* than in *Chronica*.

²⁸... *ex innata sibi nobilitate pravorum declinavit consilia. Nam sicut fortiter captum, sic eum liberaliter dimissum* (*Gesta* I.27).

astonished by these great deeds, so that it could be said as about the young John the Baptist in the temple (Luke 1.66): *Quis putas puer iste erit?* (I.28).

In addition to courage and energy Frederick here shows chivalry, according to contemporary standards to an extreme degree, for it was hardly considered *pravorum consilia* to demand ransom, although Frederick's action on this occasion may well have won him general admiration. Further, in attributing to Frederick the reason for releasing the count that his capture was due to chance, Otto probably has in mind another virtue, humility: when favoured by luck, Frederick refuses to take advantage of it. He thus behaves in exactly the opposite way to Henry IV, who boasted of his luck and was punished. Thanks to Frederick's behaviour on this and other occasions, luck will not desert him—as is shown in the following episode.

This episode takes place in connection with Frederick's participation in the Second Crusade (I.47–48) and is the only one Otto relates at any length in his very brief account of the Crusade itself—as opposed to his detailed treatment of the religious movement leading up to it and his long, philosophical passage on its outcome. Explicitly, Otto explains this brevity with the sad outcome of the Crusade, appropriate for a tragedy, while he intends to write a joyful history (I.47).

On their journey to the Holy Land, the crusaders pitch their camp in a beautiful field and prepare to celebrate the birth of the Virgin on the next day (8 September). During the night, there is a sudden heavy fall of rain and the crusaders' camp is flooded, more likely resulting from divine punishment than natural causes. Confusion and panic reign in the camp; people try to escape, but many are caught by the flood and drowned. Only Frederick and his men, who have raised their tents on a hill, remain unharmed and gather to celebrate the mass of the Virgin.²⁹ By picking out just this episode, Otto underlines two points. Firstly, the episode shows that Frederick is favoured by *Fortuna*, who from his youth till the present day has never turned 'a clouded face' towards him (I.47), and secondly, it demonstrates the fragility of human happiness and the power of the Divine Majesty (I.48). On the implicit level, Otto probably alludes to the story of Noah's Ark in the Bible, showing Frederick, like Noah, as elected by God to escape disaster: Frederick escapes, not only from the flood but also from the disastrous outcome of the Crusade itself, as well as from the many other evils afflicting the Empire during this troubled period. While Noah was saved in order to become the father of a new generation of men, Frederick is saved in order to become the saviour of the Empire and the Church. A short reference to Frederick on his return from the Second Crusade may in addition serve to explain *why* God saved him. Having been sent in advance to examine and improve the conditions in the Empire, Frederick for the first time shows his strict justice by hanging some of his own *ministeriales* (I.65, 264).

The theme of the parts of Book I treated so far is the relationship between imperial and Hohenstaufen history. While on the literal level, Otto deals with the Hohenstaufen as well as the Empire, the relationship between them is not in focus. The imperial history is at best sketchy, and the importance of the Hohenstaufen here is not made very explicit.

²⁹The story is also to be found in the chronicle of Niketas Choniates who, without mentioning Frederick, regards the flood as God's punishment for the crusaders' aggression against the Byzantines. See *O city of Byzantium. Annals of Niketas Choniates*, transl. by H. J. Magoulis (Detroit, 1984), 37–8.

On the typological and analogical level, however, there is a clear connection. The Hohenstaufen show a moral superiority compared to the members of the old dynasty, and they are depicted as favoured by luck and protected by God³⁰ during a period of chaos and trouble. Except for the glimpses of hope represented by the Hohenstaufen, the whole of Book I is pervaded by gloom, starting with Otto's proclamation of the *imperium scissum* at the very opening of the book, and continuing with the story of Henry's boasting and the episodes and comments on external defeats, internal unrest, and problems and strife within the Church and Christendom. From this point of view, the episode of Frederick's deliverance from the flood summarises the whole of Book I: disaster strikes, the world is in chaos, but God saves His chosen one, to prepare him for his great task, which is to introduce a new period of peace and greatness.

The connections pointed out so far, do not explain the whole of Otto's composition and choice of material for Book I. But they do indicate that such an explanation should be sought in a closer comparison between Books I and II. It seems a likely hypothesis that Book I is intended to show the problems in the Empire and the Church to be solved in Book II and possibly in the unfinished Book III or IV. In the following I shall therefore turn to Otto's account of how Frederick restores the Empire in various fields and treat Book I as a background for this account.

The rex iustus abroad: the expedition to Italy

Frederick is in the centre of the events recorded throughout Book II, a fact which gives Otto less choice in deciding what to include in the narrative than in Book I. Furthermore, an important source for Otto's account is a letter from Frederick himself, listing the main events of his reign so far, particularly his exploits during the Italian expedition.³¹ This expedition also dominates in Otto's account (filling 35 out of 54 pages in Schmale's edition) and will form the starting-point for the following discussion. Despite the fact that Otto clearly uses Frederick's list as his source, faithfully reporting all the exploits mentioned by him, the difference between the two accounts is far more than a question of length. While Frederick essentially lists his victories as evidence of military glory, Otto applies the same moral perspective as in Book I.³² The same two

³⁰On the relationship between the 'Boethian' theme of luck and the 'Augustinian' theme of God's providence, see F. Pickering, 'Historical thought and moral codes in medieval epic', in: *The epic in medieval society*, ed. H. Scholler (Tübingen, 1977), 1–17 and Morrison, 'Quest', 223–33. Logically, the two ideas are contradictory or at least difficult to combine. *Fortuna* was also regarded as a pagan idea and largely rejected or avoided by Christian authors from Late Antiquity onwards. However, the revival of classical learning, particularly in the Ottonian period, brought about a change in this attitude. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, *fortuna* was also integrated in Christian thought, becoming largely synonymous with God's providence. The main example of this trend is the anonymous *Vita Heinrici IV imperatoris*, ed. W. Wattenbach and W. Eberhard (MGH Scriptores, 1899). See H. F. Haefele, *Fortuna Heinrici IV. imperatoris. Untersuchungen zur Lebensbeschreibung des dritten Saliers*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, ed. L. Santifaller, vol. XV (Graz-Cologne, 1954), 18–33, 46–86. Otto's use of *fortuna* in *Gesta* seems fairly similar to that of *Vita Heinrici Quarti*.

³¹*Gesta*, 82–8.

³²For a detailed comparison, showing Otto's amplification of Frederick's list but without discussing the deeper differences, see Mierow, 'Otto of Freising', 349–61. By contrast Otto, 'Otto von Freising', 271–4, points out that Otto is concerned with peace and order in society, while Frederick cares for military glory.

episodes from Frederick's coronation day that mark the climax of the series of episodes in Book I, of the just ruler and the two *Christi Domini*, serve as the key to the interpretation of Book II. In the latter episode the relationship between the spiritual and the temporal power, or the emperor and the pope, is treated more directly. Most of Frederick's activity, however, concerns temporal matters. In Book II Otto continues his story of Frederick as the *rex iustus*, showing how he saves and restores the Empire. In contrast to Book I, however, he links this story to a more precise presentation of the Empire as a reflection of the right order of the world.

Otto's account of the Italian expedition falls into three parts: firstly, the war against Milan and the conquests in Lombardy; secondly, the entry into Rome, the fight against the inhabitants of the city, and Frederick's imperial coronation; and thirdly, the journey back to Germany. While most events in Germany, in accordance with Otto's normal style, are chronicled fairly briefly, Otto's account of the Italian expedition is more vivid and detailed, containing several dramatic episodes. Three such episodes stand out by being treated in far greater detail than the rest, one from each of the three parts of the expedition: the siege of Tortona, the encounter with the Roman envoys outside Rome and the entry into the city, and finally, the ambush near Verona. The second of these episodes is clearly the most important, offering the key to the understanding of the whole expedition to Italy.

When approaching Rome, Frederick is met by a delegation from the city of Rome, whose inhabitants had some years earlier rebelled against the pope and established their own Republic, thus intending to restore the old Roman constitution. The ensuing confrontation between Frederick and the Romans (II.31–32) is mentioned in Frederick's letter but only briefly. The two long speeches that Otto includes in his account are probably composed by himself, possibly on the basis of eye-witness reports.³³ In a high-flown speech the envoys address Frederick in the name of the city of Rome, the centre of the world, full of ancient glory, which is now being restored. Rome welcomes Frederick as her ruler, offering him, who was a guest, now to become a citizen and listing the rights he ought to respect when arriving in Rome, among other things the duty to pay the officials of the city 5000 pounds. The king is filled with just anger by this arrogance, interrupting the speakers and answering in a long speech. Quoting from Cicero's first speech against Catiline: *Fuit, fuit quondam in hac re publica virtus*, he develops the contrast between the past glory and the present misery of Rome. Now the Empire has passed over to the Franks, to Frederick and his ancestors. Rome is weak, has to implore the Franks for help, and therefore has no right to impose conditions on them. Frederick refutes in detail the demands of the Romans, declaring that he has a legitimate right to rule the Roman Empire without the consent of the inhabitants. In particular, he refuses to pay the 5000 pounds, pointing to the humiliation in accepting conditions from social inferiors, particularly in the form of money payment.

In contrast to the religious and moral perspective of the episodes discussed above, Frederick's confrontation with the Romans has a secular and political ring to it, ancient

³³On the following see G. Koch, *Auf dem Wege zum Sacrum Imperium* (Vienna, 1972), 203–15 and Benson, 'Renovatio', 339–86, who both treat the actual conflict between Frederick and the Romans, using the *Gesta* as well as other sources. Otto's two speeches correspond well with the arguments of the two parties as referred in other sources.

Rome and the strength and military virtues of Frederick and the Germans being in focus. The connection with Otto's basic ideas as presented in Book I is nevertheless clear: firstly, Frederick explicitly refers to Otto's idea of the constantly changing human fortune, and secondly, he is concerned with justice, though in a somewhat different sense from that of the earlier episodes.

As for the first point, Frederick's references to ancient Rome develop further the idea of the restoration of the Empire as described in Book I: Frederick's effort in this matter is not only compared to the situation before the Investiture Contest but to the ancient Roman Empire. This Empire has not been destroyed but moved.³⁴ The Germans are now the heirs of the ancient Romans, while the people of contemporary Rome are wrong in believing that they have any connection with ancient Rome. In having Frederick elaborate on this point, Otto approaches the question of historical change. His attitude should not be confused with the modern linear idea of history, regarding historical change as irreversible. Otto's view is cyclic: in Frederick's speech, the restoration of the Roman republic is rejected in favour of another idea of revival, regarding contemporary Germany as the true Roman Empire. Nor does he regard ancient Rome as a historically specific society. Admittedly, the Romans as well as Frederick refer to the Senate and the equestrian order, and Frederick in addition speaks of the consuls and the arrangement of the Roman camp.³⁵ The citizens of Rome had tried to copy the Roman constitution by re-establishing the republic, but according to Frederick, the real Roman institutions now existed in Germany. However, Frederick makes no attempt to show the exact German equivalents to ancient Roman institutions he lists in his speech: the consuls, the Senate, and the equestrian order. As for the latter, Otto probably misunderstood the Roman term, believing that it referred to mounted warriors in the literal sense, thus corresponding to the German knights. If so, he might have made a point of the difference in this respect between the Germans and the contemporary Romans. Most likely, however, he was not particularly concerned about the exact details of the Roman constitution, finding the essential 'Roman-ness' expressed in the Roman virtues.

As for the second point, Frederick's appeal to justice seems consistently to be derived from the idea of royal absolutism, or, in Ullmann's term 'the descending theme'.³⁶ Frederick builds his legal claims on his predecessors' conquest of Rome,³⁷ on Roman law's provisions about the emperor as the supreme legislator, and on the idea of the emperor as the owner of his realm, according to the definition of ownership in Roman law.³⁸ On the other hand, despite his harsh tone—which in Otto's opinion is perfectly

³⁴On Otto's idea of *translatio imperii*, which is also to be found in *Chronica*, see Goetz, *Geschichtsbild*, 292–3. See also Benson, 'Renovatio', 370–1, on this idea in earlier and contemporary sources.

³⁵Later, Rahewin comments on the continuity in this latter respect (IV.2).

³⁶W. Ullmann, *Principles of government and politics in the Middle Ages* (London, 1966).

³⁷According to Benson, 'Renovatio', 381–3, the idea that conquest constituted a legal claim was commonplace in Antiquity, then disappeared and was revived in the twelfth century.

³⁸This idea is expressed in the famous story, dating from the thirteenth century, of Frederick meeting the four doctors at Roncaglia in 1158 (Benson, 'Renovatio', 375 and n. 185). Here Martinus stated that everything in the realm belonged to the Emperor and received Frederick's horse as a reward. See C. McIlwain, *The growth of political thought in the West* (New York, 1932), 190, and R. W. and A. J. Carlyle, *A history of mediaeval political theory in the West*, 2 (London, 1950), 72–3. Otto himself mentions that Frederick presided over the customary meeting at Roncaglia at the beginning of his expedition in 1154 (II.17) and discusses the question of imperial rights in Italy (II.16).

appropriate when addressing such stubborn rebels—Frederick does not come forward as a tyrant. He intends to rule in the interest of his subjects, though not by their consent, and he declares himself willing to defend his subjects with his own life.

Thus, Frederick's speech accords well with Otto's general ideas about the restoration of the Empire, changing fortune, and legitimate rulership. It also contains some constitutional principles which, however, are somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, Frederick makes himself the spokesman of the absolute power of the emperor. On the other hand, he lists a number of institutions commonly associated with republican Rome, although continuing to exist during the Empire. This ambiguity may possibly be explained by Otto's general concept of Roman virtue which causes him to be less interested in examining more closely what the Roman constitution was actually like. However, it is possible to acquire a better understanding of Otto's constitutional ideas by examining other passages of the *Gesta*.

In the beginning of his account of Frederick's expedition to Italy, Otto has a fairly extensive description of the country and its people (II.14–15). Having sketched the geography of Italy, Otto turns to the barbarian invasions and how the barbarians gradually adapted the refined manners and speech of the Romans, and even the Roman wisdom in governing the state. Socially and politically, however, the Italians are widely different from other peoples, preferring elected consuls for short periods to princes and strong government, so that the whole country is divided into city states. Even nobles have to submit to these city states while artisans and men of low origin may be promoted to noble status. In this way the Italian city states are wealthier and more powerful than other cities in the world. However, the Italians retain remains of their barbarian origin in refusing to obey the laws and show princes the respect due to them, unless they are forced by the use of arms. Thus they have to be subdued, and their rebellious nature makes them rather than the prince responsible for the violence necessary for this purpose. In the following chapters, Otto expands on the emperor's rights in Italy (II.16–17): the Empire having been transferred to the Franks, the emperor, when visiting Italy, is entitled both to a tax from the whole country and to the highest judicial authority. Otto's description presents Frederick's expedition as necessary and logical. But Otto is not only concerned with Frederick's motives in going to Italy and with justifying his harsh behaviour in this country. In describing the constitution, social conditions, and behaviour of the Italians, he presents a picture of a society in total contrast to what he himself regards as the right order of the world.

In order to reach a full understanding of Otto's description of Italy, we have to turn to his other geographical description in the *Gesta*, the one of Hungary in Book I (I.33). While it is reasonable enough to introduce the major theme of Book II with a description of the country in which most of the events take place,³⁹ a description of Hungary seems more difficult to justify. Admittedly, this description precedes an account of how the Hungarians inflicted a crushing defeat on a German army and may be intended as an explanation of why the Germans were defeated as well as a reminder to Frederick that

³⁹See Werner, 'Gott', 11–12, who points to such descriptions as a conventional element in a proper *historia*.

this defeat ought to be avenged.⁴⁰ However, its main function must be understood, not in light of its immediate context, but through its significance as a contrast to the description of Italy. In his description of Hungary, Otto points to the contrast between the wealth and beauty of the country and the barbarian character of its inhabitants who are ugly, speak a barbarian language, live in tents in summer, and have few towns and little agriculture. Thus, while the barbarian origin of the Italians have been partly modified by the influence from Roman culture, the Hungarians are barbarians pure and simple. In contrast to the Italians, however, the barbarian customs of the Hungarians are not expressed in anarchy and lack of respect for law and authority. Quite the contrary, Hungary differs from Germany and other 'civilised' countries by the unlimited power of the king. The king has full command over the army; he has full jurisdiction over the whole country, including the right to torture and execute counts or local leaders, even for small offences. Such men are arrested by the king's subordinate servants, even when they are surrounded by their own retainers. No judgement by equals exists; the king's will is law. There is no private jurisdiction and no privileges of mint or tolls, and the king's local representatives are only entitled to one-third of the royal revenues.

Thus, while Otto reacts strongly against what he regards as the anarchy of the Italians, he reacts equally strongly against the tyranny of the Hungarians. Both peoples lack the proper respect for rank and social hierarchy, the Italians in subordinating the nobles under the authority of the cities and promoting artisans to noble rank, the Hungarians in subjecting the nobility to the arbitrary rule of the king. This comparison throws light on the political ideas of Frederick's speech against the Romans. Frederick does not proclaim absolute monarchy in general. The absolutist principles of Justinian's law are first and foremost intended for use against the rebellious Italians. When stating that the Roman virtues and constitution have been transferred to Germany, he also implies that the German people—or rather, the German nobility—should be ruled in a different way.

It is a common observation that one learns about one's own country by experiencing others and that travel descriptions can also be read as evidence of the travellers' own culture and society. It is also a common observation that medieval historiography gives very little systematic information on social structure or legal or constitutional matters. These observations apply to Otto as well. If we had to draw all our information on twelfth-century German society from Otto's *Gesta*, our best sources would be the descriptions of Hungary and Italy where Otto indirectly reveals important information on society and constitutional matters. Clearly, Otto did not find it necessary to give a similar, explicit description of Germany, a country whose political and social institutions he took for granted. However, in showing how Frederick restores the right order of the world, he indirectly presents this country as the golden mean between two extremes.

In his first and third stories from the Italian expedition, Otto shows the practical consequences of his understanding of Italy as essentially disordered and needing Frederick's strict justice in order to conform to the right order of the world. Admittedly, in his list of events, Frederick regards his conquest of Tortona after a long siege, from the beginning of February until the middle of April [1155], as particularly important, but

⁴⁰Otto ends his account of the war against the Hungarians by expressing such a hope (I.34) and later on mentions a plan of a new expedition against Hungary which, however, comes to nothing (II.55).

Otto gives it a far more prominent place in his narrative (II.21–29). From Otto's account of the dominant position of Milan and Frederick's wish to reduce the power of this city (II.7; II.12; II.15; II.18), modern readers, possibly also medieval ones, would be likely to draw the conclusion that Frederick attacked Tortona in order to encircle Milan by gradually conquering and destroying important strongholds in the vicinity of the city; Otto mentions several other conquests in the same connection (II.18–20). After the conquest of Tortona, however, Otto forgets about Milan, focusing on Frederick's celebration of his victory and continuing with his journey towards Rome. In political terms, this abrupt end of the story may be explained by some embarrassment about Frederick's failure to subdue Milan.

However, Otto's main aim with his account of the siege of Tortona is to show Frederick's just punishment of a rebellious people, Tortona thus becoming the symbol of Italy as a whole. Firstly, Otto pays great attention to the legal procedures before the attack: Tortona is told to terminate the alliance with Milan and instead join Pavia, but its inhabitants refuse. The city is declared guilty of lese-majesty and considered an enemy of the Empire (II.21). Otto then describes the siege in considerable detail, giving a fairly clear and vivid picture of the military operations, but mainly focusing on the sufferings of the besieged: hunger, thirst, constant attacks, and living in a crowded place. When Tortona finally surrendered, the survivors who leave their hiding-places in the city looked like corpses leaving their tombs (II.28). The purpose of this description is not, however, to make the reader feel sorry for the Tortonians or blame Frederick for his cruelty, but to show Frederick's just punishment of a stubborn and rebellious people. The guilt of the inhabitants of Tortona is emphasised at the beginning of the story and then further when Otto tells that Frederick had a gallows erected outside the walls to hang the captives within the view of the besieged (II.23: 322), and in his comment that the latter did not have the consolation of a good conscience in their sufferings. They were not fighting against an evil tyrant but rather adding misery to misery in resisting not only their lawful lord but a good ruler, so that fear of their well deserved punishment made their condition even worse. In accordance with his initial comments on the rebelliousness and stubbornness of the Italians and with his portrait of Frederick as the *rex iustus* at the opening of Book II, Otto here shows Frederick as the stern and just ruler punishing evil men and contributing to re-establishing the right order of the world.⁴¹

Otto relates a few individual incidents from the fighting, the most prominent of which has a close relationship to his ideas about social hierarchy. A groom (*strator*) manages to climb one of the towers, to defeat several of the enemies, and to return to the camp. Frederick sends for him, offering to promote him to the rank of knight. The man, however, declines, declaring that he is a man of low rank and that he is content to remain in this condition (II.25). In contrast to the Italians, this man shows the proper respect for the rank and order that should prevail in society.

⁴¹ At this point, my interpretation differs from that of Mégier, 'Tamquam lux', 228–30, who finds a certain sympathy for the Italians and criticism of Frederick, particularly in the Tortona episode. Although some passages may point in this direction, I find the interpretation suggested above more likely, particularly in the light of Otto's constitutional ideas in general and his contrasting of Germany and Italy.

The longest and most elaborate scene in Otto's description of the siege takes place during a period when Frederick, as a good Christian prince, out of respect for the Easter holidays, has ordered a stop to the assaults. On Good Friday, the clerics and monks of the city approach Frederick in procession, asking for mercy and declaring their loyalty to him and their dissociation from the evil citizens of the city and their decisions. In a long and eloquent speech (four pages in the modern edition), including a number of biblical and classical allusions and quotations, the clergy declare their innocence and argue that the innocent should not be punished for the sins of the guilty unless they have consented to them. The speech ends with some comments on the guilt of Tortona versus that of Pavia which give a somewhat different picture from that of Otto himself (II.26). Frederick is moved by this entreaty but is afraid of showing signs of weakness, so he remains stern, in accordance with the ideal of *constantia*, ordering the clerics to return to the city.

Otto thus does not let Frederick refute the clerics and does not express his personal opinion regarding their arguments. Normally, he is particular in pointing out Frederick's respect for the Church and the clergy and his concern to protect clerics and ecclesiastical property from violence during his wars.⁴² He may well have sympathised with the clergy of Tortona and may even have found Frederick somewhat too stern in this matter. His main purpose in including this speech in his work—whether or not it was based on what was actually said on the occasion need not detain us here—must be to illustrate a general truth in human life and the history of the Church. As Otto shows in his *Chronica*, the two cities, the city of God and the city of this world, occur together in this life, so that their members cannot be distinguished. Therefore, the just must be prepared to suffer in this world for the sins of the wicked. And the *rex iustus* is faced with the dilemma that he sometimes has to inflict pain on the innocent. Despite Frederick's great merits in restoring the Roman Empire, no earthly prince can overcome the inevitable misery of human life in this sinful world, which can only be remedied in heaven. In this way, the siege of Tortona becomes the symbol, not only of Frederick's just punishment of the rebellious Italians but also of the tragedy and hope of human life and the history of salvation. In a similar way as in the story of Frederick being saved from the flood, Otto may here have in mind the story of Noah and the Ark. Noah was hardly the only innocent man, but he was chosen to be saved in order to continue the human race. Otto may also be alluding to his philosophical digressions, notably the one on goodness (I.66), which shows the relative nature of all that is good on earth, as opposed to God's eternal goodness.

The third story, the ambush near Verona (II.42), is only mentioned very briefly in Frederick's letter, with the addition that Otto has already heard of it. Passing through a narrow mountain pass, the army is attacked by robbers, who demand a heavy ransom to allow Frederick and his men to pass. Frederick refuses, exclaiming that it is hard for an emperor to pay tribute to robbers. He thus expresses the same idea of the imperial dignity as in the speech against the Roman representatives. Despite the overwhelming difficulties, Frederick refuses to give in, using his bravery and cunning to devise a plan. By letting a detachment occupy a cliff high up on the mountain he attacks from above as

⁴²See, for example, II.12.

well as from below and defeats the enemy completely. After the victory Frederick exercises his strict justice against the robbers, condemning them to death and having them hanged. One, however, a young man of good family from France, who has been tricked by the robbers to join them, is pardoned but has to act as the hangman. The story thus shows Frederick's courage, patience in difficulties, and tactical skill which finally saves the army, and his combination of strict justice and mercy. In the latter respect, this story forms a contrast to the siege of Tortona: a siege cannot be conducted so that only the guilty suffer, but in meting out punishment to individuals, the judge and emperor has to consider the guilt or merit of each particular person.

The account of the Italian expedition is closer than Book I to what we—or Frederick himself—would regard as a narrative of main historical events. Otto mentions Frederick's most important victories, and he tells some kind of continuous story. Nevertheless, his main emphasis is on the moral, religious, and constitutional aspect. The main events he selects for particular treatment appear important in such a perspective, and his treatment of them emphasises this even further. He continues his two lines of thought from Book I, the moral superiority of the Hohenstaufen and of Frederick and the restoration of the Empire. In accordance with the opening 'scene' of Book II, the first and third episodes show Frederick's justice and *constantia*. In contrast to Book I, however, Otto does not confine himself to restoration as such but in the second episode enters into a more precise description of how a restored empire should conform to the right order of the world: it should be based on an ordered hierarchy, conforming neither to the anarchy of Italy nor to the tyranny of Hungary. He also places this restoration in a larger historical perspective. While in Book I and the beginning of Book II, Frederick appears as the restorer of the Roman Empire after the Investiture Contest, in the account of the Italian expedition he proclaims the great restoration of the ancient Empire on German soil.

The rex iustus at home: settling internal matters in Germany

Apart from a few longer episodes, mostly in Book I, internal German events are chronicled briefly in Book I as well as in Book II. Nevertheless, Otto's account of German events should not simply be treated as a list that had to be filled in order to make his chronicle complete. On the contrary, it completes the picture given by the main episodes of the Italian expedition. In accordance with the opening passage, the account of German matters in Book I mainly focuses on internal strife. This applies to some extent even to the reign of Conrad III which Otto regards as an improvement compared to the previous reigns (I.12; I.15; I.21–22; I.31; I.68–70). By contrast, Book II shows Frederick travelling around in his kingdom, settling issues, and creating peace. The main example of this is the struggle over the duchy of Bavaria which is treated at numerous assemblies during the first four years of Frederick's reign, until it is finally solved by compromise in 1156 (II.7; II.9; II.11–12; II.45; II.59; II.57). Otto relates the terms of this final solution, as well as those of earlier settlements, but does not give a scenic description with discussions or confrontations between the protagonists. He does, however, comment on the relationship between Frederick's successes in Germany and in

Italy: having settled affairs in Germany during the first two years of his reign, Frederick goes to Italy to receive the imperial crown. His success in Italy enables him to continue his good work in Germany, punishing rebels and evil men, solving the Bavarian question, and establishing peace in the country.

Thus, Otto shows the contrast between order and disorder and Frederick's achievement in accomplishing the latter in Germany as well as in Italy. There is, however, a significant difference between the situation in the two countries as well as in Frederick's behaviour. Admittedly, Otto blames some of the princes for their behaviour during the internal conflicts,⁴³ and occasionally shows Frederick's severity, even against bishops and nobles.⁴⁴ However, Otto does not generally regard the German nobles fighting the emperor as rebels or traitors. Even the Hohenstaufen fought the emperor during the reign of Lothar III, although Otto finds it necessary to justify their behaviour by blaming Lothar for the conflict (I.17). Some of the enemies of the Hohenstaufen also receive favourable characterisations. Berthold of Zähringen is described as energetic and brave and even, despite his lack of learning, a man of philosophical inclination who is aware of the constant changes of fortune (I.8). Even Duke Henry the Proud of Bavaria, who is blamed for his treacherous behaviour and in addition characterised as insufferable in his arrogance, is referred to as a great and noble man (I.20). In connection with Frederick's election, Otto mentions two great families, the Waiblingen and the Welf, who 'as usual among great and ambitious men, fought one another, thus frequently disturbing the peace of the realm'.⁴⁵ Otto regrets that the peace is disturbed but does not blame the magnates for fighting for their legitimate interests.

Consequently, the conflicts between the great men have to be settled by negotiations and compromise. Through God's intervention, intermarriage between the Waiblingen and the Welf family leads to peace between them, thus making possible Frederick's accession to the throne (II.2). In the following account Otto shows Frederick settling matters peacefully between the leading men. The importance of such peaceful solutions is expressed in the remark Otto attributes to Frederick that he considered the peaceful settlement between the two Henrys in the Bavarian question a greater achievement than all his other successes.⁴⁶ Characteristically, the eventual settlement of the Bavarian question is the last event narrated in Book II, before Otto's final comment on Frederick's successes.

Otto's account of Frederick's activities in Germany seems to be taken from an official itinerary, showing Frederick moving from assembly to assembly, wearing the crown or

⁴³For example, Duke Henry the Proud (see above) and the two Archbishops of Mainz, both named Adalbert (I.17, I.24).

⁴⁴Frederick fines some bishops and nobles for disobedience (II.46), condemns a count palatine to public humiliation for having plundered and burnt in Germany during Frederick's absence in Italy, and tortures and executes some robber barons and destroys their castles (II.48). See also II.4 on the punishment of the city of Utrecht for its disobedience to Conrad III.

⁴⁵... *ut inter viros magnos glorieque avidos assolet fieri, frequenter sese invicem emulantes rei publice quietem multotiens perturbant* (II.2).

⁴⁶*Proponebat hoc princeps omnibus eventuum suorum successibus, si tam magnos sibi que tam affines imperii sui principes sine sanguinis effusione in concordiam revocare posset* (II.49).

celebrating holidays, and settling the matters brought before him.⁴⁷ In this way, Otto shows the prestige and authority of the emperor and the Empire. But his intention is also to make a constitutional point. Through his high office and great virtues Frederick is the symbol of the realm and the focus of government, but he is not an absolute ruler and not the only one responsible for all the decisions made. He rules in close cooperation with the leading men of the realm, and he is able to create peace between them through negotiations and compromises. Otto even mentions occasions when Frederick is unable to acquire the decisions he wants. His proposal of an expedition against Hungary early in his reign is rejected (II.6), and he has to break off his Italian expedition and return to Germany, instead of continuing the march against Apulia, because the army refuses to follow him (II.39).

In this way, Frederick's regime forms the perfect contrast to the barbarian countries of Hungary and Italy. The Roman Empire centred in Germany represents the right order of the world, in which society is organised as a hierarchy with the emperor on top, and then in descending order the princes and nobles, and finally the common people. Conflicts between the princes or nobles or between them and the emperor may cause serious difficulties, but with luck and God's help, a wise and just emperor may create peace by solving such issues and making the leading men cooperate with himself in the interest of the Empire. The 'balanced' constitution of the Romans, based on the consuls, the senate, and the equestrian order, is thus to be found in the 'transferred' centre of the Empire in Germany, without Otto bothering too much about the exact parallels to the Roman institutions. In this Empire, peace and harmony can be created without the ruler resorting to Hungarian tyranny. By contrast, constitutional government cannot work in a country in which there is no real aristocracy. Therefore, Frederick comes forward, proclaiming the absolute power of the emperor to the rebellious Romans. In doing this, he has the German princes behind him, and is thus not announcing the *personal* power of the emperor within Germany, but the power of the New Roman Empire, centred in Germany, over the old and declining Rome in Italy. The Germans have conquered the Italians; consequently, the emperor may rule over them. By contrast, Frederick has been elected by the German princes⁴⁸ and rules in cooperation with them.

At this point, Otto's exposition conforms to principles announced by Frederick's imperial chancery, proclaiming the sovereign power of the emperor according to the most absolutist passages in Roman law, while at the same time emphasizing that the emperor rules in close cooperation with the princes.⁴⁹ These principles can be regarded as a harmonisation of the conflicting ideologies of the internal struggles during the

⁴⁷For instance, the Easter celebration in Cologne (II.4), the celebration of Pentecost in Merseburg, with an assembly settling the Danish succession and matters in Saxony (II.5–6), and further celebrations and assemblies in Regensburg, Bamberg, and Worms (II.9).

⁴⁸*nam id iuris Romani imperii apex, videlicet non per sanguinis propaginem descendere, sed per principum electionem reges creare, sibi tamquam ex singulari vindicat prerogativa* (II.1).

⁴⁹The cooperation of the princes forms an essential part of the idea of the royal office (*honor regni*), as developed in diplomas from Frederick's chancery and other, contemporary sources. See Koch, *Auf dem Wege*, 192–4, 253–4. Despite Otto's grand style and focus on the beneficial effects of Frederick's reign, his description reveals a certain weakness of the central power which conforms to actual conditions in twelfth-century Germany. The emperor had to manoeuvre and negotiate between the magnates largely in the way suggested by Otto's account. See Reuter, 'Sonderweg', 179–211, with references.

Investiture Contest: the king proclaiming royal absolutism, while the aristocratic opposition regarded the *regnum* as consisting of the princes as well as the king.⁵⁰ These principles were not only expressed in official diplomas and the *Libelli de lite* but also in the historiography of the epoch.⁵¹ Otto could therefore rely on models when treating such questions in a historical work. Otherwise, his task was difficult; these conflicting ideologies are not easily harmonised. Otto's attempt is largely successful, and is clearly the most developed, intelligent, and articulate synthesis of the opposing elements that formed the contemporary imperial ideology.

In portraying Frederick as the *rex iustus* in the beginning of Book II, in connection with his coronation, Otto has introduced the central theme of the whole book, even *Gesta* as a whole. In Book II Frederick exercises justice in two ways: he forces the Italians to obey their rightful lord by using the sword against them, and he solves the conflicts between the German princes and creates peace and harmony in this country. Frederick also exercises justice in a third way, by creating harmony and cooperation between the temporal and the spiritual power.

The two Christi Domini: Frederick Barbarossa and the Church

The conflict between the pope and the emperor dominates the last part of Otto's *Chronica* and is the main reason for his conclusion in this work that the world is approaching the end. The relationship between the emperor and the ecclesiastical hierarchy plays a crucial part in the *Gesta* as well. Frederick's accession to the throne marks the beginning of the new and better age in the spiritual as well as in the temporal field, as indicated by the reference to the two *Christi Domini* in connection with Frederick's coronation. This passage may be intended as a direct contrast to the opening sentence of Book I, referring to Gregory VII's excommunication of Henry IV (see above p. 349). The Investiture Contest is clearly important as a background to the events listed in Book I, despite the fact that it is not treated in any detail. Nor does Otto mention internal ecclesiastical matters in Germany, except for some very brief remarks. Apart from the reference to Arnold of Brescia and the new Roman republic, two matters related to the Church dominate in Book I: the Second Crusade and the theological controversy between Bernard of Clairvaux and Gilbert de la Porrée. By stating in the prologue that events in all countries have their source in the Roman Empire,⁵² Otto has apparently given himself the freedom to include almost any topic in the following historical narrative. However, the passage on Gilbert is the only real example of him exploiting this opportunity.

The length of this story (twenty pages in the modern edition), quite out of proportion with any other passage in Book I, clearly suggests that it was intended as more than simply a background to Frederick's achievement. Otto clearly took a passionate interest in the problems involved in the process against Gilbert, and he had connections to both

⁵⁰Koch, *Auf dem Wege*, 2–3, 16–8.

⁵¹Koch, *Auf dem Wege*, 2–3, 10–1, 13–4, 16–7.

⁵²*Si qua vero ex aliis regnis ecclesiastice secularisve persone gesta... interserta fuerint, ab huius negotii materia aliena non putabuntur, dum omnium regnorum vel gentium ad Romane rei publice statum tamquam ad fontem recurrat narratio* (Prol., 118–20).

protagonists in the conflict: to Bernard through his order and to Gilbert through his studies.⁵³ Otto may have wanted to give an account of the conflict before he started writing *Gesta Frederici*, possibly as part of his revision of the *Chronica*. Whatever reasons Otto may have had for originally writing the story, however, he would hardly have included it in *Gesta Frederici* if he did not in some way regard it as relevant to his account of Frederick.

The relevance of the account of this doctrinal conflict is suggested by the fact that it is interlaced into the narrative of the Crusade.⁵⁴ Otto describes the preparations for the Crusade as a great religious movement which, through God's intervention, ended inner strife within Christendom and united the rulers and princes as well as the common people for a common purpose. Its disastrous outcome apparently creates a religious crisis, which Otto addresses in his digression on goodness, intended to show that the Crusade may, after all, have had some positive effect and that the final decision in such matters must be left to God (I.66). A similar crisis is evident in Otto's description of the doctrinal problems. Abelard and the unlearned heretic Eum are minor problems from a purely theological point of view, being clearly in error. Gilbert de la Porrée, however, is a very pious and learned man who almost causes a major schism in the Church because of the division arising between the College of Cardinals and the French prelates. Although Otto, according to the majority of scholars, seems to be more sympathetic to Gilbert than to Bernard, one of his reasons for narrating this story in such detail may have been to show how difficult it is to decide in such matters. Good men fight one another, in the spiritual as well as in the temporal field; both the Church and the Empire are undergoing a crisis for which no individual person can be blamed. Otto therefore ends his account by adducing examples of great and pious churchmen in the past who accused one another of heresy.⁵⁵

⁵³From his studies in Paris in the 1120s, Otto was familiar with the most advanced philosophical ideas of the period but it is uncertain whether he personally knew Gilbert, who taught in Chartres and not in Paris at the time. For Otto's education, see A. Hofmeister, 'Studien über Otto von Freising I-II', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 37 (1912), 99–161, 633–768 and C. Kirchner-Feyerabend, *Otto von Freising als Diözesan- und Reichsbischof* (Frankfurt, 1990), 17–23.

⁵⁴Ward, 'Principles', 114–5.

⁵⁵*Gesta* I.62. As for Otto's attitude to Bernard, his remark in the beginning of his account of the doctrinal controversy is clearly critical: *Erat enim predictus abbas tam ex Christiane religionis fervore zelotipus quam ex habituali mansuetudine quodammodo credulus, ut et magistros, qui humanis rationibus seculari sapientia confisi nimium inherebant, abhorreret* (*Gesta* I.50). Against this background, E. Bernheim, 'Der Character Ottos von Freising und seiner Werke', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 6 (1885), 7–13 and Mégier, 'Tamquam lux', 216–8, regard Otto's attitude to Bernard as predominantly negative. Bernheim also maintains that Otto was strongly influenced by Gilbert and completely on his side in the conflict. By contrast, Koch, 'Geschichtsphilosophie', 341–6 points to some differences between Otto and Gilbert. Around 1155/56, it appears from a letter by Gerhoh of Reichersberg that Otto had defended Gilbert against Gerhoh's attack (Hofmeister, *Studien*, 643; Kirchner-Feyerabend, *Otto von Freising*, 21). According to Rahewin, *Gesta* IV.14, 542, Otto on his deathbed delivered his manuscript of *Gesta* to the pious and learned men surrounding him, asking them, in case he had said anything in favour of Gilbert that might offend, to correct it. Otto then professed his Catholic faith. Whether or not this revision was actually carried out after Otto's death (see Morrison, 'Quest', 210), the statement certainly shows that Otto was in doubt. Consequently, his attitude to Bernard can hardly have been entirely negative. See J. Ehlers, 'Monastische Theologie, historischer Sinn und Dialektik. Tradition und Neuerung in der Wissenschaft des 12. Jahrhunderts', *Antiqui et moderni. Traditionsbewusstsein und Fortschrittsbewusstsein im späten Mittelalter*, ed. A. Zimmermann (Berlin, 1974), 58–79, who points to some common ground between Bernard and the monastic movement on the one hand, and the early scholastics on the other. See also Goetz, *Geschichtsbild*, 40–1, 46–7, 109 with references.

Thus, together with the inner crisis in Germany, the Second Crusade and the doctrinal conflict form the background to Frederick's renewal of the Empire and the world in Book II. This connection is further underlined by the fact that the episode of Frederick's deliverance from the flood is placed in the second and 'ecclesiastical' part of Book I, between Otto's comment on the disastrous result of the Second Crusade and the beginning of the story of Gilbert de la Porrée (I.47–48). In addition, this episode alludes to two important symbols of the Church: Noah's ark and the Virgin, whose Nativity is celebrated by Frederick and his men. The episode thus presents Frederick as the saviour, not only of the secular Empire but also of the Church.

This role is further emphasised in the episode of the two *Christi Domini* at the beginning of Book II, which is clearly intended as a general characterisation of Frederick's handling of ecclesiastical affairs in the rest of the book. This theme receives its first extensive treatment in the conflict over the archiepiscopal election in Magdeburg which is followed by a number of other episodes.⁵⁶ According to Otto, the electors in Magdeburg, being divided between two candidates, turn to Frederick for arbitration. Having tried for a long time to reconcile them, Frederick eventually persuades one party to withdraw their candidate in favour of a third one, Wichmann, Bishop of Zeitz, who then receives the regalia from Frederick. However, the rejected candidate turns to Pope Eugenius III who considers Frederick's decision a serious interference in the liberty of the Church. Otto quotes a letter from the pope to Frederick's supporters among the bishops, including Otto himself, blaming them for their support of Frederick and defending the liberty of the Church in episcopal elections (II.8–9). Not long afterwards, however, Eugenius dies, and Frederick then manages to have his successor Anastasius IV confirm the election of Wichmann. Thus, Frederick is successful, not only in secular but also in ecclesiastical matters (II.10).

In this story Otto not only gives the bare facts but also sufficient background for his readers to form an opinion on the issues involved. At the same time, his own opinion is not quite easy to detect. He justifies Frederick's action by referring to the Concordat of Worms, although his remark about the interpretation of this document by the royal court may possibly indicate some reservation.⁵⁷ He mentions himself as a supporter of Frederick while on the other hand quoting the pope's letter in full, without comment. When referring to the death of Pope Eugenius, he mentions him as a just and pious man, whereas his successor Anastasius is described as an old man, well versed in the practices of this (i.e. the papal) court.⁵⁸ To be described as well versed in the practices of the Roman curia was hardly a compliment in the twelfth century when these practices were often severely criticised. The following account also seems to imply that the more secular or pragmatic attitude of Anastasius was an important reason for Frederick's success. In this particular case, Otto apparently does not stand wholeheartedly on

⁵⁶Deposition of the Archbishop of Mainz and election of his successor (II.9), punishment of the bishop of Regensburg (II.46), decision in the disputed election in Cologne (II.54, II.56, II.58).

⁵⁷*Tradit enim curia et ab ecclesia eo tempore...sibi concessum autumat* ... (II.6, 290). The Concordat of Worms only allowed the king, in case of a divided election, to decide between the two competing candidates, whereas the royal court, according to Otto, maintained that he was allowed to choose whomever he wanted. See Schmale's note in the edition.

⁵⁸*vir iustus et religione insignis ... homini veterano et in consuetudine illius curie exercitato* (II.10).

Frederick's side but rather seems to be divided between two loyalties.⁵⁹ There may be a similar ambiguity in Otto's account of Frederick's rejection of the entreaties of the clergy of Tortona. However, whatever blame can be directed against Frederick regarding these particular issues, is more than compensated by his services to the papacy and the Church in other contexts, notably in putting down the Roman rebellion.

The Roman rebellion is not only a threat to the emperor and the Germans but also to the pope, whom the rebels tried to depose from his position as the lord of the city. In Book I, Otto points to the false monk Arnold of Brescia as the instigator of the rebellion and quotes a letter from the Romans to Conrad III, offering him the imperial crown and asking him to defend the city against the pope and the king of Sicily. Otto does not quote a reply, confining himself to the short remark that Conrad did not approve of this initiative and instead received envoys from the pope (I.29–30). Otto returns to Arnold and his pernicious activities immediately before Frederick's confrontation with the Romans, referring to his heretical doctrines and regarding him as largely responsible for the Roman rebellion. He ends this account by telling of Arnold's execution by the city prefect on Frederick's orders (II.30). Frederick is thus, even in the introduction to the confrontation with the Romans, depicted as the champion of orthodoxy and the protector of the pope. Moreover, the story about Arnold in Book I is told immediately after the first presentation of Frederick and before the passage describing the chaos and dissolution at the time. This arrangement of the narrative may thus have a symbolic importance, pointing to Frederick's future role as the saviour of the pope and the Church.

The symbolic importance of the episode of the two *Christi Domini* at Frederick's royal coronation is even stronger. Most probably, this episode is intended as a prefiguration of Frederick's imperial coronation—Otto directly states that it is a prophecy about the future.⁶⁰ In connection with Frederick's imperial coronation, Otto describes the friendship that was formed between the pope and the emperor, adding that the two leaders of the world were now united, that one state (*res publica*) was formed by their two courts, and that ecclesiastical and secular matters were discussed in the same amicable spirit (II.30). The pope also warns Frederick against trusting the Romans, thus contributing to his quick and efficient seizure of power of the area around the Vatican and St Peter's. During the coronation mass the pope absolves all who have shed blood during the previous battle, stating that a knight who sheds blood fighting for his own prince against the enemies of the Empire should be regarded as an avenger not as a slayer (II.36, 356). Thus, at Frederick's imperial coronation the world is united into one republic under the leadership of the two *Christi Domini*, the emperor and the pope, not only in the typological and allegorical but also in the literal sense. In this way Otto further underlines Frederick's role as the *rex iustus*, creating peace and harmony not only in the Empire but also in the Church.

⁵⁹Consequently, my interpretation differs from that of Goetz, *Geschichtsbild*, 255 who finds that Otto regards the emperor's right to decide disputed elections as self-evident. In addition to the present case, Goetz points to the disputed election in Utrecht, where the citizens, refusing to accept Conrad III's decision, appealed to the pope, whereupon Conrad regarded them guilty of lese-majesty (I.68–69) and Frederick had them punished (II.4). In this case, however, the king had chosen one of the two original candidates.

⁶⁰*quasi prognostico*, see above n. 23.

Otto's account of ecclesiastical matters is not to be understood as pure propaganda in Frederick's favour. He apparently has divided loyalties, expressing doubt on the merits of some of Frederick's decisions. His account as a whole, however, is clearly very favourable to Frederick, regarding him as a saviour of the clergy as well as the laity. This role must be understood against the background of Otto's fundamental idea, which mainly belongs to the period before the Investiture Contest, of the pope and the emperor as joint leaders of the Church. Otto is thus neither an adherent of papal superiority over the emperor nor of imperial superiority over the pope; his ideal is harmony and cooperation between the two.⁶¹ However, Otto's insistence on the harmonious relationship between the pope and the emperor may not only be intended as a description of the actual situation but also as an appeal to the emperor to continue his policy from his first years on the throne. A more reserved attitude to the papacy and a greater assertion of imperial independence is to be found in Frederick's policy at least from 1156, culminating in the clash between the papal legates and the imperial court at Besançon in October, 1157.⁶²

Considering the detailed treatment of ecclesiastical matters in Book I, the programmatic statement on the two *Christi Domini* at the opening of Book II, and Otto's own ecclesiastical position, Frederick's role as the protector of the Church is not particularly prominent in Book II. We may therefore ask whether Otto intends his detailed account of ecclesiastical matters in Book I to be read in light of the future and not only of the present.

The leader of Christendom—towards a new crusade?

In the prologue, Otto pays considerable attention to the Second Crusade and the great movement preceding it. Going back to the time when he wrote his earlier work, *Chronica*, which ends in a gloomy atmosphere, Otto tells us that he was almost about to rewrite it as a result of the sudden peace and religious enthusiasm brought about by the advent of the 'Pilgrim God' (*peregrinus Deus*), uniting Christendom in a common expedition against the pagan peoples of the East. Turning to a more detailed account of the crusading movement, Otto says that it had its origin in a letter allegedly containing a prophecy from the 'Pilgrim God' that the King of France would conquer Constantinople and 'Babylon' (Baghdad?), as well as the whole Orient, in a similar way to the Persian

⁶¹ See L. Arbusow, *Liturgie und Geschichtsschreibung im Mittelalter* (Bonn, 1951), 25–6; Koch, *Auf dem Wege*, 186; Morrison, 'Quest', 232 n. 62. My own interpretation of Otto's view of the relationship between the two powers largely follows that of Goetz, *Geschichtsbild*, 248–61, 285. For a survey of the often widely different interpretations by earlier scholars, see Goetz, *Geschichtsbild*, 244–8.

⁶² According to Rahewin (III.25), Otto was deeply worried by the incident in Besançon, but we do not know whether he finished Book II before or after it had taken place. The omission of the Treaty of Constance with the pope (1153) from Frederick's list of events in his letter to Otto from 1157 (see p. 356)—and consequently in Otto's account—may also be an indication of a more reserved attitude to the papacy (Schmale, 'Einleitung', 22; Munz, *Frederick Barbarossa*, 135). On Frederick's policy towards the pope, see most recently B. Töpfer, 'Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossa-Grundlinien seiner Politik', in: *Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossa: Landesbau-Aspekte seiner Politik-Wirkung*, ed. E. Engel and B. Töpfer (Weimar, 1994), 9–30, 16–7, with references.

King Cyrus. The most pious men in France believed the prophecy, and Otto himself does not know whether it was pure illusion or true but as yet unfulfilled. After a short comment on the name Pilgrim God, Otto turns to the present age of peace and joy, declaring his intention to describe Frederick's great deeds and virtues.

Internal peace in Christendom precedes the crusade in Book I as well as in the prologue. In the prologue Otto distinguishes between the true peace of Frederick's reign, which certainly inaugurates a new epoch, and the short-lived and illusory peace before the Second Crusade. This may be understood as scepticism towards the crusading idea as such, contrasting Frederick's successes in Italy and Germany to the French king's dreams of conquests in the East.⁶³ A more likely interpretation, in light of the importance of the crusading idea in general in the twelfth century as well as its prominence in Otto's prologue, is that Otto is here urging Frederick to launch a new crusade in due time. Although Otto's doubt about the prophecy is apparently real enough—Otto is clearly aware of the difficulties in interpreting prophecies as well as other religious matters correctly—he might well have believed that the present conditions indicated a coming Christian empire, including the countries of the East, and ruled by the Roman emperor rather than by the King of France. His statement at the beginning of the prologue about the people in the Roman Empire living peacefully under their great and virtuous ruler, while those outside its borders, whether barbarians or Greeks, tremble under its weight and authority,⁶⁴ points in this direction. Surely, the dawn of a new era, inaugurated by the young and brilliant prince, must also create a new era for the Church. And what might contribute more to such a new era than a new crusade? Otto's respect for Frederick may well have made him reluctant to say so directly, but the whole composition of his work would seem like a firm but discreet reminder to Frederick of a new crusade as the ultimate aim of his rule.

Otto's account of foreign policy in Book I points in the same direction. He mentions a number of conflicts and encounters with neighbouring peoples, mostly unsuccessful from a German point of view: against Bohemia, Hungary, the Normans, and Byzantium. The references to these matters may be intended as reminders to Frederick of his responsibility for taking revenge or settling matters. Thus, Hungary is explicitly mentioned in this context (I.34, II.55), in addition to the crucial importance of the Hungarian example in Otto's discussion of the right order of the world. However, Mediterranean matters seem to have a particular importance in the work. The Normans are mentioned already in the opening of Book I, as the allies of Pope Gregory VII, Otto adding a short passage on the career of Robert Guiscard and the origin of Norman power

⁶³Thus Mégiér, 'Tamquam lux', 217–2; cf. also W. Mohr, 'Zum Geschichtsbild Ottos von Freising', in: *Perennitas. Thomas Michels zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. H. Rahner and E. von Severus (Münster, 1963), 287. By contrast, Goetz, *Geschichtsbild*, 280–1 regards Otto's attitude to the crusades as positive, despite the disastrous outcome of the Second Crusade. Otto's comment on the Second Crusade as a tragedy and his philosophical passage on goodness, intended to place this tragedy within a wider perspective, can hardly be understood as criticism of the crusades as such but rather as a strong need to seek a theological explanation for the failure of such a noble enterprise.

⁶⁴*et barbarus quique vel Grecus... auctoritate et pondere pressus contremiscat*, *Gesta*, prologus, 114.

in Southern Italy (I.2–3), but they are not very prominent later.⁶⁵ The Normans' traditional enemy, Byzantium, plays a more important part. In Book I, Otto deals with the marriage alliance between the two empires and quotes two letters from Conrad III and one from the Byzantine emperor in full (I.25–26). Despite the fact that this section remains fairly isolated within Book I, its length and detail suggest some special importance. So also does the fact that it is placed immediately before the first introduction of the young Frederick, which is followed by the important passage on the Roman republic, the introduction to one of the major themes of Book II.

This correspondence indicates a certain rivalry between the Western and the Eastern emperors.⁶⁶ Conrad, calling himself *Romanorum imperator augustus*, addresses the Byzantine emperor as *Constantinopolitanus imperator*, adding that the relationship between the Byzantine Empire and his own is like that of a daughter to a mother. The Byzantine Emperor John II calls himself *imperator Romanorum* and Conrad *nobilissimus frater et amicus imperii mei*. In his second letter Conrad uses the same title as before about himself, while addressing the Byzantine emperor as *rex Grecorum*, probably a slight step down. In this letter, Conrad also refers to some very offensive words by one of the Byzantine envoys which were not withdrawn until after three days of intense discussion.⁶⁷

No correspondence is quoted from Frederick's reign, but Otto's use of titles for the Byzantine emperor varies in a similar way,⁶⁸ possibly suggesting a certain decline in respect for the Byzantine emperor. As described by Otto, Frederick's policy towards Byzantium seems to lack consistency. Frederick first suggests a marriage alliance, then—without further explanation—decides to marry the Burgundian heiress, Beatrice of Mâcon (II.11; II.50). Then a conflict turns up in Italy, which almost causes him to start a war against Byzantium (II.51). This change corresponds to a change from a hostile to a more friendly attitude to the Normans, which Otto does not really try to explain. In the end, however, Frederick still regards the Byzantines as allies (II.55).

Most probably, the aim of this account is to show the great change that has taken place in the relative strength of the two empires. While Conrad has to conduct long negotiations to preserve the honour of the Empire, Frederick can cancel his plan of a marriage alliance, keep a Byzantine embassy waiting and then send it back empty-

⁶⁵Otto mentions their attack on Byzantium in 1147, immediately before the preparations started for the Second Crusade (I.35), and makes a few references to them in connection with Frederick's policy towards Byzantium (II.38–39, 50–51).

⁶⁶On the competition between the two emperors regarding their titles, see Koch, *Auf dem Wege*, 221–2.

⁶⁷The letter does not indicate the content of these words. German historians have mostly suggested that they had to do with the rank of the two empires (Koch, *Auf dem Wege*, 222 n. 266 with references). Recently, Paul Magdalino has suggested a more specific interpretation of the episode. When the marriage alliance between Conrad's sister-in-law, Bertha of Sulzbach, and Manuel, fourth son of the Emperor John II, was originally concluded, it was by no means certain that Manuel would succeed his father on the throne. However, John died suddenly in 1143 and on his deathbed appointed Manuel his successor. Consequently, when the marriage was to be celebrated two years later, the status of the partners had changed, and the Byzantine envoys probably demanded a corresponding change in Bertha's dowry and status. See P. Magdalino, *The Emperor Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 42–3. Still, however, the offensive words may have referred to the relative status of the two empires as an argument in the negotiations, and Conrad may have reacted against them, while to some extent giving in to the Byzantine demands on concrete points.

⁶⁸*Grecorum imperator* (II.11), *princeps Constantinopolitanus* (II.38), *Grecorum princeps* (II.55).

handed, and still continue negotiations with the Byzantines, apparently without fear of retaliation. This behaviour corresponds with Frederick's statement in his speech to the Romans about *Grecorum mollities* (II.32, 348) and with Otto's words in the prologue about the barbarians as well as the Greeks trembling before Frederick's power.

From the point of view of the crusading movement, Byzantium might be considered either a potential ally, as it had been during the First Crusade and in some periods in the twelfth century, or an object of conquest, as suggested by the prophecy referred to in the prologue, directed to the King of France. It is hardly possible to draw a definite conclusion about Otto's attitude to the matter from his account in the *Gesta*. The main purpose of Otto's account of the relationship to Byzantium is to show the increased prestige of the western Roman Empire in the Mediterranean region, which, together with Frederick's many other successes, seems to suggest that the ultimate aim for his reign will be to lead a united Christendom in war against the infidels and to reconquer the Orient and the Mediterranean region.

Fortune, politics, and human character

Despite many apparently isolated entries, *Gesta Frederici* forms a continuous story, following the Roman Empire from one glorious epoch, when Henry IV in his youthful irresponsibility boasted that no one dared to rebel against him, through the deep abyss caused by this boast, to another glorious epoch under Frederick. Otto finds the main explanation of this development in his idea of fortune and God's providence, as expressed in his philosophical passage in the beginning of Book I (I.5) and in occasional comments elsewhere. However, he also implies that human actions may have some influence on the course of events, at least being able to accelerate or postpone the course of fortune, and further, that the course of fortune is made intelligible through certain connections between events on this earth. Thus, Henry IV is partly responsible for the disasters during his reign. Human actions are also involved in the restoration under Frederick. His election is the result of Conrad III's and the princes' concern for the common good and Frederick's relationship to both the competing families (II.1–2). In a general way, Otto also shows *how* the Empire was restored under Frederick by tracing the main steps in the process: first peace and improved conditions in Germany, then the successful expedition to Italy which eventually leads to further improvement of the conditions in Germany.

However, he rarely tries to show why and how Frederick succeeded in each particular case. We may assume that Frederick's diplomatic ability as well as his strict justice were important factors in bringing about internal peace in Germany, and that his courage and energy lead to the conquests in Italy, but Otto gives no detailed demonstration of the exact importance of Frederick's personal qualities in bringing about these results. Otto occasionally gives examples of Frederick's courage, energy, and military ability during the Italian expedition, as for instance how he conquered Tortona and how he overcame the ambush near Verona. Nevertheless, the relatively few episodes where Frederick's skill or virtues are demonstrated do not offer a consistent political and military explanation of the course of events.

The shorter entries in Otto's narrative often seem obscure in their brevity and lack of context. However, Otto is writing contemporary history, and the context may in many cases have been clear to his readers. Moreover, we may find Otto's entries more intelligible by combining the information he gives on the same topic in different parts of his work. Thus, Otto gives no explanation of Frederick's decision to marry a Burgundian countess instead of a Byzantine princess. However, the advantage of a marriage that united such an important region to Frederick's own family lands, which were situated very near Burgundy, might appear obvious to most readers of the *Gesta*. The importance of Burgundy is further emphasised by the fact that Otto gives a fairly detailed account of the province (II.50). Furthermore, Otto clearly uses Frederick's condescending treatment of the Byzantines, in contrast to the behaviour of his predecessor, as evidence of the new strength of the Roman Empire. In his treatment of German affairs, which is usually brief and without much information on background or motives, Otto occasionally hints at political causes, for instance the old conflict between the Waiblingen and the Welf. He explains Duke Henry's alliance with Lothar by his marriage to Lothar's daughter which apparently makes him forget his ties to the Hohenstaufen, Henry's sister being married to Duke Frederick (I.19). In Otto's opinion, family or marriage ties are—and should be—more important than loyalty to the emperor. Although, unlike more secular historians, Otto does not analyse 'the game of politics',⁶⁹ he is clearly aware that such a game exists, and that great men normally fight for wealth, power, and honour. On closer examination, Otto's account of political matters is therefore not quite as unintelligible as it may appear at first sight and shows that Brandt exaggerates medieval clerical historians' lack of understanding of politics and causation in purely human terms. Most important, however, they show that although Otto cannot be considered a great political historian by modern standards, the reason for this is not that he was unable to understand or describe the game of politics, but that he was interested in other matters.

This lack of interest in 'ordinary' politics does not mean that 'the human factor' is unimportant to Otto. Quite the contrary: the *Gesta* is full of actions by individual persons, and Frederick is in the centre of the narrative in the whole of Book II. Otto's description of individuals is nevertheless very impersonal. In Book I Otto is mainly concerned with Frederick's chivalry, while in Book II the main emphasis is on his impersonal justice. This difference can hardly be considered a description of personal development. It is rather intended to show the correspondence between Frederick's character and his social role, and the importance of the sacrament he has received at his coronation. Further, Otto never shows Frederick interacting with other people, either in the form of a dialogue, or in responding to challenges from other individual actors. He speaks only once in the *Gesta*, in the speech against the Romans, which is a proclamation and not a dialogue. This feature in Otto's account must be understood in the light of Otto's concept of the royal office. Firstly, respect for Frederick's high office prevents Otto from describing competition between him and other men, which is often

⁶⁹See Bagge, *Society and politics*, 64–100, 146–61, and 240–7, for examples of such analyses in the Old Norse sagas and for a comparison with historical literature from the rest of Europe.

the point in encounters and dialogues.⁷⁰ Secondly, Otto is primarily interested in Frederick as the representative of the Empire and the realm, in accordance with the ideas of public office that were developed in contemporary Roman and canon law.

Otto develops these ideas through his strong emphasis on specifically royal virtues, notably justice in settling political and legal matters. Further, by consistently depicting Frederick exercising his office during assemblies of the great men of the realm, he demonstrates that the emperor and the princes together constitute the Empire and the imperial office. Otto's somewhat more personal picture of Frederick on his Italian expedition must mainly be understood in the light of the contrast between Italy and Germany. Being unable to act as a constitutional ruler in a society as anarchic as the Italian one, Frederick is portrayed as the official spokesman of the right order of the world. Frederick's speech on this occasion is in highly rhetorical Latin, including quotations from the Bible as well as from classical authors: Cicero, Vergil, and Boethius. Otto hardly expected his readers to believe that Frederick delivered the speech in such a manner himself, nor did medieval literary or rhetorical conventions demand that historians imitate their characters' way of speaking.⁷¹ The solemnity of Frederick's speech, together with its similarity to the style of the imperial chancery, may nevertheless be intended to show Frederick as the incarnation of the Roman Empire rather than as an individual person. In Germany, Frederick rules in cooperation with the princes of the realm. In Italy, he stands as the representative of the united Roman Empire against the rebellious Italians. In both cases, the office is more prominent than the individual person.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has shown Otto's *Gesta Frederici* as a coherent and carefully composed work. The two books that Otto managed to finish, together form a story of the decline and restoration of the Church and the Empire. Book I deals with the crisis, the first half mainly focusing on the inner struggles in the Empire, the second half on the crisis in the Church and the whole of Christendom because of the disastrous outcome of the Second Crusade and the doctrinal controversies. Book II deals with the restoration, showing Frederick creating peace, order, and harmony in the Empire and the Church. The link between the two books and thus the story of how crisis is turned into peace and harmony, is formed by a series of episodes connected by their 'inner' significance in a typological way. This story is brought to a first climax in the two portraits of Frederick

⁷⁰A general illustration of this point is the development of Old Norse historiography in the thirteenth century as a result of the rise of a strong monarchy and the idea of public office. See S. Bagge, 'The Norwegian monarchy in the thirteenth century', in: *Kings and kingship in medieval Europe*, ed. A. Duggan, King's College London Medieval Studies (London, 1993), 159–77 and *From gang leader to the Lord's anointed. Kingship in Sverris' saga and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (Odense, 1996).

⁷¹Otto says that Frederick delivered the speech without preparation, though not without consideration, *ex improviso non improvise* (II.32, 346). According to Rahewin, who here copies from Einhard's statement about Charlemagne, Frederick was very eloquent in his own language but understood Latin better than he spoke it (*Gesta* IV.86, 710).

at the opening of Book II, showing him as the *rex iustus*, upholding his severe but just judgement even on his coronation day and as the *Christus Domini*, governing the Church in cooperation with the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The subsequent account of Frederick's actual salvation of the Church and the Empire gives substance to these two portraits of him. Frederick comes forward as the *rex iustus* and the defender of the right order of the world, explicitly in the confrontation with the representatives of the new Roman republic, and implicitly in the description of Italy in Book II and its contrast to Hungary in Book I, the siege of Tortona, and the victory over the robbers near Verona. Further, Frederick is shown creating peace between the princes of Germany, reforming the Church through his interventions in ecclesiastical matters, and establishing a close friendship with the pope. In the same way as in Book I the essence of this message is presented through stories linked by their inner significance: the three long stories from the Italian expedition, together with the geographical digressions. As for internal German matters, Frederick's achievement is mainly illustrated through a number of shorter entries, although the conflicts over Bavaria and over the election to the archdiocese of Magdeburg seem to have a certain exemplary function. In this way, Frederick solves the problems indicated in Book I: the internal unrest in the Empire, its low external prestige, and—at least to some extent—the troubles in the Church. The focus on ecclesiastical matters in the second half of Book I is clearly intended as a background to Frederick's beneficial interventions in ecclesiastical matters in Book II, though the length of the passage on Gilbert de la Porrée must also be explained by Otto's profound 'existential' interest in the theological problems raised by his doctrine. The passage on the Second Crusade shows the contrast between the short-lived peace as the result of the crusading movement and the permanent change in the fortune of Christendom brought about by Frederick's reign. It may also, together with the relatively detailed passages on Mediterranean matters in Book I, be intended as a reminder to Frederick that a new crusade must be the ultimate aim of his successful reign.

On the explicit level *Gesta Frederici* clearly expresses the ideology of the milieu around Frederick Barbarossa, and may thus well be termed political propaganda.⁷² It gives a laudatory portrait of the emperor himself, and it defends his policy in most matters, such as his attitude to Italy, to the Church, and to internal problems in Germany. On the other hand, Otto is no pamphleteer in the imperial service. He speaks with authority, occasionally expressing a careful criticism of some of Frederick's decisions. He offers his advice, and—above all—he sets forth the high ideals Frederick should follow as a ruler. His examples of good and bad rulers are clearly intended to influence Frederick's actions. His description of the harmony between pope and emperor is not only a picture of the past but must be intended to urge the emperor to continue on the

⁷²On *Gesta Frederici* as propaganda, see e.g. Schmale, 'Einleitung', 13, who characterises it as *durch und durch höfische Geschichtsschreibung*. What is open to discussion, however, is to what extent Otto is simply a mouthpiece for Frederick and his court and to what extent he gives his own, original contribution to the imperial ideology. An extreme example of the former point of view is Munz, *Frederick Barbarossa*, 129–40, who regards *Gesta Frederici* as a work commissioned by Frederick himself and intended to deceive people about his allegedly revolutionary change of policy. Whatever the merits of Munz' analysis of Frederick's actually policy, his interpretation of Otto's work does not seem very convincing.

same path. Finally, and most important, Otto's imperial 'propaganda' does not focus on *ad hoc* issues but on the fundamental principles on which Frederick's government should be based. His picture of Roman law absolutism in Italy vs aristocratic constitutionalism in Germany corresponds to what we know from other sources about the political thought in Frederick's surroundings, but Otto is able to create a remarkable synthesis of these two principles: Imperial Germany is the new Roman Empire, thus corresponding to the right order of the world. As the representative of this Empire, Frederick has the right to establish absolute rule over other peoples, who lack the harmonious, aristocratic society of Germany. In a historical perspective, Frederick not only heals the *imperium scissum* resulting from the Investiture Contest, he restores the ancient Roman Empire, firmly establishing its power not only north of the Alps but also in the Mediterranean region.

There is thus a close connection between theological and philosophical ideas and narrative of events in *Gesta Frederici*, most entries in the work to a greater or lesser extent being relevant to Otto's general ideas. Otto shows sufficient awareness of ordinary causal thinking for us to reject Brandt's hypothesis that medieval clerical historians were unable to show causal connections between events or to analyse 'the game of politics'. Otto's reason for not writing history in this way must be that he was interested in other matters. Clearly, this interest is also evidence of a different mentality from ours, although not on the same fundamental level as Brandt assumes. Otto finds the principles of his historical interpretation in divine providence, fortune, morality, and the opposition between the right order of the world and deviations from this order. From these principles he is able to construct a historical narrative which at first sight seems chaotic, but which is actually as coherent as any modern work, only in a different way.

Otto's work is not only coherent; it is also, in a certain sense, very much a political work. Otto's typological thinking and moral principles not only serve a moral and Christian purpose; they are applied to fundamental constitutional problems as well as to historical change. *Gesta Frederici* may therefore serve as a warning against depicting medieval clerical historiography as too abstract and other-worldly, despite the undoubted difference between medieval and modern historical thought. Clearly, Otto is no average medieval historian.⁷³ Nevertheless, his work shows how much medieval principles of typological thinking and composition could achieve in the field of historical synthesis.

⁷³ Otto's relationship to contemporary and earlier historiographical traditions no doubt deserves a closer examination, to which I hope to contribute in the future. A comparison with late eleventh-century German historiography will be particularly interesting, as this tradition produced such brilliant works as Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, Lampert's *Annales*, and the anonymous *Vita Heinrici quarti*, the two latter of which show the same tendency as in Otto towards a combination of religious and political interpretations.