Blasphemer! Liar! Charlatan! Moron! Ignorant fool! In the mid-830s, Florus, deacon of Lyon († c. 860), wrote several invectives in which he harshly criticized his opponent and ran him down with a variety of abusive epithets.¹ The target of his verbal attacks was none other than Bishop Amalarius († c. 850), who was at the time acting as interim bishop of Lyon.² Although Amalarius was closely connected to the court and enjoyed a high standing in the intellectual community as an expert on the liturgy, the deacon did not hesitate to use foul language against his superior and aimed to undermine his position by damaging his reputation. In 835, at the council of Thionville, Amalarius had been instated as acting bishop of Lyon. He replaced Florus’ beloved bishop Agobard, who was sent into exile for his role in the rebellion against Emperor Louis the Pious. It was in fact the Emperor who assigned Amalarius to take Agobard’s place. Florus protested against the election, arguing that Amalarius’ appointment was against the sacred canons and church custom.³ It was not the place of the emperor, he maintained, to select the next bishop, especially since the current bishop was not dead yet. Florus not only took issue with the procedure of the election, but also with the suitability of the candidate. In a letter to the bishops of Thionville, he complained that Amalarius’ behaviour in Lyon was outrageous. The Bishop instructed the cathedral scribes to copy his book on the liturgy and ordered the clergy to learn its teaching by heart, even though the book, to Florus’ mind, was clearly heretical.⁴ The book at issue was the Liber officialis, an exposition of the lit-

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¹ Florus of Lyon, Invectio canonica in Amalarium officiographum (22,403; 25,499 – 500 Zechiel-Eckes): stultissima perversitas; improvide praesumptor; Liber de divina psalmodia (35,1 – 2 Zechiel-Eckes): stultus [...] calumniator; Contra Amalarium (41,3 Zechiel-Eckes): praesumptor; Epistola ad rectores ecclesiae (60,326 Zechiel-Eckes): fabricator [...] mendacii; Sermo synodalis (66,29; 69,141 Zechiel-Eckes): profanae novitatis praesumptor; ineptus fabulator. For an extensive list of abusive epithets, see De Lubac (1948) 297.

² It is unclear what exactly Amalarius’ status was in Lyon between 835 and 838. Zechiel-Eckes (1999) 27 refers to Amalarius as a “Verwalter” (administrator) of the archiepiscopal see in Agobard’s absence. Florus calls Amalarius either praepitatus or chorepiscopus, see Florus of Lyon, Epistola ad synodum Teodonis (3,9 Zechiel-Eckes); Epistola ad rectores ecclesiae (50,34 Z. – E.).


https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110643503-009
urgery, which Amalarius wrote in the 820s and dedicated to Louis the Pious. Had the venerable fathers of the council of Thionville, Florus wondered, even examined this highly suspicious book before they agreed to appoint Amalarius to the diocese of Lyon? According to Florus, Amalarius would have them believe that all the bishops present at Thionville had signed his book with their own hands, to demonstrate their endorsement of Amalarius’ teaching, but Florus found it hard to believe that this was true. Personally, Florus said, he would rather amputate the three fingers with which he wrote than ever put his signature on such errors. He called on the bishops to organize a proper council to publicly read this “filthy object”, submit it to a truthful examination and judge its content for themselves. When his arguments did not produce the desired effect and his plea to convocate a council was ignored, Florus launched a campaign to attack the allegorical interpretation of the Eucharist that Amalarius expounded in his Liber officialis and in other writings. Between 835 and 838, Florus wrote no less than seven polemical tracts and letters in which he challenged the Bishop’s orthodoxy and questioned his mental sanity. Other members of the clergy of Lyon soon joined Florus’ campaign, while the former bishop, Agobard, added fuel to the fire from his place of exile. According

5 In 835, shortly before his move to Lyon, Amalarius completed the third and final redaction of the text and drafted a final statement of his liturgical theories, called the Embolis. Jones (2002) 19. On the Embolis, see Knibbs (2014) XI.

6 Florus of Lyon, Epistola ad synodum Teodonis (3,14 – 16 Z. – E.): [...] ut omnes manu propria suis ineptissimis libris subscribere sis ic unanimiter sentire atque observare velitès.

7 Florus of Lyon, Epistola ad synodum Teodonis (3,18 – 20 Z. – E.): [...] tres prius digitos, quibus scribimur, radicitus amputari vellem, quam errores huicsemodi manus proprie subscripserit.

8 Florus of Lyon, Epistola ad synodum Teodonis (4,34 – 38 Z. – E.): Sed ne quis me falsa putet asserrere, veniat liber illius in medium et feditatem sui publice legenti atque audientibus denudabit, ex quo et ista, quae sincerissimo examini vestro dilucidanda offero, verissime ab illo prolata probabitis, cum illic multa insaniora legeritis.

9 Epistola ad synodum Teodonis (835), Invectio canonicà, De divina psalmodia, Contra Amalarium, Epistola ad rectores ecclesiae, Sermo synodalis (838) and Relatio synodalis (838). I refer to the texts by the titles they were given in Klaus Zechiel-Eckes’ edition in CChr.CM 260; see the overview of the titles in Zechiel-Eckes (2014) XLVII. The texts cannot be dated with precision, apart from the first and last two texts. The other texts were written between 835 and 838.

10 Agobard of Lyon, De antiphonario (ad cantores ecclesiae Lugdunensis) 6 (absurditate et falsitate turpatur [340,6 Van Acker]); 7 (apertissime blasphemiae est [342,26 V.A.]; quantà vanitate proferre ausus est [342,27 V.A.]); 9 (ridiculosa et fantastica [343,11 – 12 V.A.]); Agobard of Lyon, Contra libros quattuor Amalarii 2 (inutilia, et [...] noxia [355,2 Van Acker]); 4 (nimia praesumptio [357,8 V.A.]); 5 (conflusa et inutilia [358,31 V.A.]); 9 (insane mentis [360,2 V.A.]; mendacissime [360,10 V.A.]; stultissimis et blasphemis sermonibus [361,16 – 17 V.A.]; ridiculosius [362,70 V.A.]); 18 (verbi [...] vagis et furibundis [365,1 V.A.]; verba [...] noxia et veritate contraria [366,5 – 6 V.A.]). Van Acker dates these two texts to the period of Agobard’s exile, between the council of Thionville in 835 and the council of Quierzy in 838, see Van Acker (1981) XLVI–XLVII. Agobard is somewhat milder in his judgment than Florus is. Although he considers Amalarius’ exposition of the liturgy, like Florus, muddled, confused, ridiculous, blasphemous, insane, stupid and utterly deceitful, he gives Amalarius the benefit of doubt:
to Agobard, Amalarius’ views on the liturgy were confused and utterly disturbing; not even the heretics Pelagius and Celestius would have dared to preach such a heresy.¹¹

Another striking example of the fierce rhetoric employed against Amalarius can be found in the margins of an annotated copy of Amalarius’ Liber officialis that at the time of the conflict belonged to the cathedral library of Lyon (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouv. acq. lat. 329, 9th c., Cluny).¹² Here, an anonymous annotator added exclamations of contempt that closely resemble Florus’ lexicon of abuse to which he joined some idiosyncratic insults of his own.¹³ The annotator targeted Amalarius’ orthodoxy and denigrated his views on the liturgy as raving madness, stupid arrogance and diabolical insanity.¹⁴ He ridiculed Amalarius’ incorrect quotations from the church fathers and took issue with his interpretations. “You treat Ambrose poorly, accusing him and asserting that he said what he did not say”¹⁵ or “Tell me, I ask you, in what region, in what church, was Christ a doorkeeper? Truly you depart from the meaning of the Gospel and Augustine as much as darkness differs from light”.¹⁶ He also added sarcastic comments that derided Amalarius’ intellect. Next to a passage where Amalarius explained that the tonsure signified the shearing

perhaps he meant well, but phrased it badly (Agobard of Lyon, Contra libros quatuor Amalarii 7 [360,25–26 V.A.]: si bene sentit, bonum bene non loquitur).

¹¹ Agobard, Contra libros quatuor Amalarii 12 (363,1–3 Van Acker): Contra haec verba Amalarii confusa et turbulentos sensus respondendum est, quod nec Pelagius nec Caelestius ausi sunt tam ireverenter suam heresim praedicare.

¹² On the origin and provenance of the manuscript, see Zechiel-Eckes (1999) 72–76, and now also Pezé (2013).

¹³ The marginal annotations were first discovered and edited by André Wilmart (1924), who ascribed them to Florus. Klaus Zechiel-Eckes, however, questioned the attribution and demonstrated that some of the terms of abuse the annotator used did not occur in Florus’ repertoire (Zechiel-Eckes [1999] 72–76). On the close resemblance between the language of the annotations, Florus’ polemical treatises and Agobard’s Contra libros quator Amalarii, see Van Acker (1981) XXXIII–XXXVI. I would argue that the correspondences between these texts can be explained by the fact that Florus, Agobard and the anonymous annotator were part of the same community of discourse, had access to a common corpus of authoritative texts from which they quoted, and shared a lexicon of abuse.

¹⁴ Vagus et rabidus (“rambling and mad”); insanum mendacium (“an insane lie”); omni despectione dignum (“worthy of all contempt”); rabida locutio (“a mad statement”); mira vanitas (“remarkable emptiness”); sic loqui cogit mentis insaniae (“thus does the insanity of his mind drive him to speak”). This is just a selection from the many derogatory annotations, which have now all been edited and translated by Knibbs (= Amalarius of Metz, Liber officialis, glossae).

¹⁵ Amalarius of Metz, Liber officialis 2,13, glossa (534 Knibbs): Male agis adversum Ambrosium, accusans eum et affirmans eum dixisse quod non dixit.

¹⁶ Amalarius of Metz, Liber officialis 2,6, glossa (529 K.): Dic, rogo, in qua regione, in qua ecclesia, fuit Christus ostiarius? Vere tantum distas a sensu Evangelii vel Augustini, quantum different tenebrae a luce. Arthur Westwell informed me that the idea of Christ as a doorkeeper can already be found in earlier expositions on the liturgy, and was not as outrageous as the annotator would have us believe.
away of idle thoughts, the annotator put the snide remark that if that were true, Amalarius should shave off his entire brain.\textsuperscript{17}

The exclamations of contempt and abhorrence that occupy the margins of Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouv. acq. lat. 329 have been regarded as the spontaneous, emotional response of a reader who read Amalarius’ \textit{Liber officialis} for the first time, and got carried away by his anger and frustration.\textsuperscript{18} It is, however, a matter of doubt to what extent these annotations were ad hoc reactions. Some of them attest to a well thought-out strategy to cast a slur on Amalarius’ character. The annotator claimed, for example, that Amalarius allowed Jews “with their unclean spirits” to enter the sanctuary and approach the altar of the Lord.\textsuperscript{19} He said he witnessed this himself one day when he was sitting in the presbytery, and saw such a large crowd of Jews standing around Amalarius that “their backs were nearly driven against the altar”.\textsuperscript{20} This was a serious allegation to make, all the more because anti-Jewish sentiments were strong in Lyon and the relationship between the Jewish and Christian communities was strained. The exiled bishop Agobard had brought this (in his view) highly problematic situation to the attention of the court time and again.\textsuperscript{21} The anonymous annotator picked up on Agobard’s anti-Jewish polemic and used it to undermine Amalarius’ position.

The question presents itself whether such fierce verbal attacks on one’s ecclesiastical superior, or on any fellow Christian for that matter, were deemed acceptable. Were character assassination and foul language part and parcel of the early medieval culture of debate, or were Florus and other members of the community of Lyon crossing a line when they verbally abused their bishop? When Florus protested against the imperial appointment of Amalarius, he maintained that this was not how it was done in the early days of the church.\textsuperscript{22} Yet did Florus then assume that mudslinging was in agreement with the customs of the early church? This chapter explores rhetorical

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Amalarius of Metz, \textit{Liber officialis} 2.5, glossa (527 K.): \emph{Si capilli superfui superfias cogitationes significant, et ideo tonderi aut radi debent, multum tibi ncesser erat ut non solum caput corporis sed etiam mentem raderes, unde tanta superfia prodeunt.}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Wilmart (1924) 319; 320. Wilmart observes that the notes in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouv. acq. lat. 329 are written in a steady, controlled hand that does not match the “sentiments vibrants” of their content. This observation leads him to conclude the notes must have been copied from an exemplar.
\item \textsuperscript{19} \textit{Immundis animis Iudaeos}, see full quotation below (note 20).
\item \textsuperscript{20} Amalarius of Metz, \textit{Liber officialis} 2.7, glossa (529 K.): […] \textit{tu quare ingredi permittis inmundis animis Iudaeos ad sacrarium, id est ad altare Domini, it ut te sedente [see alternative reconstruction below] in presbyterio turba Iudaeorum tanta tibi adset, ut altare dorsis suis frequenter paene impellant.}
Warren Pezé convincingly argued that it was the annotator who witnessed the scene from the presbytery, and not Amalarius himself (reading \textit{me praesente} instead of \textit{te sedente}, conform the reconstruction of Wilmart’s edition of the notes [323 Wilmart]), see Pezé (2013) 10; 11.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Much has been written about Agobard’s polemical treatises against the Jewish community in Lyon and the prominent position of Jews at the court of Louis the Pious, see the literature cited in Pezé (2013).
\item \textsuperscript{22} See note 3.
\end{itemize}
continuities between the polemical treatises and dialogues of late antiquity and those of the early middle ages, and asks the question under which circumstances members of Christian communities were at liberty to offend one another. The polemical campaign of Florus of Lyon against Amalarius of Metz will serve as a vantage point to explore continuities and changes between late antique and early medieval polemics, and to address the question of what models or sources Florus drew inspiration from for the strategies of rhetorical attack and abusive epithets of his invectives. An interesting circumstance is that Florus’ invectives against Amalarius have been preserved in what we could call a late antique frame of interpretation in the manuscripts in which they were transmitted, as I will explain below.

1 A Curious Attribution

When we look at the composition of the codices in which Florus’ invectives were transmitted, it is notable that these polemical texts were often combined with late antique dialogues, anti-heretical tracts and letters and sermons of the church fathers. In Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 13371 (10th c., Cluny), for example, four of Florus’ polemical treatises against Amalarius were transmitted together with Ps-Augustine’s dialogue with the Arian Pascentius, Marius Victorinus’ treatise against Arius and with excerpts from the works of Gregory Nazianzen. Florus’ polemical treatise De divina psalmodia was combined with letters from Jerome, while his invective Contra Amalarium went with excerpts from a sermon of Augustine and, again, a letter of Jerome. Perhaps the most striking example of a late antique setting can be found in manuscript St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 681 (10th c.), where Florus’ second tract against Amalarius is curiously enough attributed to Pope Martin I, also known as St. Martin the Confessor († 655). In this manuscript, Florus’ invective re-

23 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 13371 (10th c., Cluny): fol. 22r–33v, Florus of Lyon, Epistola ad rectores ecclesiae (838); fol. 33v–42r, Relatio synodalis (838); fol. 42r–57r, Sermo synodalis (838); fol. 57r–59v, Epistola ad synodum Teodonis (835). On the Cluny provenance of the manuscript see Zechiel-Eckes (2014) XXII. See further Delisle (1868) 99.
24 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 13371, fol. 1–16, Ps-Augustin, Collatio Augustini cum Pascentio Ariano.
26 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 13371, fol. 60r–68v, Pauca capitula ex dictis beati Gregorii Nazanzeni episcopi excerpta. Ms. Lyon, Bibliothèque municipale, 599 probably served as exemplar for this collection of excerpts from works of Gregory Nazianzen.
27 Fulda, Hessische Landesbibliothek, Aa20 (second third of the 9th c., East Francia).
28 Metz, Bibliothèque – Mediathèque, 1212 (12th c., France?).
29 St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 681 (second half ?) of the 10th c., Middle Rhine/Main-Franconia/Hesse), fol. 4–54; Florus of Lyon, Contra Amalarium. Zechiel-Eckes (2014) XXXII dates the manuscript to the second half of the tenth century, Gustav Scherrer (1875) 222 to the second or third quarter of the eleventh century.
ceived the following heading: *Invectio canonica Martini Papae in Amalarium officiographum*. A tenth-century scribe added a preface on a page that was inserted into the codex, stating that Pope Martin wrote this pamphlet against “a certain false teacher Amalarius” (*adversum quendam Amalarium falsum doctorem*) after the Lateran council of 649, which condemned the adherents of the Monothelite doctrine as heretics.

According to the scribe, Pope Martin wrote his invective shortly after the council, just before he was arrested on the order of Emperor Constantine (i.e. Constans II) and exiled to Cherson, where he died a martyr. The scribe introduced Florus’ invective with the following historical introduction:

Perhaps someone would like to know in what time Pope Martin lived. We find in the chronicle of the priest Bede that he lived in the days of Constantine the son of Constantine, who was deceived by Paul who promulgated a Typos against the Catholic faith [...]. Thereupon pope Martin convened a synod in Rome of one hundred and five bishops, and under anathema condemned the aforementioned Cyrus, Sergius, Pyrrhus and Paul as heretics, and wrote this pamphlet against a certain false teacher AMALARIUS. Following this, the exarch THEODORE was sent by the emperor. He carried off pope MARTIN from the Constantinian basilica and sent him to Constantinople. Afterwards he was exiled to Cherson where he died, shining in that place in many signs of miracles right up to today. The above-mentioned synod was held in the month of October, in the ninth year of the emperor Constantine, in the eighth indiction. Constantine, after many and unheard-of raids had been made on the provinces, was killed in his bath on the twelfth indiction.

**LAWFUL INVECTIVE OF POPE MARTIN AGAINST THE OFFICE-WRITER AMALARIUS**

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30 St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 681, fol. 6. It is not known where exactly the manuscript was produced (see note 28), but in the twelfth century it was in the possession of the church of St. John the Baptist in Johannisberg. On the provenance of the manuscript, see Zechiel-Eckes (2014) XXXII.

31 See below and note 33.

32 “Aforementioned” (*praefatos*) refers to the preceding chapter in Bede’s *Chronicon* from which the scribe took the information for his historical introduction, see note below.

This mistaken attribution indicates that Florus’ invective was interpreted as belonging to a patristic past, in which stout defenders of the orthodox faith argued against heretics at ecumenical councils and were willing to suffer exile for defending the truth. The curious transmission of Florus’ invective against Amalarius shows, furthermore, that the details of their controversy were already forgotten a century after the conflict shook the diocese of Lyon. Yet, the text itself was apparently still considered valuable to copy and preserve, perhaps as an example of offensive rhetoric and “lawful invective” (invectio canonica), as the text was called in this manuscript. The scribe who added the preface seems to have had no trouble conceiving that the harsh, abusive language that Florus had employed against Amalarius came from the pen of venerable Pope St. Martin the Confessor.

34 Zechiel-Eckes offers the plausible suggestion that the scribe misinterpreted Florus’ reference to the Lateran council at the end of his invective, where Florus said that the preceding excerpts derived from its canons (Florus of Lyon, Invectio canonica [31,676; cf. 32,710 Z.-E.: quae superius scripta sunt]). The scribe must have assumed that the entire invective related to the events of that particular council (Zechiel-Eckes [1999] 36, note 101).
2 Rhetoric of Abuse

Florus was not the only ninth-century author to adopt an abusive style when arguing against a view he did not agree with. His contemporaries Prudentius of Troyes, Hincmar of Reims and Gottschalk of Orbais did not hesitate to hurl insults at their opponents while refuting their propositions. Gottschalk, for example, called bishop Hincmar an “inflated bladder”, 35 Hincmar put Gottschalk down as a “pseudo-monk” and a “wild beast”, 36 Florus said John the Scot argued against the truth like a “cunning viper”, 37 while Prudentius accused John of “impudence” and said he produced nothing but “filth”. 38 John the Scot, the target of their insults, was no pushover either. He is said to have composed this biting epitaph for his former patron, then opponent Hincmar:

Here lies Hincmar, a vicious and avaricious thief
The only noble thing he did was to die. 39

We even find terms of abuse and snide remarks in conciliar acts. In the Acts of the Council of Valence of 855 at which John the Scot’s treatise on predestination was condemned, the author’s theses were put down as “old wives’ tales” (aniles fabellas) and “Irish porridge” (Scottorum pultes). 40 The person who was responsible for the wording of this particular section of the acts, which ridiculed John’s theses without addressing their content, was none other than Florus of Lyon. 41

The harsh language these ninth-century scholars used against each other in an attempt to get the upper hand in a debate appears to stand in sharp contrast to the high moral standards which were held up to Christian disputants in late antiquity. In

35 Gottschalk of Orbais, De trina deitate (96,28 Lambot): inflata vesica. He also called him misella potentioita (“wretched man with little power” [96,28 L.]), cutis tumida turgida (“puffed-up, swollen skin” [96,28 L.]) and elata pellis morticana (“arrogant decaying pelt” [96,29 L.]).
36 Hincmar of Reims, Epistola 2 ad Nicolaum papam (43B Migne): habitu monachus, mente ferinus. In the same letter he referred to Gottschalk as a “pestilent person” (pestiferi hominis [43 A M.]). Hincmar of Reims, prologue to De una et non trina deitate 13 (475B Migne): pseudomonachus.
37 Florus of Lyon, Liber adversus cuiusdam vanissimi hominis qui cognominatur Joannes ineptias et errores 9 (126B): viperae subtilitate [...] iste impugnator veritatis.
38 Prudentius of Troyes, De praedestinatione contra Joannem Scotum cognomento Erigenam: impudentia (1011D Migne); feculentias (1013A M.).
39 Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg.lat. 240 (second half of the 9th c., Lyon?), fol. 121v: Hoc epitaphium composuit iohannes scottus licet sapiens hereticus tamen. Hic iacet igcmarus cleptes et semper avarus / Hoc solum fecit nobile quod perit. John is called here “a wise man, but a heretic”, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.240 (see the last two lines on fol. 121v).
41 On the correspondence between the language of the acts of Valence and Florus’ writings, see Zechiel-Eckes (1999) 17.
the course of the third and fourth centuries, norms and rules were developed to ensure that members of Christian communities argued in a proper manner, and searched for the truth without biting each other’s head off. It would seem that Florus, Prudentius, John, Hincmar and their contemporaries forgot the moral standards their predecessors had developed to avoid precisely the kind of over-heated debate in which they now found themselves enmeshed. In the next paragraph we will see whether this actually was the case.

3 Debate Etiquette

In late antiquity, in particular during the fourth century, Christological controversies created deep divisions in Christian communities. Adherents of competing schools of Christian thought were pitted against each other in heated debates over complicated theological issues such as the threefold nature of God and the precise relationship between Christ’s human and divine natures. The competitive culture of argumentation and disputation of the educated elite, which Christians inherited, was seen to pose a threat to the unity and harmony of the church. In response, attempts were made to formulate ethical norms and rules of behaviour to keep discussions within civilized bounds. Bishop Gregory Nazianzen († 390) advocated a thorough training in Christian paideia in order to teach students social responsibility before they were allowed to engage in a debate. The Pseudo-Clementine Recognitiones (4th c.) recorded agreeable disputations amongst Christians, offering examples of orderly, friendly discussions which could serve as models for Christian disputants. In the Recognitiones we encounter Christians who discussed matters of the faith quietly and patiently, who propounded their arguments in good order, with brotherly love, and did so without interrupting each other. In Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical history (c. 313/326) we find a story that may also have been intended to serve as a counter-example to contemporary agonistic debates which tore communities apart. Eusebius recounted how Dionysius of Alexandria († 264) participated in a friendly disputation with Christians of Arsinoe. Although Dionysius, according to Eusebius, who cited from Dionysius’ letter, strongly disagreed with their views, he admired the soundness, sincerity, logic and intelligence of his brethren, and the way they discussed with restraint the difficulties and points of agreement. In this ideal world of orderly dialogue, the participants raised questions, proposed arguments to treat the problem from different sides and eventually reached a conclusion that could be subscribed to by all.

42 Lim (1995) 164, referring to Gregory Nazianzen, Oratio 27.
44 Eusebius of Caesarea, Historia ecclesiastica 7,24,6 – 9. This passage is discussed and translated in Weijers (2013) 41; 42.
The contrast between these orderly disputing Christians and the heated theological debates of the ninth century is striking. It would be tempting to conclude, as mentioned earlier, that debate manners had drastically deteriorated from the polite disputations of the fourth down to the verbal onslaughts of the ninth. But of course there was no such shift in debate etiquette. We only need to think of the quarrelling bishops of the early ecumenical councils, of Jerome’s polemic against Vigilantius or of Lucifer of Cagliari’s diatribe against Emperor Constantius II to recognize that the manners of ninth-century disputants were no worse than those of their fourth-century colleagues. The bishops of the council of Chalcedon (451), for example, are reported to have engaged in a veritable shouting match, hurling accusations at each other. The situation got so out of hand that the secular notables, who were guarding the proceedings, had to step in and reprimand the participants, reminding them that such histrionic shouting and name-calling was inappropriate behaviour for bishops.

How should this divergence between brotherly, orderly disputation and heated, abusive debates be explained? Did different styles of argumentation exist side by side, or should the discrepancy rather be explained by an incompatibility between norms and reality, between the lofty ideals of Socratic dialogue and the rough and tumble of dialectical debate? After all, the premises of a dialogue differ significantly from those of a dialectical disputation or an invective. We could therefore explain the differences by pointing to genre: the type of language and choice of words which were appropriate to the invective were inappropriate to the dialogue. Yet that explanation does not answer but rather sidesteps the question. For how did one decide which genre was appropriate for the occasion? Was one at liberty to write an invective against one’s brother or sister in Christ, or were members of a community encouraged to solve their differences of opinion through a respectful dialogue? To further explore the question of if and under what circumstances abusive language was deemed acceptable, it is worthwhile to have a look at what ancient handbooks on the language arts, in particular on dialectic and rhetoric, have to say on the topic. Seeing that these handbooks were intensively studied throughout the middle ages, it is reasonable to assume that the advice these manuals offered to disputants and public speakers was relevant to the formation of medieval ideals and practices of debate. Did ancient dialecticians and rhetoricians allot a prominent role to emotions, and in particular to outbursts of anger, in attempts to combat or convince an opponent? In the following we will see what prescriptions or prohibitions handbooks on dialectic and rhetoric had to offer on the topic of strong language, and whether early medieval disputants who studied these ancient texts took their advice on board in their own polemical writings.

45 Opelt (1972); Humphries (1998); Flower (2013); Raaijmakers (2017).
4 Ad hominem Attacks in Rhetorical and Dialectical Theory

When looking at the history of insults from a cultural perspective, certain trends may be detected. In the abusive repertoire of fourth- and fifth-century polemicists, comparisons with reptiles, excrements and jibes at sexual depravity stand out, while ninth-century polemicists had a preference for infectious diseases, ethnic insults, and accusations of mental insanity.⁴⁷ In dialectical theory, such insults, directed at the person of the disputant instead of his arguments, belong to the argumentum ad hominem, usually abbreviated as ad hominem. The argumentum ad hominem is commonly regarded as a logical fallacy: a failure to address or counter the arguments of a disputant and instead target his or her personality, habits, appearance or personal circumstances. There are several versions of ad hominem arguments: the circumstantial ad hominem (the disputant’s views are motivated by self-interest and should therefore be disregarded), the tu quoque argument (arguing that the disputant’s advice need not be taken seriously, because he does not act on it himself) and the abusive ad hominem, which brings a negative quality of the disputant to bear on the views he or she advances, saying that this person’s view cannot be accepted because of an unfavourable character trait.⁴⁸ In all these versions of the ad hominem, but in particular in the abusive ad hominem, the ethos of the disputant provides a ground for disqualifying his or her arguments, rather than the content of the claim that person is making. Yet the idea that this strategy is a logical fallacy, to be precise: a fallacy of relevance, is a fairly modern judgment. We rather find it in seventeenth-century discussions of logic than in ancient authors.⁴⁹ Aristotle does not list the ad hominem (πρὸς τὸν ἀνθρώπον) in his catalogue of logical fallacies in the Sophistical Refutations, which was translated into Latin by Boethius, but he considers the strategy less pertinent to the case from a logical point of view.⁵⁰ In classical rhetorical theory, the strategy to target the person instead of the argument is acknowledged as a valid approach. Quintilian and Priscian even offer a list of suggestions: when insulting someone, one should target his lineage and denigrate his family, his ethnicity, his education and his habits.⁵¹ These were topics, or

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⁴⁷ Opelt (1965 and 1980); Humphries (2002).
⁴⁹ For example in John Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Boethius speaks of the solutio ad hominem and Aquinas of demonstratio ad hominem, see Nuchelmans (1993) 43.
⁵⁰ Boethius translated Aristotle’s πρὸς τὸν ἀνθρώπον as solutio ad hominem, see Nuchelmans (1993) 43. Boethius’s Latin translation of Aristotle’s Sophistical Refutations, De sophisticis elenchis, was available in the early middle ages, but it was not yet widely read at the time. The first commentaries to De sophisticis elenchis date to the twelfth century. Albert the Great regarded the solutio ad hominem as a pseudo-solution (apparens solutio), see Nuchelmans (1993) 43.
⁵¹ Argumenta a persona (arguments drawn from the person), see Quintilian, Institutio oratoria 5,10,23–29 (258,13–259,20 Winterbottom); loci a persona, Chirius Fortunatianus, Ars Retorica 2,1
“places”, where it hurt most. Just as panegyrists used the *loci a persona* to heap praise on someone, they could also be employed to the opposite end in invectives to produce the most effective insults to destroy a reputation. This is what makes a study of insults so interesting. Like other *topoi* insults reveal what mattered most to a society or specific community in terms of status, social reputation and shared moral values. While in antiquity accusations of moral misbehaviour and sexual depravity were highly effective means to disqualify a disputant’s point of view, in the early middle ages accusations of heresy, mental instability and original thinking (novelty) often scored the best effect and stopped discussion short. Demonstrative proof of such accusations was rarely needed; plausible suggestions were usually sufficient to smear a disputant’s reputation and disqualify his arguments.

## 5 The Force of Words

As a general rule, dialectical textbooks have little to say on what language is appropriate or inappropriate during a debate. They describe the categories of the language of argumentation, the relationship between words, thoughts and things, the techniques of division, definition and distribution, but do not engage with the ethics of dialectical confrontations. The textbooks that were known and consulted in the early medieval Latin West, such as the *Categoriae decem*, ascribed to Augustine, Porphyry’s *Isagoge* and Apuleius’ *Periermeneias* do not address social aspects of dialectical engagement. Only Augustine’s *De dialectica* contains a brief paragraph that discusses appropriate, or rather: inappropriate language in a chapter dedicated to “the force of words.” This treatise has been transmitted in a late ninth-, or tenth-century codex of dialectical texts (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 12949, Auxerre) that is heavily annotated. The hands that wrote the annotations date to the tenth century, but many of the annotations belong to an older tradition. Some go back to Heiric of Auxerre, while other annotations contain material that can be traced to John the Scot. In his chapter on the force of words, Augustine warned against using vulgar words that offend “the chastity of our ears”. One should use seemly words that “hide the shamefulness of the thing” and not sordid and vulgar terms.

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52 Augustinus, *De dialectica* 7: *De vi verbi*. The chapter title is modern, but accords with the first sentence in which Augustine indicates the topic of the chapter: *Nunc vim verborum [...] breviter consideremus* (100 Pinborg). Augustine’s authorship of this treatise on dialectic has long been in doubt but is now commonly accepted.

“for then the base character of both would affect both sense and mind.” In Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 12949, this part of the text received much attention from an annotator. On fol. 16v we find a *nota* sign in the right margin, highlighting the importance of the paragraph, and on the left a dense cluster of marginal annotations which offer further reflections on the impropriety of vulgar language. The annotator even helpfully offered a few suggestions in the margin of vulgar words to avoid. The annotations in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 12949 attest to a revived interest in dialectic starting in the late eighth century. Around 800, *dialectica* was studied with much interest thanks to the efforts of court scholars such as Theodulf and Alcuin, who showed the usefulness of the art in theological controversies and in the fight against heresy. This increased interest in dialectic is manifest in John the Scot’s treatise *On predestination against Gottschalk*, written around 850. We also know from the annotations to Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 12949, some of which grew from a collection of glosses initiated by John, that he intensively studied dialectical treatises. In his *On predestination against Gottschalk* we can see him putting his theoretical knowledge into practice. The treatise can be read as an instruction manual in the art of dialectical disputation, in which the refutation of Gottschalk’s teaching served as the main case study to demonstrate the art. Yet John’s line of reasoning is occasionally interrupted by denigrating remarks directed at his opponent. In the first chapter where John explains the four parts of the art of disputation he writes for example:

> No man instructed in the art of disputation has any doubt that it is indeed by means of these four parts, as by some very useful and honourable fourfold method of human reasoning, that the very art of disputation, which is truth, is arrived at. The rules of that art are indispensably prescribed for us when we are compelled to reply to a certain Gottschalk, a lover of putrid filth.

After this insult to Gottschalk, that has no argumentative value whatsoever, John continues to explain in a patient manner the fourfold method of the art of disputation. Sometimes he interrupts the cool logic of his argumentation to denigrate Gottschalk’s teaching as “a foolish and merciless lunacy” or to hurl an insult at Gott-
schalk in person, saying: “You deserve to burn in oil and pitch”. To a modern reader, these sudden outbursts look odd and out of place within the detached logic of John’s writing, as if he was unable to control himself. Yet John simply may have conformed to the conventions of his day and age. Dialectical modes of argumentation may strike us as being incompatible with the ardent language of insult and abuse, but John the Scot’s Treatise on Divine Predestination shows that in the ninth century the two modes could exist side by side.

6 Advice to the Outspoken

As already mentioned, the strategy to target the person instead of the argument was acknowledged as a valid approach in rhetorical theory. Although classical and late antique handbooks on rhetoric devote much more attention to techniques of praise than to techniques to insult (which are basically the same techniques, but inverted), rhetoricians are, generally speaking, less critical of the argumentum ad hominem than dialecticians. This is not surprising given the fact that dialect focuses on ratio, logic and precise language, whereas rhetoric makes strategic use of emotions. Emotions, and in particular the emotion of “indignation”, was considered a valid tool of assessment to distinguish true from false arguments. To establish whether statements were true, the audience should carefully consider the character (ethos) of the person who issued them. The speaker’s character and reputation lent credibility to his words; his ethos functioned as a guarantee for the reliability of his statements. Thus, for a disputant who aimed to undermine the credibility of his opponent, it was an effective strategy to attack his character and, by doing so, rouse the indignation of the audience, who would take their indignation as proof or demonstration that the words of that speaker must be as false as well. This was not considered a logical fallacy, but the proper way to go about establishing the truth and making an informed decision.

Textbooks on rhetoric do not explicitly deal with ways to solve differences of opinion, except in court cases, but they do offer ethical guidelines on how to deliver criticism. The rhetorical handbook Ad Herennium (1st c. BC), for example, advises to mitigate outspokenness, here called licentia, with a few kind words of appreciation or respect to show the person under attack that you, the critic, only have his best inter-


60 Cicero, De inventione 1,53; Chirius Fortunatianus, Ars Rhetorica 2,31 (Indignatio [...] nam his non tantum probamus, verum etiam augemus [120,8–9 H.]); Marius Victorinus (Q. Fabius Laurentius Victorinus), Explanatio in rhetoricam M. Tullii Ciceronis 18 (274,39 – 275,27 Halm); Martianus Capella, De arte rhetorica 53 (491,18 – 28 Halm); rhetorical figures to rouse indignation in the audience: amplificatio (Rhetorica ad Herennium 2,47 [81 Achard]) and exaggeratio (Sulpicius Victor, Institutiones oratoriae 23,12 [324,29 – 325,2 Halm]).
ests at heart. Regardless of whether that is actually the case, it is important, says the author, to emphasize that one is not out to hurt anyone’s feelings. It will be easier for the other party to accept harsh criticism, when it is believed to spring from good intentions or from sadness over past mistakes. The author strongly advises the speaker to stress the fact that he would rather not to have spoken out at all, but cannot help it: he is compelled to do so.\footnote{Rhetorica ad Herennium 4,49 (192–193 A.): Eiusmodi licentia, si nimium videbitur acrimoniae habeere, multis mitigationibus leniatur; nam continuo aliquid huiusmodi licebit infere: “Hic ego virtutem vestram quaero, sapientiam desidero, veterem consuetudinem requiro”, ut quod erit commotum licentia, id mitigetur laude, ut altera res ab incundia et molestia removeat, altera res ab errato deterreat.}

This strategy, to tone down offence, can be found in several discussions of licentia but it also has its own name in rhetorical theory: diortosis, or in Latin correctio. It can best be translated as “rectification”, in the sense of “putting things right with the audience” after a shocking utterance.\footnote{Aquila Romanus, De figuris sententiarum et elocutionis 1 (23,8–11 Halm): Προδιόρθωσις, προεδρέως correctio. Haec figura, ubi aliquid necessarium dictu, set insuave audientibus aut odiosum nobis dicturi sumus, praemunit. Exemplum apud Cicero frequens: Quamquam sentio quanta hoc cum offendisse dicturum sim, dicendum est.} This is how the third-century rhetorician Aquila Romanus described the rhetorical figure of correctio when offered in advance:

\begin{quote}
Prodiortosis, that is preceding correctio. This figure offers a safeguard in advance, when we are about to say something that is necessary to say, but that is disagreeable to the audience or seems offensive to us. We find this example often in Cicero: “Even though I realize that what I am about to say is offensive, it needs to be said.”\footnote{Schemata Dianoeas quae ad rhetores pertinent 2–4 (here 71,9 Halm). Correctio is further discussed in Quintilian, Institutio oratoria 9,2,18 (492,11–14 W.); 9,3,89 (532,12–22 W.); Carmen de figuris vel schematibus (69,151–153 Halm).}
\end{quote}

Likewise the author of the anonymous treatise Schemata dianoeas (of unknown date, but transmitted in an eighth-century manuscript) discussed several strategies of correctio to give satisfaction for what he calls “arrogant and injurious language” (arrogans aut injuriosum).\footnote{Lausberg (1998) 349.} Among the possibilities of offering correctio after giving offence are the good old apologetic and stock phrases such as “no insult intended”. Heinrich Lausberg in his Handbook of Literary Rhetoric explained the occurrence of shocking statements, which can be mitigated by correctio, as “made in a state of emotion”.\footnote{Crass Insults: Ad hominem Attacks and Rhetorical Conventions} It should be noted, however, that the so-called “emotive figures” in rhetorical theory aim to appeal to the emotions of the audience, not to those of the speaker. An orator may act as if he is overwhelmed by emotions to sway the opinion of the audience, but in the meantime he should stay firmly in possession of him-
self. Cicero maintained that an orator did not need to feel anger to be able to arouse it in others. Feigned anger led to the same result, and was much easier to control. The rhetorical figure, *licentia*, outspokenness, also called *libertas dicendi* or known by its Greek name *parrhesia*, was listed among the emotive figures. Just like other emotive figures it involved *simulatio*. As Quintilian put it: “The Figures adapted to intensifying emotions consist chiefly in pretence. We pretend that we are angry, happy, frightened, surprised, grieved, indignant or the like.” A critic needed to calculate the effect of his words on the audience and estimate how far he could go. One needed a clear mind to make this kind of careful judgment and not be overwhelmed by passion or indignation; one merely had to act the part.

7 “I Am No Rebel”

Let us return to the case of Florus versus Amalarius. To what extent can we detect any influence of dialectical and rhetorical theory on Florus’ polemical writings against Amalarius? Like John the Scot, Florus studied classical and late antique treatises and commentaries on dialectic. The library of Lyon owned a manuscript, known as the Leidrad codex (now Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pagès 1, 8th c., Lyon), that contained several dialectical treatises. In the margins of this codex, which is the oldest surviving collection of dialectical texts, we find marginal notes in Florus’ hand. Yet although Florus must have acquired knowledge of dialectic, going by the evidence of the annotations, he did not use logical techniques in his polemics against Amalarius. Later, in a disagreement with John the Scot, he showed himself to be well versed in the language of Aristotelian categories and dialectical techniques of argumentation, but we see no evidence of that here. Given the fact that his annotations to the Leidrad codex cannot be dated, he may have become better acquainted with dialectic later in his career, but it is more plausible that dialectic simply did not serve his purposes during his conflict with Amalarius. He did, however, employ the rhetorical figures *licentia* and *correctio*. In his first polemical text against Amalarius, Florus explained to the bishops of Thionville who had agreed to Amalarius’ appointment, that he had to speak out against injustice to protect the community of Lyon. None of the bishops who were present when Agobard was deposed and Amalarius instated had dared to speak their mind, he argued. Florus

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offered *correctio* for his strong-worded language, but he offered it to his addressees, the bishops, not to Amalarius, the target of his verbal assaults:

> It is not as if I am a rebel against sacred ordination or devout imperial appointment [of Amalarius]. [...] The almighty God is my witness that I am not heaping up these [accusations] because I am driven by anger (*iracundia*), although I have been hurt, [...] but I am urged on by hatred of error (*erroris odio*) and love of truth (*amore veritatis*), and I suffer greatly over the wound that has been inflicted to my mother, the church.\(^70\)

Florus was not angry, he was hurt. Employing the rhetorical figure of *correctio*, he reframed an emotion that his audience could interpret as a vice (*iracundia*) as a virtue (*erroris odium et amore veritatis*).\(^71\) Florus presents us here with a textbook example of *licentia* or *libertas dicendi*: criticism that is justified by hurt or sadness, love for truth and concern over the wellbeing of others, just as we find it described by Quintilian, the Rhetor *ad Herennium*, Rutilius Lupus, Isidore of Seville and others. Florus may well have studied these rhetorical textbooks himself, or have drawn inspiration from authors who employed this figure. In a florilegium of excerpts from church fathers, which Florus composed, we find a quotation of Gregory Nazianzen advocating *libertas dicendi* to speak out for justice and truth.\(^72\) The florilegium also contains excerpts from Hilary of Poitiers’ invective against Emperor Constantius II, in which Hilary justified his criticism of the emperor with an appeal to *libertas*.\(^73\) The library of Lyon, moreover, possessed Augustine’s *Contra Faustum* (annotated by Florus),\(^74\) polemical writings of Jerome and a codex, known as the Codex Agobardinus, which contained the works of Tertullian, another outspoken authority from the early church.\(^75\) In other words, there were plenty of models around, both in the library of Lyon and in Florus’ personal collection of manuscripts, from which to pick effec-

\(^{70}\) Florus of Lyon, *Epistola ad synodum Teodonis* (appeal to the bishops of Thionville, 835) (4,51–5,58 Z.-E.): *Testis est mihi omnipotens deus, quia haec non impulsu iracundiae tanquam laesus exaggero […], nec divinae ordinationi seu imperiali piae provisioni […], velut rebellis existens […], sed erroris odio et amore veritatis, ecclesiae quoque matris meae vulneribus condolens […].

\(^{71}\) On early medieval perceptions of the dangers of *iracundia*, see Rosenwein (2016) 67–87; compare to the example of *correctio* given in the *Carmen de figuris vel schematis* (69,153 H.): *Non amor est, verum ardor vel furor iste*. Reframing a virtue as a vice (or a vice as a virtue) is also called παραδιαστολή, see Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 9,3,65 (526,22–527,2 W.).

\(^{72}\) Florus of Lyon, *Collectio ex dictis XII patrum*, Gregorius Nazianzenus 8 (51,42–43 Fransen/Coppetiers ’t Wallant/Demeulenare); Fransen (2000). See Vaticanus Reg. lat. 141 (early 9th c.), fol. 127v: *Suscipitisne libertatem verbi, libenter accipitis, quod lex Christi sacerdotali vos nostrae subicit potestati, atque isisti tribunalibus subdit?*

\(^{73}\) Florus of Lyon, *Collectio ex dictis XII patrum*, Hilarius Pictaviensis 8 (76 Fransen/Coppetiers ’t Wallant/Demeulenare); 66 (130 F./C.’tW./D.); 76 (139 F./C.’tW./D.); 90 (148 F./C.’tW./D.); 109 (168–169 F./C.’tW./D.): *Ex libro in Constantium*.

\(^{74}\) Ms. Lyon, Bibliothèque municipale, 610, late 8th or early 9th c. Excerpts from Augustine’s *Contra Faustum* can be found in the polemical dossier *De profanis et inaniloquis* with which Florus closes his *Invectio canonica*. See Zechiel-Eckes (1999) 199, note 29. On Florus’ notes, see Charlier (1945).

\(^{75}\) Codex Agobardinus, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 1622 (9th c., Lyon).
tive strategies to run down an opponent. Yet Florus need not necessarily have
turned to rhetorical or dialectical theory, or to patristic models, to find inspiration
for his invectives. He may well have learned the tricks of the trade directly from
the master of outspoken criticism, Bishop Agobard.

8 Conclusion

Apart from a few instances of textbook rhetoric such as the one just cited, Florus’
polemical treatises against Amalarius do not stand out for their sophisticated dialec-
tical or rhetorical strategies. His strategy was much more straightforward, simple and
highly effective. Florus employed what we would nowadays call populist or dema-
gogic rhetoric. Although his rhetoric was not directed at the people at large, it
was aimed at a specific segment of the public sphere. As is often the case with invectives, Florus’
invective was not written for his opponent to change his opinion, his goal was to persuade a larger audience to support his case against his opponent. His target audience were the bishops of the councils of Thionville and Quierzy. To get
their support, he needed to rouse their indignation and undermine Amalarius’ ethos,
i.e. his character, reputation and credibility. Florus appealed to the shared values of
his audience: orthodoxy, stability, and unity, and put Amalarius down as the enemy
of these values. He played on his audience’s deep-seated fears, associating his oppo-
nent with what he knew they dreaded most: heresy, instability, and division. He
twisted his opponent’s words and misquoted from Amalarius’ work to target precisely
these fears, creating a caricature of both his character and his thinking.

This brings us back to the question posed at the beginning of the chapter. Was the
ad hominem attack considered an admissible strategy among Christian dispu-
tants to win an argument, or was Florus crossing a line when he lambasted Amalarius? I would say that it was not deemed acceptable to abuse a fellow Christian, let alone one’s (acting) bishop. Yet if that bishop was a heretic, it changed every-
thing. In late antiquity and the early middle ages different debate models, norms
and conventions existed side by side. Whether one adopted the tone of a friendly
altercation or that appropriate to a polemical attack depended on the type of oppo-
nent. If that person was a fellow Christian with whom one engaged in a dialogue in
search of the truth, good manners were required. Yet if the opponent was a heretic
who threatened to undermine the stability of one’s own community or that of the

76 On Florus’ manuscripts, see Charlier (1945), and now also Chambert-Protat (2018).
77 See also the analysis of Florus’ rhetoric in Zechiel-Eckes (1999) 218–243: “Florus von Lyon als po-
litischer Publizist”.
79 Graumann (2015); Renswoude (2017).
Christian commonwealth, every weapon was allowed. Heresy was a game changer that overruled all other rules.

In the short run, Florus’ polemical strategies were successful. In 838, the council of Quierzy deposed Amalarius and condemned his Liber officialis. Emperor Louis called Agobard back from exile and reinstated him to the see of Lyon. Yet in the long run, Amalarius’ reputation did not suffer from Florus’ slander campaign. His Liber officialis survives in more than sixty manuscripts. It was studied and excerpted by many readers, who did not know that the author of this work was labelled a liar, an arrogant fraud and a raving madman. Florus lived to witness the growing popularity of the books he had worked so hard to condemn. In a letter written shortly after Amalarius’ death, he complained that readers far and wide were consulting Amalarius’ heretical books. In his opinion, the books should have been burned when they had the chance, as he had fervently argued in his final plea to the bishops of Quierzy, to prevent Amalarius’ teaching from spreading throughout Francia and beyond.

Florus’ invectives fared less well. As we have seen, his main invective against Amalarius survived in just one copy that was not attributed to Florus, but to the seventh-century Pope St. Martin the Confessor. Interestingly, the scribe who added the historical introduction to the text, did not associate the heretic denounced in this scathing invective with the, by this time, well-known and respected liturgist Amalarius. He assumed that this assertor falsitatis, against whom the author of this invective railed, was a false teacher of the patristic past; a past that was populated with bold defenders of the orthodox truth, such as Hilary, Tertullian, Gregory and Jerome, who had all employed strong language in the service of a greater good, namely to

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80 This distinction between the etiquette of an amicable dialogue with a fellow Christian and that of a heated disputation with a heretic was, however, not clear-cut. The sixth-century literary dialogue between Augustine and the Arian Pascentius (Collatio Augustini cum Pascentio) shows that one could imagine an altercation between a church father and a heretic that was fully civilized. The Collatio Augustini cum Pascentio Ariano was the very text with which Florus’ invective against Amalarius was combined in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 13371, fol. 1–16 (see note 23). We also know examples from the late eighth and early ninth centuries of disputations with alleged heretics where the participants treated each other respectfully, without any name-calling, see Renswoude (2017).

81 On Florus’ role at the council of Quierzy in 838 see now Pezé (forthcoming).


83 Florus of Lyon, Liber de tribus epistolis 40 (1054C Migne; here attributed to Remigius of Lyon): Amalarium [...] qui et verbis, et libris suis mendaciiis, et erroribus, et phantasticis atque haereticis disputationibus plenis omnes pene apud Franciam ecclesias, et nonnullas etiam aliarum regionum, quantum in se fuit infect, atque corruptit: ut non tam ipse de fide interrogari, quam omnia scripta eius saltem post mortem ipsius debuerint igne consumi, ne simpliciores quiique, qui eos multum diligere, et legendo frequentare dicuntur, eorum lectione et inaniter occuparentur, et pernicieose fallerentur et deciperentur. See Florus’ (indirect) plea to burn the books in his Sermo synodalis (77,386–388; 79,32Z. – E.), with reference to the decree of Pope Leo I to burn all falsi codices.
purify the church from the poison of heresy. As the reception of Florus’ invectives demonstrates, the fierce rhetoric of patristic polemics and late antique debates continued provide inspiration to early medieval disputants, to such an extent that later readers could interpret Florus’ texts as products of a late antique past.

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