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By Janet L. Nelson

ENGLAND AND THE CONTINENT IN THE NINTH CENTURY: I, ENDS AND BEGINNINGS

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ABSTRACT. This essay begins by celebrating the achievement of Wilhelm Levison, whose *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* has both inspired and provoked new generations of explorers. The essay goes on to argue that the historiography of the earlier Middle Ages has been haunted by quests for the end of the Roman Empire. Recent attempts at periodisation, Marxist and other, have extended Rome's decline to span the ninth century, with the Carolingian heyday both truncated and belittled, while Anglo-Saxon England has been split down the middle by representations of the Vikings' impact as a re-run of the fifth-century barbarian onslaught. Since 1989, abundant and diverse historiographical takes, cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and comparative, have made it possible to see the ninth century as a formative and defining period in European history, not least because of multiple contacts between England and the Continent. The last part of the essay examines the pontificate of Leo III (795–816), to show England and the Continent meeting, figuratively speaking, in Rome. A wider world of connections is brought into view and the scene set for further explorations.

'IN MY beginning is my end'[1] is one of those deep sayings that sets the mind working overtime – and over time. First, in my present situation, it makes me reflect that the beginning of one president's stint is necessarily an end to another's. Peter Marshall's lectures have adorned and enriched the last four years' programmes of this Society, and of course its *Transactions* too. Great wisdom, scholarship worn lightly, intercontinental breadth, compelling explanatory power: these made Peter's lectures as memorable as his whole presidency has proved memorable in expanding the Society's size and scope, and, more

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[1] T. S. Eliot, 'East Coker', *The Four Quartets* (1944), 15. The tag was a well-used later medieval and early modern *memento mori*.

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important still, its vision of what it can and should be doing for History. Peter's successor self-evidently has an impossible act to follow.[2] All that can be said is that this one will be different, thanks to the Society's excellent practice of choosing as successive presidents specialists in different times and places. So, we now skip back a millennium, from India and America to western Europe, from an age of western European global cultural dominance to a world in which Latin Christendom, small, disparate, poor, was peripheral to the great Eurasian landmass, where the shots were called in Baghdad and Ch'ang-an.[3] The Royal Historical Society takes all that and more in its stride, just as, following the injunction of the psalmist's text in Hebrew that adorns the Gustav Tuck theatre in University College, London, it 'considers the years of each generation'.[4] Enough, in this context, about a beginning being an end.

Let me instead pursue the thought in another context. My title, as early medievalists here will have recognised, perhaps with a frisson of alarm at what may look like sheer cheek on my part, echoes Wilhelm Levison's *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*. Levison escaped from Germany in 1939, just in time, and received a welcome in Durham, then as since, a bastion of medieval learning. In 1943, Oxford invited Levison to deliver the Ford Lectures, which became the book published posthumously in 1947. In his preface, he wrote: 'I have tried to some extent to connect up Continental and English research. May these pages … contribute to join again broken links, when the works of peace have resumed their place lost in the turmoil of war.'[5] And Levison recalled 'with grateful mind' his old pre-war colleagues at the Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH), 'many of whom did not bow the knee to Baal, but remained faithful till the hour of parting could no longer be avoided'. My beginning is a salute to his memory. His death was indeed the ending of a magnificent chapter in the history of early medieval scholarship. Of course, the Monumenta has long since revived again, and flourished, but that was a never-to-be-repeated pioneering age when Levison and Bruno Krusch between them published the seven magnificent volumes of the MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, and Levison completed the first part of the revision

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[2] This is the apt moment to acknowledge, too, James Holt and Rees Davies, two medievalists among recent past presidents of the Society, both exemplary, both inimitable.

[3] See *The Times Atlas of World History*, ed. G. Barraclough, 4th rev. edn G. Parker (1993), 108–9: 'The Eurasian world in 814'.

[4] The Society owes thanks to UCL for making this beautiful theatre available for our lectures in London. I owe the translation of the Hebrew to the kindness of my UCL colleague David d'Avray.

[5] W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1947), vi. There is a thought-provoking entry on Levison (by F. Lifshitz) in *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing*, ed. K. Boyd (1999), I, 717–18.

of Wattenbach's nineteenth-century monumental *Deutschlands Ges-chichtsquellen im Mittelalter*. No wonder an MGH colleague recalled Levison as 'the tireless one' (*der Unermüdlich*).[6] No wonder early medi-evalists remember Levison with grateful mind. No wonder that more than one of us has wished that Levison had lived to write the sequel to his masterwork. As it is, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* contains no more than a few tantalising forays into the ninth.

There is a further sense, too, in which a subject came to an end not just in Levison's work, but around 800. The well-documented eighth-century connections woven by four generations of Anglo-Saxon mis-sionaries on the Continent were becoming attenuated, or transformed, as the Frankish Church assumed responsibility for its own mission. A great age of missionary saints' Lives ended too. To read the Continuator of Bede is to realise, painfully, that Bede's act was impossible to continue.[7] In Francia, the Continuator of Fredegar who stopped work in 768 had no successor.[8] Thread-bare annals replaced history on both sides of the Channel.[9] The death of Alcuin in 804 did not just put a stop to his letter-writing, so depriving us of the richest source we have for Anglo-Continental relations in the late eighth century, but the Northumbrian annals nourished by information from Francia stopped approximately then too.[10] It becomes curiously less easy to write a story of Anglo-Continental connections in the ninth century than for the eighth century – or even the seventh.

As for seizing the ninth century as a substantive subject in itself, there is another kind of obstacle: periodisation, History's handy organiser, but also its bane. Marc Bloch, in 1942, noted the carving-up of the past by centuries as a 'rather recent fashion', 'all the more insidious because it has no rational basis'.[11] What Georges Duby called the magic of the double zero still casts its spell – witness the syllabus I have taught for thirty-two years at King's College London. Frustration may account

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[6] Walther Holtzmann, 'Vorwort' to Levison's revised vol. 1 of W. Wattenbach, *Deut-schlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter* (Weimar, 1952), vii.

[7] *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1896), 361–3, trans. J. McClure and R. Collins, *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1994), 296–8, and comment, xxi–ii.

[8] R. Collins, 'Deception and Misrepresentation in Early Eighth-Century Frankish Historiography: Two Case Studies', in *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, ed. J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter, Beihefte der *Francia* (Sigmaringen, 1994), 227–47; *idem*, *Fredegar*, Authors of the Middle Ages, 13 (Aldershot, 1996).

[9] M. McCormick, *Les 'Annales' du haut moyen âge*, Typologie des sources du haut moyen âge occidental XIV (Turnhout, 1975).

[10] D. Rollason, *Sources for York History to AD 1100*, The Archaeology of York 1 (York, 1998); *idem*, 'Symeon's Contribution to Historical Writing in Northern England', and J. Story, 'Symeon as Annalist', in *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. D. Rollason (Stamford, 1998), 1–13, 202–13.

[11] M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. P. Puttnam (Manchester, 1954), 149.

for the proliferation of 'long centuries' (the long eighteenth century set the trend) that sprawl imperialistically across double-zero frontiers. The ninth century recently had its first four decades nabbed by foragers from the long eighth: maybe no bad thing.[12] But what the ninth century has suffered excessively from is periodisation's dead hand. It has been the victim of two great efforts at revisionism. Marx rethought Antiquity as a slave-based mode and the Middle Ages as feudalism. Unclarity about where, when and how you got from one to the other (not to mention, in feudalism's case, confusion with non-Marxist meanings) has evoked a great deal of debate. That most magical of multiple zeros, the year one thousand, has seemed to many historians, especially in France, the most natural of frontiers. Under the great neo-Marxian sign of *mutation féodale*, that frontier could remain upstanding when other walls crumbled, leaving the ninth century firmly on the antique side.[13] Marc Bloch began *Feudal Society* with the ninth century in order to emphasise, not a beginning, but an end.[14] In his view, the ninth century completed the unfinished business of the fifth, as a second age of invasions by Saracens, Vikings and Magyars finished off the remnants of the Roman empire. This was scene-setting. For Bloch's book, centred on the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, was about a new world. Overwhelmed by prescience of the destruction to follow, Charlemagne, as imagined by Michael Wallace-Hadrill, could only lament, *Dieus . . . si penuse est ma vie* – though he had to do so in the words of a twelfth-century text (the Song of Roland), not a ninth-century one.[15] Wallace-Hadrill followed the logic of Bloch's periodisation. The ninth and tenth centuries inevitably featured in *The Barbarian West* (and in so much other text-book writing on the earlier Middle Ages) as a dying fall. See also Georges Duby's answer in 1980 to his own question, what, really, was the Carolingian empire? – 'a village chiefdom extended to the limits of the universe; from the edge of impenetrable forests that sheltered outlaws, where every autumn men took their herds of pigs and bands of huntsmen ventured, through clearings where starving peasants struggled to produce what they were forced to take to the residences of their lords, those specialists in fighting whom their warlord-

[12] *The Long Eighth Century*, ed. I. L. Hanson and C. Wickham (Leiden, 2000).

[13] C. Wickham, 'The Other Transition: From the Ancient World to Feudalism', *Past and Present*, 103 (1984), 3–36; *idem*, 'Mutations et révolutions aux environs de l'an mil', *Médiévales*, 21 (1991), 27–38; T. N. Bisson, 'The Feudal Revolution', *Past and Present*, 144 (1995), 6–42; cf. D. Barthélemy and S. White, 'Debate: The Feudal Revolution', *Past and Present*, 152 (1996), 196–223; T. Reuter, C. Wickham and the rejoinder of Bisson, 'Debate: The Feudal Revolution', *Past and Present*, 155 (1997), 176–225; and D. Barthélemy, *La mutation de l'an mil a-t-elle eu lieu?* (Paris, 1997), 13–28.

[14] M. Bloch, *La société féodale* (2 vols., Paris, 1939–41), English trans. J. Anderson (1961).

[15] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West*, 3rd rev. edn (1967), 114.

king led every spring on plundering raids'.[16] Where, really, was the link between this primitive capital accumulation and the new age of feudal growth after the year 1000? In such a context, Carolingian renewal of the Roman empire could only seem at best a fantasy, at worst a fake. In the historiographies of Germany, of Italy, of Spain, all for quite different reasons that Marx would have termed superstructural, but which also have a lot to do with modern national preoccupations, the big medieval break-points have *post*dated the ninth century: Germany's first Reich, Italy's urban civilisation, Spain's *reconquista*.

In a second area, too, revisionism became fossilised in a way that offered nothing for the ninth century. For the francophone Belgian Henri Pirenne, medieval European towns were the creation of *homo oeconomicus* in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The breed was new. An absence of continuity, of any organic or structural link, between the key economic institutions of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, was the key argument of *Mohammed and Charlemagne*. The rise of Islam, and the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries ended the Roman empire for good by destroying a trading and cultural community centred on the Mediterranean.[17] In economic terms, this end was followed by no new beginning, but a caesura: a period of no markets, but instead of rural autarky, associated with what we would call under-development, in Francia, the heartland of Charlemagne's empire. Here belong Duby's outlaws, pigs and huntsmen, impenetrable forests, starving peasants and miserable clearings. Because Pirenne left his book unfinished when he died in 1935, and its latter part remained only a sketch, between his earlier work and this final one no bridge was ever built. Into that void fell the ninth century. At the same time, of course, Pirenne acknowledged cultural and ideological innovation in the eighth-century Franks' *entente cordiale* with the Church. *Mohammed and Charlemagne* ends here, with new monarchy. Pirenne could not have written the rest of the ninth century in these terms, any more than could his younger contemporaries Louis Halphen and François-Louis Ganshof, who took up Pirenne's story. New monarchy was shortlived because (I quote Halphen) 'neither Charlemagne nor his counsellors were capable of forming a clear idea of the objective to be aimed at'. Charlemagne

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[16] G. Duby, *Des sociétés médiévales,* Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France, prononcée le 4 décembre 1970 (Paris, 1971), p. 23.

[17] H. Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (1937), trans. B. Meall (1939). Recent radical rethinking is exemplified in P. Delogu, 'Reading Pirenne Again', in *The Sixth Century*, ed. R. Hodges and W. Bowden (Leiden, 1998), 15–40; P. Hordern and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000), 153–72; and, especially relevant to the ninth century, M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300–900* (Cambridge, 2002), all with fine bibliographies.

'had no idea of system', but simply responded to events.[18] The result –
and the word recurs depressingly in the writings of the late 1940s – was
decomposition. Charlemagne's old, decaying body (he died at the age
of sixty-five in 814) represented the premature aging of his state.[19] And
to the Old World historians of the late 1940s, it mirrored the state of
the post-war Continent. Looking back from 1990 and from the New
World, Norman Cantor castigated the 'post-Nazi era anti-intellectualism
of [the Austrian] Heinrich Fichtenau (Hitler was a phony, so Char-
lemagne had be a phony, too), and the sour British vulgarity of Wallace-
Hadrill (they were all barbarians, and intelligence never prevails in
history anyway)'.[20] Things could only get better.

The post-war historiographical upswing began and throve where you
would have expected: in the areas of high culture, the Church and
Christianisation in regions and localities rather than at the level of
kingdom or empire. The ninth century was the focus of new attention
from theologians, historians of thought including political thought, of
script, of art and ritual and the Christian life. While the bulk of the
work was Continental,[21] there were important contributions from this
side of the Channel where two men in particular were productive and
inspirational: Michael Wallace-Hadrill (let me as quickly as possible
rescue his name from the charge of sour vulgarity, ethnically labelled
or otherwise) and Walter Ullmann, who, like Levison, came to Britain
in 1939 and stayed. If you seek their monument, look about you! Most
of the earlier medieval historians currently working in this country
are their intellectual children and grandchildren.[22] Their influence
internationally was and still is large.

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[18] L. Halphen, *Charlemagne et l'empire carolingien* (Paris, 1947; repr. with postface by P.
Riché 1995), 423, and cf. 424, 412.

[19] F.-L. Ganshof, 'L'échec de Charlemagne' ('Charlemagne's failure'), and 'The last
period of Charlemagne's reign: a study in decomposition', both in his collected papers
trans. J. Sondheimer, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy* (1971), chs. 12 and 13; and
see also H. Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire* (Oxford, 1957; originally published in
German in 1949), 177–87.

[20] N. F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works and Ideas of the Great Medievalists
of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1991), 139.

[21] The works of B. Bischoff in his collected *Mittelalterliche Studien*, I and II (Stuttgart,
1966–7); J. Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige* (2 vols., Stuttgart, 1957–66); J.
Semmler, 'Studien zum *Supplex Libellus* und zur anianischen Reform in Fulda', *Zeitschrift
für Kirchengechichte,* 119 (1958), 268–98. These three in *Karl der Grosse: Idee und Wirklichkeit*,
ed. W. Braunfels (5 vols., Düsseldorf, 1965), vols. I and II; and P. Riché in his collected
papers, *Instruction et vie religieuse dans le haut moyen âge* (Aldershot, 1981), are exemplary, in
both senses.

[22] This emerges from the historiographical review by R. Collins, 'The Carolingians
and the Ottonians in an Anglophone World', *Journal of Medieval History*, 22 (1996), 97–114.
There is an entry for Ullmann (by F. Lifshitz), but not, alas, for Wallace-Hadrill, in
Encyclopedia of Historians, ed. Boyd, II, 1212–13. The third great inspiring presence for my

And yet in 1989, quite soon after their deaths, Richard Sullivan, a North American grand old man of earlier medieval history surveying the international historiography of the preceding three decades or so, detected 'a malaise in Carolingian studies'. He was polite enough to write of a problem rather than an error, but he was absolutely clear that a crisis had arisen out the Carolingianists' very achievement: in producing a great deal of research intended to support their prior conviction that the Carolingian age was one of beginnings, and innovation, Carolingianists had actually proved the opposite. Their findings, far from sustaining the 'unique, organic character' of the Carolingian period, had splintered it beyond repair by demonstrating 'cultural plurality'. The Carolingianists' cognitively dissonant experience had produced, Sullivan thought, 'a kind of aimlessness', an 'absence of cohesion', 'uncertainty' – in short, 'something amiss'.[23] Sullivan, perceptibly, grew impatient with the Carolingianists' prior conviction: it became a previous conviction. Sullivan's tone, in 1989, was appropriately judgemental. Few Carolingianists then aged forty or over remained with knuckles unrapped. Yet Sullivan's justice was more remedial than punitive. What he prescribed for these recidivists was an *annaliste* boot camp, distance runs while carrying thirty-five kilos' weight of *grandes thèses* through indefinitely prolonged late Antiquity, immersions in icy post-Roman *longues durées*, ending with a short, sharp douche of *révolution féodale*. They – we – would emerge convinced of 'a long historical continuum reaching forward from late antiquity, a continuum in which the Carolingian age constituted a not so distinctive segment'. The failed model of Carolingian change would be replaced by a new ' "excavation" of structural foundations', from the bottom up — hence diminishing the role of elites and of ' "high" civilisation', and privileging 'the "little" people whose lives constitute the essence of society's basic structures [characterised by] immobility over the *longue durée'*. 'Enduring economic, social and mental structures … little affected by the allegedly decisive events clustered around 750' (he referred to the fall of Byzantine Ravenna to the Lombards, and the accession in Francia of the first Carolingian king) persisted down to c. 1000, increasingly moribund. Sullivan finally, and to me rather surprisingly, endorsed the *annaliste/marxisant* variant of the dead hand. So much for the innovative ninth century – if

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generation of British earlier medievalists was Karl Leyser. See the entry (by T. Reuter), in *Encyclopedia of Historians*, ed. Boyd, I, 721–2.

[23] R. Sullivan, 'The Carolingian Age: Reflections on its Place in the History of the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 64 (1989), 267–306, at 268, and for quotations below, 281, 285–7, 297–8, 303. It is instructive to compare two earlier historiographical staging-posts: the two volumes of *Nascita dell'Europa ed Europa carolingia: un'equazione da verificare*, Settimane di Studi del Centro Italiano sull'alto Medioevo XXVII (Spoleto, 1981), and the review article of D. Bullough, '*Europae pater*: Charlemagne and his Achievement in the Light of Recent Scholarship', *English Historical Review*, 85 (1970), 59–105.

Sullivan was right. But I do not believe Sullivan was right, either in the diagnosis, for cultural plurality can coexist with organic unity, nor in the prescription, for I think we shall not look at the little people *instead of* elites, any more than we should look at men *instead of* women and gender. I am for the inclusive view, and I hope to convince you that it shows the ninth century's formative impact in the history of Europe.

But before pursuing that agenda, I want to apply the Sullivan method to the historiography of ninth-century England, which he excluded. Looking back from 1989, we would have to start, not post-war, but mid-war, in 1943, with F. M. Stenton's Anglo-Saxon chronicling of 'the evolution of an effective monarchy', and 'the advance of the English peoples towards political unity'.[24] Here is a ninth century of shadow, of *dis*unity, corruption, violence within, making the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms easy prey to Viking depredation and destruction from without, but also a ninth century of sunshine, not least in its coverage of the reign of Alfred, who in successfully resisting the Vikings created a state and a corpus of Old English vernacular literature, and set Englishkind (*Angelcynn*) again on the progressive road.[25] Stenton can stand, too, for the inclusion in historical studies of numismatics. Not himself a numismatist, he recognised the importance of coinage as evidence of the Anglo-Saxon economy and of the state. One reason for Alfred's consistent interest in London, and his 'restoration' of the city in 886, was that he knew the value of its mint.[26] After the war, Dorothy Whitelock's publication of *English Historical Documents*, volume I, a landmark of erudition, gave undergraduates easy access to a treasure-hoard of evidence, including some of the Continental narrative sources with a bearing on Anglo-Saxon history.[27] Even in those decades,

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[24] F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943). The quotations come from the third edition (1971), 259.

[25] See P. Wormald, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*', in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. P. Wormald *et al.* (Oxford, 1983), 99–129, building on but also critiquing Stenton; and S. Foot, 'The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', *TRHS*, 6th series, 6 (1996), 25–50.

[26] Stenton's pioneering interest in this field was recognised in the presentation to him of a Festschrift edited by R. H. M. Dolley, *Anglo-Saxon Coins: Studies Presented to F. M. Stenton* (Oxford, 1961). The most recent work also acknowledges (though it revises) Stenton: see M. Blackburn, 'The London Mint in the Reign of Alfred', in *Kings, Currency and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century*, ed. M. Blackburn and D. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1998), 105–24.

[27] D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents c. 500–1042*, I (1955; 2nd rev. edn, 1979). For a thoughtful review of the second edition, see K. Leyser, 'The Anglo-Saxons "At Home" ', in *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, II ed. D. Brown, J. Campbell and S. C. Hawkes (British Archaeological Reports, British Series XCII, Oxford, 1981), 237–42, reprinted in Leyser's collected papers, posthumously published as *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe*, ed. T. Reuter (2 vols., London, 1994), I, 105–10.

historians of Anglo-Saxon England did, sometimes, look across the Channel, not just, as Levison had done for the eighth century, to show the multiplicity of contacts, or, as Stenton and Whitelock did, to track evidence bearing on England, but, as well, to make substantial comparisons and contrasts, as James Campbell and Patrick Wormald both did for the tenth and eleventh centuries.[28] For the ninth century, though, Michael Wallace-Hadrill's shining example apart,[29] what strikes me is the relative lack of such comparative approaches before c. 1989, a tendency accentuated, paradoxically, by one of the most positive aspects of Anglo-Saxon studies already in those decades: their inter-disciplinarity. Talking to archaeologists of the middle Saxon period did not incline historians of ninth-century Wessex to look across the Channel (though in their defence, it must be said that there were few Continental archaeologists specialising in the ninth century to talk to in those days, which helps explain why both Quentovic and Pont-de-l'Arche were excavated, in the end, by English archaeologists).[30] Talking to Old English specialists did not incline the historian of ninth-century Wessex to look across to the Continent either; and that, I am afraid, remains for me a limitation of Anglo-Saxon historiography in North America where the great majority of specialists come out of the literary and linguistic rather than the historical stable. What has the Sullivan method revealed for England then? No sign of aimlessness, certainly, and plenty of cohesion – perhaps too much.

My response to historiographical developments *since* 1989? Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be middle aged may allow (by analogy with wine) a more intense savouring of change and difference.

[28] J. Campbell, 'England, France, Flanders and Germany: Some Comparisons and Connections', in *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, ed. D. Hill (British Archaeological Reports, British Series LIX, Oxford, 1978), 255–70, and *idem*, 'The Significance of the Anglo-Norman State in the Administrative History of Western Europe', in *Histoire comparée de l'administration (IVe–XVIIIe siècle)*, ed. W. Paravicini and K. F. Werner, Beihefte der *Francia* IX (Munich, 1980), 117–34, both reprinted in J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (1986), chs. 12 and 11; P. Wormald, 'Æthelwold and his Continental Counterparts', in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. B. A. E. Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), 13–42.

[29] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Franks and the English in the Ninth Century: Some Common Historical Interests', *History*, 35 (1950), 202–18, reprinted in J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History* (1975), 201–16. This was the inspiration behind J. L. Nelson, '"A King across the Sea": Alfred in Continental Perspective', *TRHS*, 36 (1986), 45–68, reprinted in J. L. Nelson, *Rulers and Ruling Families in Early Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, 1999), ch. 1.

[30] R. Hodges, 'Trade and Market Origins in the Ninth Century: Relations between England and the Continent', in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, ed. M. Gibson and J. L. Nelson (2nd edn, Aldershot, 2000), 203–23; B. Dearden, 'Charles the Bald's Fortified Bridge at Pîtres (Seine): Recent Archaeological Investigations', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 11 (1989), 107–11; *idem*, 'Pont-de-l'Arche or Pîtres? A Location and Archaeomagnetic Dating for Charles the Bald's Fortifications on the Seine', *Antiquity*, 64 (1990), 567–71.

Little over a decade ago, Sullivan looked in vain, he said, for diversity in scholarship on the ninth century. Since then, how he must have enjoyed seeing a hundred flowers bloom in England (and Britain more widely) and on the Continent *and* in North America! Over the past decade or so, Carolingianists and Anglo-Saxonists alike have proved incorrigibly productive and innovative. What is more, there seems to me to have been a lot more to-ing and fro-ing across the Channel intellectually and therefore literally too,[31] and a lot less fog. Historians of Anglo-Saxon England are no longer insular (if they ever were). Some evidently know their ways round Brescia and Rome, Benevento and Monte Gargano just as well as Southampton, London and Canterbury.[32] 'Historians of Anglo-Saxon England' are in some cases intrepid Continentals following Levison and Ullmann into lands across the sea, but for happier because entirely positive reasons and from choice,[33] just as ninth-century Continental history has long been a specialism of choice for some born and bred on this side of the Channel and further afield too. Benefits in all cases have been mutual. 1989 was a vintage year in one other quite specific sense: Rosamond McKitterick's *The Carolingians and the Written Word* challenged us all to look afresh at the multiplicity, and multiple concerns, of ninth-century writers and readers, lay as well as clerical.[34] From that, much has followed (and will follow), not least from this author herself.[35]

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[31] There is an instructive comparison to be made with the relatively limited participation of British scholars in post-war scholarship on earlier medieval Continental Europe of the immediate post-war decades, and the increased traffic of the 1980s and *a fortiori* the 1990s. See, for instance, the volumes of the Spoleto Settimane held from 1952 onwards by the Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo at Spoleto (published 1954 onwards). Much to be welcomed are inter-institutional collaborations set up over the past decade involving Dutch, Belgian, German and French scholars, young and old, with British and American counterparts. The ongoing effects of the 'Transformation of the Roman World' project are perceptible here: see below, n. 53. There is still a long way to go, however, and British scholars of the younger generation are likely to be more, not less, hampered by a deficit in modern-language skills that has become a national disgrace.

[32] See for instance S. Keynes, 'Anglo-Saxon Entries in the "Liber Vitae" of Brescia', in *Alfred the Wise: Studies in Honour of Janet Bately,* ed. J. Roberts and J. L. Nelson (Woodbridge, 1997), 99–119; J. Story, 'Cathwulf, Kingship and the Royal Abbey of St Denis', *Speculum,* 74 (1999), 1–22 ; A. Thacker, '*Peculiaris patronus noster*: The Saint as Patron of the State in the early Middle Ages', in *The Medieval State: Essays Presented to James Campbell,* ed. J. R. Maddicott and D. M. Palliser (2000), 1–24.

[33] See for instance A. Scharer, 'The Writing of History at King Alfred's Court', *Early Medieval Europe,* 5 (1996), 177–206; S. Lebecq, 'Les marchands aux longs cours et les formes de leur organization dans l'Europe du nord et du nord-ouest aux VIIe–XIe siècles', *Voyages et voyageurs à Byzance et en Occident du VIe au XIe siècle,* ed. A. Dierkens and J.-M. Sansterre (Geneva, 2000), 321–37.

[34] R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989).

[35] R. McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of the Royal Frankish Annals', *TRHS,* 6th series, 7 (1997), 101–30; *idem*, 'Political Ideology in

Since 1989, too, wider geographical boundaries-of-the-mind have been dismantled: 'England and the Continent' no longer means (if it ever did) just England and Francia. Scandinavia is self-evidently integral to Europe's Viking age, and the Vikings' impact continues to be vigorously and fruitfully debated.[36] Nowadays western Europeanists compare notes with Byzantinists on a ninth century that some Mediterranean specialists are insisting saw a revival of contacts between East and West. A new agenda looms, in consequence, of making models to link, or otherwise accommodate, the economies of northern and southern Europe.[37] Hoary historiographical constructs are being targeted, none more effectively than associated fiefs and vassals by Susan Reynolds, who includes the ninth century in her sights.[38] Other boundaries too have been subverted: fine new work in ecclesiastical and intellectual and art history, sometimes all three at once, has been launched directly into the historical mainstream.[39] Biblical exegesis and liturgy have come in from the cold to the cutting edge, and the ninth century begins to look as creative as the late Margaret Gibson foresaw it would.[40] New interdisciplinary currents from anthropology and gender studies have run strongly in social and religious history.[41] The religious

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Carolingian Historiography', in *The Uses of the Past in the Earlier Middle Ages*, ed. Y. Hen and M. Innes (Cambridge, 2000), 162–74.

[36] Between them, contributors to *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, ed. P. Sawyer (Oxford, 1997), and *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. D. Hadley and J. D. Richards (Turnhout, 2000), unsettle orthodoxies, provoke comparisons and offer new entrées.

[37] C. Wickham, 'Ninth-Century Byzantium through Western Eyes', in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, ed. L. Brubaker (Aldershot, 1998), 245–56; J. Shepard, 'Courts in East and West', in *The Medieval World*, ed. P. Linehan and J. L. Nelson (2001), 14–36; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (which triumphantly delivers the promise of its subtitle, rather less so, that of its title).

[38] S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994).

[39] Both L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1999), and C. Chazelle, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era* (Cambridge, 2001), offer rich comparative insights.

[40] M. Gibson, 'The Continuity of Learning, c. 850-1050', *Viator*, 6 (1975), 1–13. See further D. Ganz, *Corbie in the Carolingian Renaissance* (Sigmaringen, 1990); D. A. Bullough, *Carolingian Renewal* (Manchester, 1992); J. Cavadini, *The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, 785–820* (Philadelphia, 1993); *The Gentle Voices of Teachers: Aspects of Learning in the Carolingian Age*, ed. R. E. Sullivan (Columbus, OH, 1995); J. J. Contreni, 'Carolingian Biblical Culture', in *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena: The Bible and Hermeneutics*, ed. G. Van Riel *et al.* (Louvain, 1996), 1–23. Two important recent editions with excellent commentary are A. L. Harting-Corrêa, *Walahfrid Strabo's Liber de exordiis et incrementis* (Leiden, 1995), and A. Freeman with P. Meyvaert, *Opus Caroli Regis contra synodum (Libri Carolini)*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Concilia aevi Karolini, Supplementum 1 (Hannover, 1998).

[41] See on ninth-century social and political relations R. Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VIIe–Xe siècle): essai d'anthropologie sociale* (Paris, 1994); *La royauté et les élites dans l'Europe carolingienne*, ed. R. Le Jan (Lille, 1998); M. Innes, 'Charlemagne's Will: Piety,

dimension of guilds (which make their first appearance in the long ninth century) links them with prayer-association and arrangements for the commemoration of the dead in which lay people and ecclesiastics were mutually bound.[42] *Libri Vitae*, 'books of life', recording the names of persons to be liturgically commemorated are among the most impressive of the ninth century's written survivals; and while work on these has been ongoing since long before 1989, recent research has added qualitative as well as quantitative value.[43] Confronting those myriad names (a prosopographer's dream challenge!), many of them in clusters representing groups of local or occupational associates, or kin (including dead children), and reflecting on how they came to be listed and how they were remembered thereafter, you are tempted to charge historians of later periods with misappropriation of the discovery of the individual, and the discovery of childhood. The research project at Durham on the *Liber Vitae* kept by St Cuthbert's community will at last put the spotlight on this unique Anglo-Saxon example of the genre in

Politics and the Imperial Succession', *English Historical Review*, 112 (1997), 833–55; *idem*, 'Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society', *Past and Present*, 158 (1998), 3–36; *idem*, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley 400–1000* (Cambridge, 2000), which, title notwithstanding, focuses on the ninth century. With a similar focus, see P. E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (Lincoln, NE, 1994); M. de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (Leiden, 1996); J. L. Nelson, 'Monks, Secular Men, and Masculinity c. 900', in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. Hadley (1997), 121–42; G. Bührer-Thierry, ' "Just Anger" or "Vengeful Anger"? The Punishment of Blinding in the Early Medieval West', in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. B. H. Rosenwein (Cornell, 1998), 75–91; S. Airlie, 'Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce Case of Lothar II', *Past and Present*, 161 (1999), 1–38; P. E. Kershaw, 'Illness, Power and Prayer in Asser's Life of King Alfred', *Early Medieval Europe*, 10 (2001), 201–24; and the review article of P. Stafford, 'Parents and Children in the Early Middle Ages', *Early Medieval Europe*, 10 (2001), 257–71. See also S. Thiébaux's fine new edition with commentary of Dhuoda's *Liber Manualis* (Cambridge, 1998).

[42] J. L. Nelson, 'Peers in the Early Middle Ages', in *Law, Laity and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds*, ed. P. Stafford, J. L. Nelson and J. Martindale (Manchester, 2001), 27–46, where I engage with the work of O. G. Oexle, especially his '*Conjuratio* und Gilde im frühen Mittelalter', in *Gilden und Zünfte: Kaufmännische und gewerbliche Genos-senschaften*, ed. B. Schwineköper (Sigmaringen, 1985), 151–214, and 'Gilde und Kommune: Über die Entstehung von "Einung" und "Gemeinde" als Grundformen des Zus-ammenlebens in Europa', in *Theorien kommunalen Ordnung in Europa*, ed. P. Blickle (Oldenburg, 1996), 75–97.

[43] See the new Monumenta edition of *Der Memorial und Liturgiecodex von San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia*, ed. D. Geuenich *et al.* (Munich, 2000), and for some of the individuals therein, Keynes, 'Anglo-Saxon Entries', and C. La Rocca and L. Provero, 'The Dead and their Gifts: The Will of Eberhard, Count of Friuli, and his Wife Gisela', in *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. F. Theuws and J. L. Nelson (Leiden, 2000), 225–80. On *Libri Vitae* and the work of K. Schmid and J. Wollasch, see J. Gerschow, '*Societas et Fraternitas*: A Report on a Research-Project Based at the Universities of Freiburg and Münster', *Nomina*, 12 (1988–9), 153–71, and *idem*, *Die Gedenküberlieferung der Angelsachsen: Mit einem Katalog der Libri vitae und Necrologien* (Berlin, 1988).

the ninth century, and, not least, its impressive list of *nomina reginarum et abbatissarum*, 'queens and abbesses': that conjuncture is significant, and for even more reasons than Levison saw in 1943.[44]

Several recent museum exhibitions in England and on the Continent have showcased – and for hundreds of thousands of people – the ninth century's material culture. Immense research efforts have gone into all this.[45] Archaeologists, thank goodness, have been ever-ready to inject theoretical stiffening into interdisciplinary debate.[46] Both thence, and via new investigations of written texts, students of the ninth century have become not just hot on towns but hot on the causes of towns.[47] By similar routes, the ninth-century peasantry have acquired more variegated features: some can be seen not just multiplying in what can be seen, now, in the ninth century, as monogamous Christian relationships, but potentially thriving as well.[48] And ninth-century

[44] Levison, *England and the Continent*, 28; cf. Stafford, 'Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England', *Past and Present*, 163 (1999), 3–35, and *idem*, 'Powerful Women in the Early Middle Ages: Queens and Abbesses', in *The Medieval World*, ed. Linehan and Nelson, 398–415.

[45] See *The Transformation of the Roman World AD 400–900*, ed. L. Webster and M. Brown (1997), including the catalogues of five linked exhibitions in 1997 at Cologne, Thessaloniki, Leiden, Stockholm and London (see below, n. 53). There was a further series of five exhibitions on the theme 'Charlemagne: The Making of Europe', in 1999–2001, at Paderborn, Barcelona, Brescia, Split and York. Among the catalogues for these were: *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit: Karl der Grosse und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*, ed. C. Stiegemann and M. Wemhoff (2 vols., Mainz, 1999); *Il futuro dei Longobardi: L'Italia e le costruzione dell'Europa di Carlo Magno*, ed. C. Bertelli and G. P. Brogiolo (Brescia, 2000); *Alcuin and Charlemagne: The Golden Age of York*, ed. E. Hartley (York, 2001). For comparative reflections on the Paderborn Exhibition, and an exhibition on 'Alfred the Great: London's Forgotten King' at the Museum of London, also in 1999, see J. L. Nelson, 'Two Exhibitions', *History Workshop Journal*, 50 (2000), 295–9.

[46] See J. Moreland, 'Concepts of the Early Medieval Economy', in Hanson and Wickham, *The Long Eighth Century*, 1–34, and C. Loveluck, 'Aspects of Rural Settlement Hierarchy in the Age of Charlemagne: An Archaeological Perspective', in *Charlemagne*, ed. J. Story (2002, forthcoming). I am very grateful to Chris Loveluck for letting me see a copy of this paper in advance of publication. For further interdisciplinary insights, see O. Bruand, 'Circulation monétaire et pouvoirs politiques locaux sous les Mérovingiens et les Carolingiens (du VIIe au IXe siècles)', in *L'argent au moyen âge*, Actes du XXIIIe Congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de Clermont-Ferrand (Paris, 1998), 47–59.

[47] A. Verhulst, *The Rise of Cities in North-West Europe* (Cambridge, 1999); R. Hodges, *Towns and Trade in the Age of Charlemagne* (2000).

[48] See J.-P. Devroey, 'Femmes au miroir des polyptyques: une approche des rapports du couple dans l'exploitation rurale dépendante entre Seine et Rhin au IXe siècle', *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident (VIe–XI siècles)*, ed. S. Lebecq *et al.* (Lille, 1999), 227–50; *idem*, 'Men and Women in Early Medieval Serfdom: The Ninth-Century North Frankish Evidence', *Past and Present*, 166 (2000), 3–30; Y. Morimoto, 'Aspects of the Early Medieval Peasant Economy', in *The Medieval World*, ed. Linehan and Nelson, 605–20. See also H.-W. Goetz, 'Serfdom and the Beginnings of a "Seigneurial System" in the Carolingian Period', *Early Medieval Europe*, 2 (1993), 29–52.

nobilities have been more intensively and sympathetically viewed as elites and notables with varied local obligations rather than a monochrome and monotonously exploitative ruling class.[49] For a historian of material culture, graves and wills (and the ninth century has striking examples of both)[50] have exceptional evidentiary value as well as their own pathos. 'Consider the years of each generation ...'

For me, most heartening of all have been the ways that the old historical staples of the ninth century, that is, politics, political structures, political ideas, law and historical writing, have been renovated through new perspectives, cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and comparative. One example can stand for many: Patrick Wormald's re-reading of the Laws of Alfred (c. 890) in such a wide-lens context.[51] And in this context, you cannot have too much of a good thing. In Anglo-Saxon historiography nowadays, comparison of English with Irish, Welsh and Scottish history is proving not an alternative to but complementary to the Continental sort, and often as fruitful, not least in Viking studies. It may seem ungrateful to lament that two very recent and especially useful comparisons, John Maddicott's of two Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, Timothy Reuter's of England with Germany, deal respectively with the seventh–eighth centuries and the long tenth century;[52] but it can only be a matter of time before someone subjects the long ninth century to similar treatment. It would certainly be ungrateful to mourn the ending of the European Science Foundation-funded Transformation of the Roman World project (1993-8), or to regret that the ninth century constituted its chronological tail-end. Maybe the ninth-century brigade were lucky to be there at all, but they clung on tenaciously, and a general note of ninth-century innovativeness resonates in results published so far.[53] In all the above, the academic community of this country,

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[49] See S. Airlie, 'The Aristocracy', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. II, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), 431–50, and the contributions by S. Airlie, P. Fouracre, R. Le Jan, J. L. Nelson, J. Roberts and T. Reuter to *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe*, ed. A. Duggan (Woodbridge, 2000), Part I: 'Early Middle Ages', 17–98.

[50] For instances of graves, in J. L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (1992), 6; *idem*, 'Carolingian Royal Funerals', in *Rituals of Power*, ed. Theuws and Nelson, 167–8; G. Halsall, 'The Viking Presence in England? The Burial Evidence Reconsidered', in *Cultures in Contact*, ed. Hadley and Richards, 259–76. For wills, Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', in *Property and Power in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. W. Davies and P. Fouracre (Cambridge, 1995), 82–113; La Rocca and Provero, 'The dead and their gifts'.

[51] P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, I: *Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), 265–85.

[52] J. R. Maddicott, 'Two Frontier States: Northumbria and Wessex, c. 650–750', in *The Medieval State*, ed. Maddicott and Palliser, 25–46; T. Reuter, 'The Making of England and Germany, 850–1050: Points of Comparison and Difference', in *Medieval Europeans: Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe*, ed. A. P. Smyth (Basingstoke, 1998), 53–70.

[53] I. N. Wood, 'Report: The European Science Foundation's Programme on the

embodied not least in the Fellows of this Society, can say it has done its bit. Two special sources of mellow enjoyment for the likes of me are first, the contributions of so many younger scholars, some already Fellows of the Society, others no doubt future ones; and second, the collaborations with Continental colleagues, for I really do believe that the future of medieval historical scholarship is European or it is nothing.

All periodisation is artifice, but it is not arbitrary. Johannes Fried in 1991 dated the formation of Europe from 840 to 1046, 'the break-up of the Carolingian Empire and the rise of nation-states'.[54] R. I. Moore in 2000 placed the first European revolution squarely in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when sustained economic growth was founded on urbanisation.[55] For Robert Bartlett, the making of Europe, which he also memorably saw in terms of Europeanisation, began c. 950 and was complete by 1300: among its traits were shared saint-cults, shared economic and governmental tools in the form of coins and charters and shared educational practices embodied in universities.[56] Any model has to take account of the intensity or dominance of these features vis-à-vis other and older ones, and also of their diffusion over time. Travel around Europe and you find the Middle Ages beginning at different dates in Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Ireland, while the Dark Ages, now barely visible in academic history books, used to end at different dates in England and France, Germany and Italy, and still do on television and in museums. With all that in mind, I want to argue for the ninth century (long or short) as a fundamentally formative and defining period; and I do so, less by challenging the periodisations of Fried, Moore and Bartlett, than by borrowing and reassigning their criteria. That is, I would see medieval states (though I would not call them nation-states), urbanisation, saint-cults, coins and charters and educational practices as either new, or acquiring a new significance in ninth-century Carolingian kingdoms and in England, to be diffused from then on, in varied forms, elsewhere in Europe. That is to claim a lot for the ninth century. Over the next three lectures, and courtesy of the work of many colleagues, I hope to substantiate the claim by another look at the defining features, but also at processes not just of diffusion but of *fusion*, through new encounters, new appropriations and new blends (what I intend to do for Fried *et al.* is what, for instance, the Anglo-Saxons did for the Franks, and the Scandinavians for the

Transformation of the Roman World and the Emergence of Early Medieval Europe', *Early Medieval Europe*, 6 (1997), 217–27.

[54] J. Fried, *Die Formierung Europas 840–1046* (Munich, 1991), 2.

[55] R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215* (2000), esp. 30–9.

[56] R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350* (1993), esp. 269–92.

Anglo-Saxons *and* the Franks) and in new contexts (here violence will loom larger than in Levison's view of the eighth century, but so too will prayer-associations and marriages, for mine will be stories of peace as well as war).

In the last bit of *this* paper, I will concentrate on a place, and an institution, where England and the Continent met (figuratively speaking) in the ninth century: Rome, and the papacy, in the pontificate of Leo III (795-816).[57] A Member of the Society has thoughtfully reminded me that today is the 1900th anniversary of the death of St Clement, St Peter's first successor, and that is pleasingly apt for my Roman theme. I focus first on a date with its own magic, the very first day of the ninth century, which was reckoned by those who knew about time-reckoning then to be 25 December 801. Chroniclers started the year on Christmas Day. Maybe not every little English girl or boy knows what happened that day, but I am told that little French and German ones did and do: Charlemagne (or *Karl der Grosse*) was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III in Rome. Some of the time-reckoners had calculated the end of time on 24 December 800.[58] For several years they had been expressing what we moderns can see, with our longer hindsight, as 90s *Angst*. Was Charlemagne defying the experts, or did he reckon on winning each way? This coronation was carefully planned, at least a year and more in advance. Charlemagne's wagon-train, lumbering Romewards in October–November 800, carried gifts for St Peter that were both lavish and extremely heavy, up to 400lb of precious metal in the form of church plate, fixtures and fittings: a headache for the royal Frankish transport corps; but surely suggesting forward planning for a big event.[59]

Who gained most from it? Leo III? Charlemagne? Charlemagne's family? Apart from the main actors, there were many more interested parties, including Anglo-Saxons dependent on Frankish and papal support. There was something for everyone to hope for. One little bundle of evidence that has been relatively little weighed in the balance here consists of three letters that Leo sent Charlemagne in 808 and 809.[60] They are the more precious because relatively little ninth-century

[57] See R. Schieffer, 'Charlemagne and Rome', in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald Bullough*, ed. J. M. H. Smith (Leiden, 2000), 279–96. For Leo's lavish extensions to the Lateran palace and their iconography, see P. E. Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization* (Peterborough, Ontario, 1993), 50–4.

[58] W. Brandes, '*Tempora periculosa sunt*: Eschatologisches im Vorfeld der Kaiserkrönung Karls der Grossen', in *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794*, ed. R. Berndt (Mainz, 1997), 49–80; cf. R. Landes, 'The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000', *Speculum*, 70 (2000), 97–145.

[59] *Vita Leonis III* cc. 24, 25, ed. L. Duchesne, C. Vogel (rev. edn, 3 vols., Rome, 1955–7), II, 7–8, trans. R. Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes* (Liverpool, 1992), 191–2.

[60] Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae v, ed. K. Hampe (Berlin, 1898), Epistolae Leonis III Papae 2, 3 and 4, pp. 89–94 (this one-sided correspondence consists of just ten letters of Leo to Charles).

papal correspondence survives (in fact some 979 probably genuine ninth-century papal letters do survive but they are the tip of a now-lost iceberg).[61] Leo's letters cast retrospective light on what Leo and Charlemagne thought the coronation meant. That they are preserved uniquely in a manuscript which also contains the only two key dossiers that show how Charlemagne's estates were managed suggests an official collection of sorts, and, as we will see, concern with economic resources is a common thread.[62]

In the first letter, Leo complains to Charlemagne:

> We do not know if it was at your request that your envoys (*missi*) who came to do justice brought with them many men and based them in various cities. Everything that your duke, set in position by you, was accustomed to do in the way of levying [fines] through his jurisdiction in various cases, and which he paid over to us annually in the customary way, these men of your envoys have now been levying. They have also collected heavy taxes from that people, so that the dukes cannot pay over the contributions they owe *us*.[63]

The grounds for complaint are clear, even if the accusation that Charlemagne ordered the envoys' action is decently veiled. The rest of the letter is about Anglo-Saxon matters, and, again, about envoys: Charlemagne's *missi* had seen to the evacuation to Francia of King Eardwulf of Northumbria, who had been driven out of his kingdom (in 806? or slightly later?) by opponents including the archbishop of York and the king of neighbouring Mercia (the Royal Frankish Annals report the exiled king's meeting with Charlemagne at Nijmegen on or about 16 April 808);[64] Leo tells Charlemagne of his joy at Eardwulf's safety: 'he has always been your faithful man', and thanks to his safe escape, 'your [Charlemagne's] imperial defence

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[61] This rough calculation was made on the basis of data in P. Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, S. Loewenfeld *et al.*, eds. (2nd edn, 2 vols, Berlin, 1885–8), i.

[62] MS Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Helmst. 254, also contains the Capitulare *De villis*, and the *Brevium Exempla*: see H. Mordek, *Bibliotheca capitularium regum Francorum manuscripta: Überlieferung und Traditionzusammenhang der fränkischen Herrscherlasse*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Hilfsmittel xv (Munich, 1995), 946–9. See further K. Verhein, 'Studien zu den Quellen zum Reichsgut der Karolingerzeit', *Deutsches Archiv*, 10 (1953–4), 313–94, at 363–5, and *Deutsches Archiv*, 11 (1954–5), 333–92; and on *De villis*, see J. Martindale, 'The Kingdom of Aquitaine and the Dissolution of the Carolingian Fisc', *Francia*, 11 (1984), 131–91, repr. J. Martindale, *Status, Authority and Regional Power: Aquitaine and France, 9th to 12th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1997), ch. ii, 160–2.

[63] Leo III, Ep. 2, p. 89. Some justice was done to the interest of this letter by J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Charlemagne and England', originally in *Karl der Grosse: Idee und Wirklichkeit*, i, 683–98, repr. in Wallace-Hadrill's collected papers, *Early Medieval History* (Oxford, 1975), 155–80.

[64] *Annales regni Francorum* 808, ed. F. Kurze, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in Usum Scholarum (Hannover, 1895), 126.

resounds everywhere in multiple ways'; Leo says that Charlemagne's envoys and his, acting in concert, should see to the Northumbrian king's restoration, which was clearly what Charlemagne wanted. Leo takes the opportunity to observe, with special regret, and perceiving, no doubt, the huge contrast with Charlemagne's firm control of *his* churchmen, that both Anglo-Saxon archbishops, Canterbury as well as York, are in conflict with their respective kings. Leo knows that precisely these circumstances caused archbishops and kings to invoke papal intervention. Charlemagne has asked Leo to require the archbishop of York either to come to Rome to answer for his conduct, or to answer to Charlemagne. Leo replies that he has sent the orders as requested but suggests that *his* envoy would have greater impact if he were to be accompanied by an envoy from Charlemagne. In a situation where *dolositas* (suspicion, guile, treachery – an appropriately slippery word) is rampant, it is vital that Charlemagne and Leo sing from the same hymn sheet: 'ipsi homines [i.e. the archbishop and co.] dolosi sunt, ut ne, missos super missos suscipientes, in dolositate eveniant'.[65] Leo adds a PS: do not make Bishop Jesse of Amiens your envoy again for I regard him as *non idoneus* ('not suitable') both for that job, and for being a confidential adviser. (Given that the bishop of Amiens was one of Charlemagne's very closest advisers, this was frank stuff!) And finally, quiz your (other) envoys especially closely about what they heard when the archbishop of Ravenna invited them to dinner on Palm Sunday (9 April). Leo's letter reveals the multi-tasking of envoys, their capacity, with or without their principal's say-so, to take initiatives which included military and fiscal ones, the close involvement of emperor and pope in Northumbrian politics (Leo offers here the clearest evidence for the implications of Charlemagne's imperial role), the mind-boggling complexity of Italian politics, the intimate interconnectedness of papal and imperial policy and last but not least, this pope's political *nous*. You can think of parallels for a jumped-up and insecure churchman quickly learning the old rules, and experimenting with new ones (Gregory VII, Thomas Becket, Thomas Cranmer), but Leo emerges here as exceptionally resourceful, and that has its own implications for what had happened on 25 December 801.

Leo's second letter, dated 31 December and also of 808 (by modern reckoning), reveals yet more about envoys, this time including one of Leo's own, a man named Aldulf, *de Brittania, natione Saxo*.[66] Aldulf had

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[65] Leo III, Ep. 2, 90: 'These men are anxious that they may come under suspicion for receiving one lot of *missi*, then another.'

[66] *Annales regni Francorum* 808, 126–7; Leo, Ep. 3, p. 91, names him as 'Hadulf'.

been sent to meet the archbishop of York's envoy in England and accompany him to Rome. On the outward journey, Aldulf had been honourably received by Charlemagne, escorted to the port and given permission to embark. On the inward journey, with the archbishop's envoy in tow, Aldulf had not waited for Charlemagne's envoy to meet him and escort him to the emperor, but had gone hell for leather, like a fugitive (*quasi fugiens*), to Rome. Meanwhile Charlemagne had been waiting for him for several days in vain.[67] Now it was never a good idea to make Charlemagne feel he had been stood up. In fact, Leo knew, the emperor was in a state of 'fury'. Leo apologised for his envoy's 'crude offence against the manners of this world' (*stolida occursio* against *solertia huius saeculi*), and promised that it would not happen again. Charlemagne had of course suspected much more than a breach of diplomatic courtesy: he thought Ardulf was in league with the archbishop's envoy to get to Rome before the Northumbrian king, Charles's protégé. Leo said he was sending Charles the contents of Ardulf's diplomatic bag to prove there was no treachery here; please return them once read, he added, for my files (*pro pignore*). At the same time Leo affirmed his own special responsibility for the English, the Holy Roman Church's people of acquisition. Leo dreaded 'that people's giving the impression that the struggles of my predecessor Pope Gregory are fruitless in my times, and that that be laid to my account at the judgement'. Given the amount of evidence for Leo's involvement in Anglo-Saxon affairs and his sense of papal tradition, I think we can read his anxiety as sincere. Leo thought Charlemagne would share that sense of responsibility: emperor and pope stood shoulder to shoulder.

The third letter, of 809, can be quickly dealt with. Most of it consists of replies to three queries from Charlemagne about three biblical passages, but first, Leo acknowledges receipt of news from Charlemagne brought by Leo's envoy Bishop Sabinus: Leo's earlier envoy Aldulf, after participating in the restoration of the Northumbrian king, and en route for home, had been captured by 'pirates', that is, Vikings. They had taken him to Britain, where he had been ransomed by one of the king of Mercia's men. Bishop Sabinus has brought the news but returned alone 'from regions across the sea', that is, England.[68] Leo expresses to Charlemagne his continuing anxiety about Aldulf's fate. Thanks to the Royal Frankish Annals for this year, though, we know that Aldulf made it back to Rome (the last we hear of him).[69] Embarrassing for Leo that the accident-prone envoy had evidently troubled the emperor again: for it sounds as if Charlemagne saw to

[67] Leo III, Ep. 3, 91–2.
[68] Leo III, Ep. 4, 93–4.
[69] *Annales regni Francorum* 808, 128.

Aldulf's transfer from Mercian hands, perhaps very soon after receiving Leo's letter.

These letters (along with other evidence) show an astonishing frequency of transalpine exchanges, implying continuous to-ing and fro-ing of envoys between Aachen and Rome. They also reveal multiple exchanges with Anglo-Saxon England, and a wider world of connections in which Vikings were starting to figure. Like other churchmen, especially bishops, Leo was not aloof from the world, but well versed in its *solertia*. Frequently in touch with Anglo-Saxons, and far though he was, mostly, from Charlemagne, Leo knew that his envoys to England had to travel by way of Charlemagne's court, and have Charlemagne's leave to depart, just as aristocrats needed the ruler's leave to quit assemblies and head for home. Equally, Anglo-Saxons knew that the route to Rome from Quentovic or Rouen must now take them via Aachen. The ninth century opens, then, with the new emperor in his new capital exerting his own centripetal pull across Europe and far beyond. At the same time, the Anglo-Saxons felt more strongly than ever the pull of Rome. Twice in Leo's pontificate, an Anglo-Saxon archbishop went to Rome, the first visits there of Anglo-Saxon bishops in person since the early eighth century. Archbishops engaged in conflicts with kings, and in equally urgent conflicts to control churches founded by lay royals or aristocrats and inherited by their noble kin, needed all the signs of distinction they could get. Papal privileges, exotically inscribed on papyrus, were such signs. But all the papal privileges in the world could not secure ecclesiastical property in the far-flung regions of Christendom against local familial interest. Levison's tart comment on this subject was: 'facts were stronger than theories'.[70] The papacy had its own material worries too. Leo needed the fines and renders that dukes customarily collected and handed over. Writing to the Mercian king Coenwulf, Leo recalled that King Offa, recently deceased, had promised from himself and his successors in perpetuity an annual payment of 365 mancuses, that is 1,095 silver pennies, to St Peter the keybearer of heaven, '*Quod et fecit* – and he did it too!': a sharp reminder to Coenwulf who had just sent only a third that much (120 mancuses).[71] Leo III was a big spender. He invested heavily in the assiduous promotion of papal authority in Rome itself, through lavish gifts to Rome's many churches, and through staging huge, impressive processions. If Leo commanded such resources, his income from Mercian

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[70] Levison, *England and the Continent*, 32.

[71] Coenwulf's letter to Leo, and Leo's reply, are edited in A. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (3 vols., 1869–71), III, 521–3, 523–5, trans. D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, I (rev. edn, 1979), 858–62. See N. P. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester, 1984), 123–7, and ch. 7, illuminating the wider context.

kings, and from pilgrim traffic generally, was part of the explanation.

But no such material explanation could work without something else: the cult of St Peter himself, to whose tomb, called the *confessio*, beneath the church of St Peter's, awestruck pilgrims were taken. Charlemagne himself had been taken down there at Easter 774 at a critical moment in his early career. Charlemagne's best hope *then* had been for Peter's help. And in the light of that earlier experience, Charlemagne on 25 December 801, but also on 24 December 800 – that is, when, if experts were to be believed, the imminence of the end-time was still a possibility – must have felt confident in and for himself. In Charlemagne's mind, and in the minds of his Frankish contemporaries, there was no incompatibility, no paradox, in holding on, despite papal protests, to what the papacy considered St Peter's lands, or sending envoys to appropriate for his own Italian regime what Leo considered St Peter's dues, and yet, at the same time investing heavily in St Peter's patronage. Likewise, the same Anglo-Saxon king, Offa of Mercia, who allegedly plotted to remove one pope and replace him with another[72] was the same king who instituted the annual payment of what came to be called Peter's Pence. These kings and their counsellors were not incapable of grasping ideas, including the big idea that individual popes and their earthly lordship were to be distinguished from the papal office and its first tenant St Peter, the chosen of Christ. Anglo-Saxon pennies found in Rome are the material residue of faith in powers wielded beyond the grave by the keybearer of heaven. Theories – or beliefs – were stronger than facts.

In the end, though, theories coexisted with facts, more or less comfortably. Leo connived at the restoration of a western empire because 'imperial defence' would thereby be provided, not just for the likes of Eardwulf, but for the papacy itself, if on Charlemagne's terms. Thanks to Leo's realism, the ninth century was on course to be a great age for the papacy. Those 979 papal letters, the vast majority addressed to recipients north of the Alps, were supplied in response to local requests, and they show the strength of new demand for papal authority. Whether imperial power waxed or waned, there was a widening desire that St Peter's patronage 'resound everywhere in multiple ways'. That resonance was as much a part of Europe's making as Charlemagne's ninth-century empire. But those stories and sequels are for other lectures. In my end is my beginning.

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[72] Codex Carolinus 92, ed. W. Gundlach, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae III (Berlin, 1892), 629–30. See Brooks, *The Early History*, 111–27.