

Rome in Ninth-Century Anglo-Saxon England

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And if a man consider the originall of this great Ecclesiasticall Dominion, he will easily perceive, that the *Papacy*, is no other, than the *Ghost* of the deceased *Romane Empire*, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

ed. R. Tuck (Cambridge, 1991), p. 480

For my family

For Martha

And for Maisie

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Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of Rome upon Anglo-Saxon politics, religion, and culture in the ninth century. From the Gregorian mission onwards, Rome helped shape the ecclesiastical and devotional contexts of Anglo-Saxon Christianity and occupied a central place in the imaginations of early English writers. Yet the extent to which these links continued into and throughout the ninth century remains obscure, with scholarship about religion and culture often treating the period as a hiatus. In political narratives, the ninth century is treated as a crucial period, and Roman involvement is most visible in this sphere. By redressing the imbalance between religion and politics, this thesis achieves a thorough appreciation of the part played by Rome in these various fields of experience, as well as showing how Anglo-Saxon writers located themselves and their pasts in relation to the city. It does so over the course of five thematic chapters, which progress from an analysis of the most fundamental issues to more imaginative ones. Chapter one examines contact and communication between England and Rome, arguing that the two areas were closely and constantly connected across the century. The second and third chapters explore the impact of Rome on religion and kingship respectively, finding that while Roman influence on the church was most pronounced in the first half of the century, in political terms the city played a significant and changing role throughout the period. Chapters four and five consider the position of Rome in Anglo-Saxon historical thought and geographical understanding, examining how writers continued to define their position in a wider Christian world with reference to the city and its past. This thesis argues that, in the ninth century, Rome continued to play an important role in English life, while also influencing Anglo-Saxon thought and experience in new and dynamic ways.

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Abbreviations

AB	<i>Annals of St Bertin</i> , ed. G. Waitz, <i>Annales Bertiniani</i> , MGH SS rer. Germ. V (Hanover, 1883); trans. J. Nelson, <i>The Annals of St Bertin</i> (Manchester, 1991)
Asser	Asser, <i>Vita Alfredi</i> , ed. W. H. Stevenson, <i>Asser's Life of King Alfred Together with the Annals of Saint Neots Erroneously Ascribed to Asser</i> (Oxford, 1904), pp. 1-96; trans. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, <i>Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other Contemporary Sources</i> (London and New York, 1983), pp. 67-110
Alf-Prl	'King Alfred's <i>Domboc</i> ', prologue, ed. F. Liebermann, <i>Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen</i> (3 vols., Halle, 1903-1916), I, 26-47; trans. B. Thorpe, <i>Ancient Laws and Institutes of England</i> (London, 1840), pp. 44-59
Alcuin, <i>Ep.</i>	<i>Alcuini sive Albini epistolae</i> , ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epp. IV (II) (Berlin, 1895); part trans. Allott, S., <i>Alcuin of York, c. A.D. 732 to 804: his Life and Letters</i> (York, 1974)
ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
ASC	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , ed. <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> (17 vols., Cambridge, 1982-); trans. D Whitelock, <i>English Historical Documents, I: c.500-1042</i> (2nd edn, London and New York, 1979), No 1; [chronological dislocations are silently corrected throughout]
A	Ms A, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Volume 3</i> , ed. J. Bately (1986)
B	MS B, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Volume 4</i> , ed. S. Taylor (1983)
C	MS C, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Volume 5</i> , ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe (2001)

D	MS D, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Volume 6</i> , ed. G. Cubbin (1996)
E	MS E, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. Volume 7</i> , ed. S. Irvine (2004)
CC	J. Story, <i>Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750-870</i> (Aldershot, 2003)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina (Turnhout)
DTR	Bede, <i>De temporum ratione</i> , ed. C. Jones, <i>Bedae Opera Didascalica vol. II</i> , Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 123 B (Turnhout, 1977); trans. F. Wallis, <i>Bede: The Reckoning of Time</i> (Liverpool, 1988)
EHCC	N. Brooks, <i>The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066</i> (Leicester, 1984)
ECEC	W. Levison, <i>England and the Continent in the Eighth Century</i> (Oxford, 1946)
EHD	<i>English Historical Documents, I: c.500-1042</i> , ed. D. Whitelock (2nd edn, London and New York, 1979)
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
HE	Bede, <i>Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</i> , ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. Mynors, <i>Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> (Oxford, 1969)
HS	A. Haddan and W. Stubbs, eds., <i>Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland</i> (3 vols., Oxford, 1869-79)

LP	<i>Liber Pontificalis</i> , ed. L. Duchesne, <i>Le Liber Pontificalis, Texte, Introduction et Commentaire</i> (2 vols., Paris, 1886-92), revised edition with a 3 rd volume containing updates, additions, and corrections (3 vols., Paris, 1955-7); lives 1-90 trans. R. Davis, <i>The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis)</i> (2 nd edn, Liverpool, 2000); lives 91-99 trans. R. Davis, <i>The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes</i> (rev. edn, Liverpool, 2007); lives 100-112 trans. R. Davis, <i>The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis)</i> (Liverpool, 1995)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Auct. ant.	<i>Auctores antiquissimi</i> (15 vols.)
Epp.	<i>Epistolae III-VIII, Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini Aevi</i> (5 vols.)
Epp. Sel.	<i>Epistolae Selectae in usum scholarum</i> , (5 vols.)
Libri mem. N. S.	<i>Libri memoriales et necrologia, Nova Series</i> (6 vols)
SS rer. Germ.	<i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum seperatim editi</i> , (63 vols.)
SS	<i>Scriptores (in folio)</i> (30 vols.)
OEB	<i>The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> , ed. and trans. T. Miller (2 parts in 4 vols., London, 1890-8)
OEBo	<i>The Old English Boethius</i> , ed. and trans. M. Godden and S. Irvine (2 vols., Oxford, 2009)
OEM	<i>Old English Martyrology</i> , ed. G. Kotzor, <i>Das Altenglische Martyrologium</i> , Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil. hist. Kl., ns 88.1-2 (2 vols., Munich, 1981); trans. G. Herzfeld, <i>An Old English Martyrology</i> (London, 1900)
OEOr	<i>The Old English Orosius</i> , ed. J. Bately (Oxford, 1980)

OEPC	<i>King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care</i> , Preface, ed. and trans. H. Sweet, (London, 1871), p. 2-9; trans. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, <i>Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources</i> (London and New York, 1983), pp. 124-6
OH	Orosius, <i>Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII</i> , ed. C. Zangemeister (Vienna, 1882); trans. R. Deferrari, <i>Paulus Orosius: The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans</i> (Washington, DC, 1964)
Settimane	<i>Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo</i> (Spoleto)
S	P.H. Sawyer, ed., <i>Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography</i> , Royal Historical Society guides and handbooks 8 (London, 1968). Now superseded by the Electronic Sawyer: http://www.esawyer.org.uk/
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
VW	Stephen, <i>Vita Wilfridi</i> , ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, <i>The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus</i> (Cambridge, 1927)

The material originally presented here is not currently available in ORA

Map 1: Anglo-Saxon England

From: *CC*, p. xviii

The material originally presented here is not currently available in ORA

Map 2: Carolingian Europe

From: *CC*, p. xvii

Introduction

Rome's just a city like anywhere else. A vastly overrated city, I'd say. It trades on belief just as Stratford trades on Shakespeare.¹

A cynical modern observer might agree with this pronouncement on 'the eternal city' made by the dyspeptic poet Enderby, the antihero of a series of comic novels by Anthony Burgess. For the Anglo-Saxons, however, Rome was not 'like anywhere else' nor could it be overrated. The especial reverence of the Anglo-Saxons towards Rome has long been noted; indeed, the mid-ninth-century Frankish author of the *Gesta sanctorum patrum Fontanellensis coenobii* wrote that the English (*gens Anglorum*) were 'most intimate with the Apostolic See'.² Such intimacy was not born out of any enduring connections between Rome and its former province, for, unlike other 'Germanic' successor-states, Roman governmental structures and urban life had largely broken down by the time the Anglo-Saxons began to occupy Britain in the second half of the fifth century.³ Rather, it was a consequence of Rome's new 'trade in belief', namely the Roman missionary activity initiated by Pope Gregory I (590-604) and enshrined in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*.⁴ The Roman role in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon peoples and the formation of their church remains the central fact of early medieval Anglo-Roman history, and explains on a fundamental level why, for the Anglo-Saxons, Rome was neither 'overrated' nor 'like anywhere else'. Yet Roman involvement and influences upon England and Anglo-Saxon attitudes to Rome were far more complex than a simple exchange of religion for reverence.

¹ A. Burgess, *Inside Mr Enderby* (London, 1963), p. 133.

² *Gesta sanctorum partum Fontanellensis coenobii*, ed. F. Lohier and R. Laporte (Rouen and Paris, 1936), ch. 14.

³ C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 306-14.

⁴ *HE*, i.23-33, ii.1.

Early medieval Rome has been described as ‘geographically marginal but symbolically central, a powerful idea but a shabby urban experience.’⁵ Compared to the city at the height of its imperial power, Rome may have been ‘marginal’ and ‘shabby’ in this period, but it may not have seemed so to the Anglo-Saxons, who occupied the outermost margins of the known world and to whom any urban experience must have been extraordinary. The city certainly was ‘symbolically central’, far more than just a place, far more in fact than just a single, powerful idea. Rome had a long past from the early republican times through the imperial era into the post-imperial present, and had played an important role in Christianity from its earliest beginnings. It could thus mean many different things: about power, empire, religious authority, and sanctity. Moreover, much of the classical and Christian literary culture to which the Anglo-Saxons gained access after their conversion had been produced in a context dominated by imperial and Christian Rome, and the city was therefore a key figure in wider ideas about the past and about the Christian present. Rome did not exist solely in the realms of text; it was, of course, a living, breathing city, and one that, due to its role in their conversion, could exert a profound influence on the Anglo-Saxons, as well as on their ideas. In addition, it remained a religious force under popes who involved themselves in Anglo-Saxon affairs and represented their ideas and authority to an insular audience.

Simply put, as a place and as a set of ideas, Rome could have a significant and multifaceted impact on Anglo-Saxon thought and experience. In essence, this thesis attempts to understand that impact and, consequently, to explain what Rome meant to the Anglo-Saxons. It does so by examining the part the city and its bishops played in Anglo-Saxon religion, politics, and culture. By looking at both the role of the papacy in Anglo-Saxon affairs, and at how Anglo-Saxons sought that involvement and also employed

⁵ J. Smith, *Europe After Rome: A New Cultural History 500-1000* (Oxford, 2005), p. 256.

ideas about Rome in attempts to locate themselves in Christian time and space, it aims to take account of the complex dynamics between England and Rome, while also gaining the fullest appreciation of how that city shaped Anglo-Saxon life. In addressing these issues the thesis focuses upon the ninth century: an important and transformative period which is too often submerged beneath alternative periodisations, but which should be addressed as a whole and on its own terms. As I shall show, Rome played an important and changing role in Anglo-Saxon England across this dynamic period.

Contacts and Christianity

Previous studies of Anglo-Saxon contacts with Rome have focussed upon the seventh and eighth or the tenth and eleventh centuries, with the ninth century remaining relatively under-explored. It was, perhaps, the vigour of seventh- and eighth-century contacts that lead a previous generation of scholars to produce what are still the standard works on the subject.⁶ More recently, Ortenberg has illuminated the tenth and eleventh centuries from a cultural and religious perspective.⁷ The few overviews of Anglo-Roman contact devote relatively little attention to the ninth century: for example, Ortenberg's essay on the 'Anglo-Saxon Church and the papacy' mentions certain ninth-century royal journeys to Rome and epistolary contacts, but dedicates the bulk of analysis to the earlier and later

⁶ See ECEC; and W. Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims to Rome and the Schola Saxonum* (Fribourg, 1937). S. Crawford, *Anglo-Saxon Influence on Western Christendom 600–800* (London, 1933), remains an important study.

⁷ V. Ortenberg, *The English Church and the Continent in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Cultural, Spiritual, and Artistic Exchanges* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 127–96, explores the seventh- and eighth-century background, but rarely that of the ninth century.

Anglo-Saxon periods.⁸ While a cursory glance at the sources for the ninth century might suggest that less contact took place than in the preceding century, this notion has never been properly explored. Moreover, such neglect may reveal a common, if largely unspoken, view of the ninth century as one of a cultural and religious hiatus separating periods of more apparent achievement. Consequently, the role of Rome in ninth-century England is imperfectly understood, and this is particularly the case with ecclesiastical contacts.

It is clear that Rome was integral to seventh- and eighth-century ecclesiastical and religious life in several ways. In his *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, Wilhelm Levison prefaced his influential account of the Anglo-Saxon contribution to eighth-century Western Europe with an analysis of 'England and the church of Rome'. He argued that, despite the relative infrequency of legatine visits to England 'a real connexion' with Rome was maintained, visible in the 'routine' bestowal of the archiepiscopal *pallia* and granting of monastic privileges, as well as less formal contacts such as the acquisition of Roman relics for church dedications, and pilgrimage.⁹ Many of Levison's arguments still find acceptance today and there has been little substantive work on Anglo-Saxon obtainment of papal privileges and archiepiscopal *pallia* since.¹⁰ Clayton has supplemented his work on church dedications, coming to the same conclusions as Levison about the importance of Roman saints in early dedications, and Anglo-Saxon pilgrimage and travel to Rome have received more thorough treatment.¹¹ It

⁸ V. Ortenberg, 'The Anglo-Saxon Church and the papacy', in *The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, ed. C.H. Lawrence (Stroud, 1999), pp. 31-62.

⁹ *ECEC*, pp. 15-44.

¹⁰ Although H. Anton, *Studien zu den Klosterprivilegien der Päpste im Frühen Mittelalter. Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Privilegierung von St. Maurice D'Agaune* (Berlin and New York, 1975), pp. 62-83, has looked again at the seventh- and eighth-century privileges.

¹¹ M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 122-41; on pilgrimage and travel, see B. Colgrave, 'Pilgrimages to Rome in the seventh and eighth centuries', in *Studies in Language, Literature, and Culture of the Middle Ages and Later*, eds. E. Bagby Atwood and A. Hill (Austin, TX, 1969), pp. 156-172; Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity*

is perhaps the work of David Rollason and Alan Thacker on relics and the cult of saints that has added most to Levison's work. These scholars have illuminated the influence of Roman relics and saints, of papal relic policy, and of the Roman calendar on the early Anglo-Saxon church, as well as establishing the key role played by the Anglo-Saxons in propagating the cult of Pope Gregory.¹²

Of course, Roman influence on early Anglo-Saxon Christianity was not total, and scholars have expended a good deal of energy qualifying and revising the Rome-centric picture of the English church painted by its earliest writers, to establish the role of other peoples and churches in the genesis of Anglo-Saxon Christianity.¹³ In some cases, as with the early liturgy, Anglo-Saxon professions of unity with Rome may actually mask a diversity of practices, although the writers' insistence that they were following Rome is illuminating in itself.¹⁴ In spite of such qualifications, there were clearly regional centres where Roman practices were self-consciously promoted. Brooks, for example, has established that the southern metropolitan see of Canterbury exhibited a particular *Romanitas* in the seventh and eighth centuries, and this is also the case at Wearmouth-Jarrow, with its fine uncial script and churches built '*iuxta morem Romanorum*'.¹⁵ Work

and Change (Woodbridge, 1998); S. Matthews, *The Road to Rome: Travel and Travellers between England and Italy in the Anglo-Saxon Centuries* (Oxford, 2007).

¹² D. Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 23-82; A. Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory the Great: the origin and transmission of a papal cult in the seventh and eighth centuries', *Early Medieval Europe* 7.1 (1998), 59-84; idem., 'In search of saints: the English church and the cult of Roman apostles and martyrs in the seventh and eighth centuries', in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 247-77.

¹³ The literature here is extensive but see, for example, J. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Rome and the early English Church: some questions of transmission', in his *Early Medieval History* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 114-37; J. Campbell, 'The first century of Christianity in England', in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 49-67.

¹⁴ C. Cubitt, 'Unity and diversity in the early Anglo-Saxon liturgy', in *Unity and Diversity in the Church*, ed. R. Swanson (Oxford, 1996), pp. 45-57.

¹⁵ N. Brooks, 'Canterbury, Rome, and the construction of English identity', in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 224-31; idem., 'Canterbury and Rome: the limits and myth of *Romanitas*', *Settimane* 49 (2002), 803-16; on the Wearmouth-Jarrow scripts, see M. Parkes, *The Scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow* (Jarrow Lecture, 1982), pp. 1-32; and Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 5, ed. C. Plummer *Venerabilis Bedae opera historica*, (2 vols., Oxford, 1896), I, 368; trans. D. Farmer, in *The Age of Bede*, trans. J. Webb and D. Farmer (London, 1983), p. 191, mentions churches built in the Roman manner.

by art historians has also detected a wider and deliberate imitation of Rome in various aspects of the material culture of this period, particularly in stone churches and monuments, as well as the imagery imported into Christian England.¹⁶ There thus exists a developed, if incomplete, understanding of how Rome influenced Christianity and the church in the seventh and eighth centuries, but this understanding does not stretch into the ninth century.

This lack of understanding is perhaps a reflection of the problematic nature of the period. Rarely treated as a whole, the history of the ninth-century church falls into three discernable phases which reflect the varying and often quite limited source material that survives. In the first phase (c.800-35), the southern episcopate features prominently, its actions relatively well documented by a series of genuine charters, synodal canons, letters, and episcopal lists and professions. Little is known about the church in the second period (835-75) for which, other than some diplomatic records, later annals, and material remnants, the historical record is almost silent. Finally, in the third phase (875-900), the church re-emerges as an adjunct to a royal-led programme of religious and educational revival, as evidenced in Alfredian translations and their prefaces. Older histories uncritically reflect these phases, emphasising the vikings as agents of the religious breakdown in phase two. As Margaret Deanesly wrote in 1965, ‘the raiding of “the heathen men” in the ninth century divided the early part of English Church history from the latter as by a deep valley.’¹⁷ While the precise nature of the viking impact remains

¹⁶ J. Hawkes, ‘*Iuxta morem romanorum*: stone and sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, eds. C. Karkov and G. Brown (Albany, NY, 2003), pp. 69-99; eadem, ‘Anglo-Saxon Romanitas: the transmission and use of early Christian art in Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages* (Donington, 2007), pp. 19-37; see also the more specific study of É. Ó’Carragáin, ‘The term *porticus* and *imitatio Romae* in early Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Text and Gloss*, ed. H. Conrad-O’Briain, A. D’Arcy, and J. Scattergood (Dublin, 1999), 13-34, idem, ‘The necessary distance: *imitatio Romae* and the Ruthwell cross’, in *Northumbria’s Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 191-203.

¹⁷ M. Deanesly, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Church and the papacy’, in *The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Lawrence (London, 1965), p. 53. See also, eadem, *The Pre-Conquest Church in*

contested, we now have a better sense of what happened to the church in the mid-ninth century.¹⁸ There was certainly significant disruption to monastic life and episcopal provision in the areas conquered by the vikings, and this contributed to a decline in Latinity and literate culture already underway in a church pressured by lay lordship.¹⁹ Yet, disruption and decline were not absolute and there were underlying continuities across the century: in episcopal provision and minsters in the areas not settled, and in the growing use of the vernacular.²⁰ Still, the sense that the middle years of the ninth century were a watershed in ecclesiastical history persists, and the years around 850 provide a convenient to end monographs or sections within them.²¹

If the problems presented by the ninth century have deterred scholars from investigating the role of Rome, then the paucity of ecclesiastical documentation does make an appreciation of Rome's involvement in religion – and in Anglo-Saxon England more generally – difficult, for it is on this type of documentation that much of the understanding of the role of Rome in the seventh and eighth centuries is based. Despite such difficulties, we must treat the ninth century on its own terms, and not simply avoid it or assume it to be a break between two separate periods. Moreover, it cannot be taken for granted that because there was much decline and disruption this applied to all aspects of

England, (London, 1961), pp. 244-50; J. Godfrey, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 273-84.

¹⁸ On the vikings, see N. Brooks, 'England in the ninth century: the crucible of defeat', in *TRHS* 5th series 29 (1979), 11-17; S. Foot, 'Violence against Christians? The vikings and the church in ninth-century England', *Medieval History* 1 (1991), 3-16; and J. Nelson, 'England and the continent in the ninth century: II, the vikings and others', *TRHS* 6th series 13 (2003), 1-28, and references therein.

¹⁹ On disruption to minsters, see J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 295- 323; on the episcopate, see M. O'Donovan, 'An interim revision of episcopal dates for the province of Canterbury, 850-950: part I', *ASE* 1 (1972), 23-44; eadem, 'An interim revision of episcopal dates for the province of Canterbury, 850-950: part II', *ASE* 2 (1973), 91-113; and on the decline in Latinity see M. Lapidge, 'Latin learning in ninth-century England' in his *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899* (London, 1996), pp. 409-39.

²⁰ On the vernacular, see S. Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word', in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 36-62.

²¹ For example, Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, and Blair, *The Church*, use the mid ninth century as a place to move between sections analysing the early and late Anglo-Saxon periods; C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils, c. 650-850* (Leicester, 1995), ends her analysis in this period, although evidence of church councils does die out then; Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin*, analyses the whole Anglo-Saxon period but, like the studies cited in n.8 and n.17, largely skirts the ninth century to focus on the eighth and the tenth.

Anglo-Saxon experience; if there is discontinuity, then we must attempt to show it. One of the aims of this thesis is to explore and understand the ninth century as a whole, using a range of contemporary, later, and continental texts alongside material evidence. By looking at Anglo-Saxon contacts with Rome, at papal involvement in the ninth-century church, and at Roman influences on religious culture, it aims to interrogate and better understand the nature of this difficult period and, in so doing, to deal with questions of continuity or disjuncture. Situating its discussion in an understanding of seventh- and eighth-century Anglo-Roman contact, it also aims to assess longer-term trends and illuminate the ninth century by comparison with this earlier period. This thesis, then, not only explores the role of Rome but uses it to illuminate the dark ages of the ninth century.

Kingship and Carolingian connections

Although the ninth century is often seen a hiatus in religious and cultural terms, this is not the case in political narratives, where it is a period of the utmost importance. Such accounts detail how the Mercian domination of southern England which had lasted for most of the eighth century was, in the 820s, overturned and replaced by West-Saxon hegemony under Ecgbert (802-39) and his descendants.²² Wessex was subsequently the only Anglo-Saxon kingdom able to survive the ‘great heathen army’ which overran the other kingdoms in the 860s and 870s, and the century ended with Alfred of Wessex ruling

²² For political overviews, see F. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edn, Oxford, 1971), pp. 225-69; P. Wormald, ‘The ninth century’, in *The Anglo-Saxons*, ed. J. Campbell (London, 1982), pp. 132-57; and D. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (rev. edn, London and New York, 2000), pp. 151-78.

‘all the English people that were not under subjection to the Danes’.²³ Interestingly, in the ninth century Rome is perhaps most visible in the sphere of kingship; a number of kings were in contact with popes, and others journeyed to the city. These royal contacts are too often treated in relative isolation from each other, for example West-Saxon journeys to Rome have received some attention, but are rarely compared to earlier Mercian contacts with the papacy.²⁴ It is one of the aims of this thesis to treat them as a group and investigate whether Rome had a meaningful effect on Anglo-Saxon kingship and whether this changed across the century.

When these royal contacts with Rome are explored, it is often in terms of their Carolingian dimension. There are good reasons for this. In the eighth and ninth centuries, having entered into an alliance with the papacy, the powerful Carolingian kings of Francia were in regular contact with Rome and the popes, dispatching letters thence and sometimes visiting the city.²⁵ Their actions thus provided precedents for powerful Anglo-Saxon rulers seeking to exploit the symbolism of Rome. Also, Anglo-Roman contacts often had an important Frankish dimension, not least because the routes to Rome led through that region. For example, when journeying to Rome in 855, Æthelwulf of Wessex (839-58) was received by the West Frankish king Charles the Bald (843-77) and married the latter’s daughter on his return.²⁶ The concern with the Carolingian aspects of royal contact with Rome is also indicative of a historiographical focus on Carolingian influences upon England, reflecting the influential arguments of Wallace-Hadrill that

²³ ASC, 886; and see S. Foot, ‘The making of *Angelcynn*: English identity before the Norman Conquest’, *TRHS* 6th series 6 (1996), 25-49.

²⁴ CC, pp. 195-240, does explore both Mercian and West-Saxon contacts, though she is primarily concerned with their Frankish elements.

²⁵ On the Franco-papal alliance, see T. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter. The (Birth of the Papal State 680-825* (Philadelphia, PN, 1984), pp. 256-334, and see R. Scheiffer, ‘Die Karolinger in Rom’, *Settimane* 49 (2002), 101-28, on Carolingian visits to Rome.

²⁶ AB, 855-6; see P. Stafford, ‘Charles the Bald, Judith and England’, in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, eds. M. Gibson and J. Nelson (Aldershot, 1990), pp. 137-51.

Anglo-Saxon history after 850 cannot be understood without reference to Frankish developments.²⁷

The Frankish dimension in Anglo-Saxon interaction with Rome is of clear importance, but there is also a danger that, by viewing these contacts through a Carolingian prism, the significance of Rome may be obscured. Writing about Anglo-Frankish contacts, Story described Rome as ‘the third point on the diplomatic triangle’.²⁸ Nelson, meanwhile, has argued that ‘ninth-century contacts between the Franks and the English often went a long way round...*carefully choosing* a route via Rome’, and that due to Rome’s ideological pull ‘Anglo-Frankish contacts were pulled into a transalpine ellipse’.²⁹ In treating Rome as merely a ‘third point’ or an extended route to Francia, these studies subsume Anglo-Roman contacts into the history of Carolingian connections, and we lose sight of the fact that, for kings travelling abroad or sending letters to the continent, Rome was almost always the primary destination. This thesis aims to place Rome at the centre of these royal contacts, seeking to understand why kings sought to interact with this distant city and its bishops and whether they obtained any material benefits as a result. In doing so, an appreciation of the role of Carolingian precedents and Frankish contacts is crucial, but we must also bear in mind that there were insular precedents for royal journeys to Rome and interaction with the papacy. In looking at external influences on ninth-century England, this thesis seeks to keep the Carolingian perspective in proportion, and remember that the way was not to Francia via Rome but, more naturally, to Rome via Francia.

²⁷ J. Wallace-Hadrill, ‘The Franks and the English in the ninth century: some common historical interests’, *History* 35 (1950), 211-18.

²⁸ CC, p. 197

²⁹ J. Nelson, ‘The Franks and the English in the ninth-century reconsidered’, in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, eds. P. Szarmach and J. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI, 1999), p. 141[her italics]; and eadem, ‘England and the continent in the ninth century: I, ends and beginnings’, *TRHS* 6th series 12 (2002), 20-1.

Imagining Rome

As well as addressing more direct questions of Anglo-Roman contacts and their consequences for religion and kingship, this thesis also seeks to appreciate how Rome functioned as an idea – or part of a set of ideas – in Anglo-Saxon thought. More specifically, it explores how Rome was imagined in Anglo-Saxon ideas about the past and where it was located in their geographical understanding, asking whether and how writers linked themselves to the city spatially and chronologically. By looking not only at what they knew, but at how this knowledge functioned as part of wider textual dynamics, it attempts to understand whether ideas about Rome played a part in Anglo-Saxons' attempts to locate themselves in the wider Christian world and its past.

Previous approaches to the place of Rome in Anglo-Saxon historical thought have sought to ascertain what the Anglo-Saxon knew about 'Ancient' – meaning republican and imperial – Rome. In 1974, Hunter argued that among the Anglo-Saxons some 'elementary' knowledge of the Roman past 'was quite common', but that 'real knowledge of classical history' was rare.³⁰ He went on to argue that Anglo-Saxons tended to confuse or conflate the Roman and Germanic past, and were 'not fully conscious of the difference between them' weaving the two into a single fabric.³¹ More recently, 'the image of Antique Rome in Anglo-Saxon England' has been the subject of a substantial thesis by Yann Coz.³² Almost every Anglo-Saxon text and object that may convey information

³⁰ M. Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 3 (1974), 29-50, at 40.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

³² Y. Coz, 'L'image de la Rome Antique dans l'Angleterre Anglo-Saxonne (VII^{ème} siècle-1066)' (Université de Paris-Sorbonne [Paris IV] *Doctorat* Thesis, 2007), pp. 1-736.

about, or impressions of, Ancient Rome is examined in this thorough work. Although he eschews Hunter's judgemental schema, Coz retains a focus on finding out what the Anglo-Saxons 'knew' about the politics and culture of pre-Christian Rome and, like Hunter, his method inevitably highlights the failings of Anglo-Saxon knowledge of the Roman past. An appreciation of Anglo-Saxon knowledge of the Roman past is important, but this thesis aims to look more at how writers interpreted and re-deployed this knowledge and, in doing so, it is more similar to the approaches of Godden and Irvine who examine specific aspects of the Roman past.³³ Moreover, by examining how Anglo-Saxon writers perceived their own past in relation to that of imperial and then papal Rome, this thesis seeks to understand where these writers positioned themselves within the longer linear progression of divine history.

There are several ways of exploring Anglo-Saxon concepts of geography and space but, in considering the imagined geographical relationship between the Anglo-Saxons and Rome, this thesis is concerned not with localised ideas of space and place but with the broader realm of theoretical or imagined geography.³⁴ Unlike work on the Roman past, previous studies have largely approached Anglo-Saxon theoretical geography from a literary perspective, most notably Nicholas Howe's essays on English 'cultural geography' and Fabienne Michelet's work on the Anglo-Saxon spatial *imaginaire*.³⁵ Integrating the analysis of poetry with Latin and vernacular prose texts, these works take a wide view of what constitutes geographical or spatial knowledge, exploring the

³³ M. Godden, 'The Anglo-Saxons and the Goths: rewriting the sack of Rome', *ASE* 31 (2002), 47-68; and S. Irvine, 'The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the idea of Rome in Alfredian literature', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 63-77.

³⁴ For more localised approaches, see the essays in C. Lees and G. Overing (eds.), *A Place to Believe in: Locating Medieval Landscapes* (University Park, PA 2000).

³⁵ Particularly N. Howe 'An angle on this earth: sense of place in Anglo-Saxon England', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 82.1 (2000), 1-25; idem, 'Rome: capital of Anglo-Saxon England', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34 (2004) 147-72; and idem, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (New Haven, CT, 2008); Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*.

imaginative dimensions of certain pre-determined concepts. This thesis takes a slightly narrower view, avoiding certain assumptions about insular attitudes to inherited portrayals of Britain, and attempting to achieve a more historicised view of Anglo-Saxon geographical understanding. Moreover, it avoids the notion of ‘verbal maps’ employed by Howe in particular, who has argued that the understanding of maps as visual objects is a distinctly modern limitation and that we should instead look for such verbal maps in Anglo-Saxon texts.³⁶ Maps *are* diagrammatic representations, and rather than collapsing this distinction, it is more helpful to employ alternative ways of thinking about early medieval geographical perceptions. Perhaps tellingly, those who employ the concept of verbal maps spend a good deal of time on their visual counterparts, and while *mappaemundi* are indeed fascinating objects, there is no evidence that any were produced or even seen in England between 600 and 900.³⁷ Consequently, this study takes a largely textual approach to Anglo-Saxon geographical understanding.

Studying these topics in the ninth century is not without its difficulties for, as outlined above, ecclesiastical institutions – the guardians of literate culture in the eighth century – were under pressure from lay lords and vikings, and there was a marked decline in the composition and copying of Latin texts and in Latinity itself. Consequently, few literary texts were composed in the first three quarters of the ninth century. When literate learning re-emerges in the reign of Alfred, it is in a profoundly different form to the Latinate monastic culture of the earlier period, consisting of vernacular translations aimed

³⁶ Howe, ‘An angle’, 4-7; and also idem, *Writing the Map*, pp. 1-25 and *passim*; the notion is also employed by Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*, pp. ix-32, and A. Hiatt, ‘Mapping the ends of empire’, in *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures*, eds. A. Kabir and D. Williams (Cambridge, 2005), 48-76.

³⁷ *Mappaemundi* have been well studied, see particularly J. Harley and D. Woodward (eds.), *The History of Cartography Volume I: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 283-343; and E. Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed their World* (London, 1997), pp. 1-77.

at a lay audience.³⁸ In its analysis of Anglo-Saxon historical and geographical thought, this thesis dedicates the bulk of its analysis to these late-ninth-century vernacular texts. Yet it also aims to avoid treating these texts in isolation, instead situating them in a discussion of the eighth and early-ninth century background. As a result, it not only explores longer term trends in how Rome was imagined, but also seeks to achieve a more informed basis for understanding Alfredian texts, and how they drew on and departed from earlier ideas.

Structure of this thesis

In exploring the role of Rome in ninth-century England, this thesis employs a thematic approach. While a purely chronological structure would be illuminating, analysing the material in terms of predominant themes allows a clearer delineation of the ways in which Rome could influence, and be imagined in, Anglo-Saxon England. It also makes it easier to assess long term trends, and to deal with the unevenness in the sources of the period. Over the course of five chapters, this thesis examines the issue of direct Anglo-Roman contact first, and then has two chapters investigating the role of Rome and the papacy in religion and in kingship. Following this, a pair of more cultural historical chapters consider the place of Rome in Anglo-Saxon ideas about their past and about their geographical location in the wider world. It is hoped that this approach has a complementary logic, whereby each chapter builds on the analysis of its predecessor,

³⁸ See D. Whitelock, 'The prose of Alfred's reign', in *Continuations and Beginnings*, ed. E. Stanley (London, 1966), pp. 67-103; and R. Abels, *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Harlow, 1998), 220-43.

moving from the most immediate to the most imaginative aspects of Anglo-Roman history. In this way, it endeavours to appreciate fully the place of Rome in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England, the different roles it could play, and the various ways in which it was imagined.

Chapter one, then, examines the extent and nature of contact and communication between ninth-century England and Rome. Rarely an object of study in itself, travel was one of the most important and immediate ways in which Rome featured in Anglo-Saxon life and lay at the base of all wider interactions and influences. In order to gain as complete a picture as possible of ninth-century Anglo-Roman travel, the chapter begins by investigating directly attested journeys between England and Rome and the reasons they were recorded, before broadening this picture by exploring journeys that can be accurately inferred from the historical record and by looking at less precise and anecdotal evidence for contact. Compared with the eighth century, surviving Anglo-papal correspondence is relatively abundant for the ninth, and the next part of the chapter considers these documents, looking at when letters were sent and why. It also attempts to reconstruct from the surviving letters and from other sources a more comprehensive picture of ninth-century correspondence, asking whether these letters represent most of what was once written, or merely a fragment of a more extensive but now lost correspondence. A final section looks at the evidence for Anglo-Saxons in ninth-century Rome and particularly the English quarter known as the *Schola Saxonum* to see what this adds to the insular sources. Appendices provide a list of travellers to Rome and of Anglo-papal letters and privileges, lost and surviving. Overall, this chapter looks for patterns in contact and what they tell us about the connectedness of England and Rome in the ninth century, and, in this sense, it lays the groundwork for the rest of the thesis.

Chapter two investigates the place of Rome in Anglo-Saxon religious life. In the first two centuries of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England, churchmen developed an ecclesiology which placed the customs, saints, and practices of Rome at the heart of its devotional practice, as well as emphasising the importance of Rome as the religious centre of the west. As we have seen, the extent to which this continued into and across the ninth century is unclear, not least because of the difficulties of studying a church subject to sustained attack for much of the century. Looking first at papal interaction with the episcopate, this chapter asks whether the ‘routine intercourse’ observed by Levison in the seventh and eighth centuries continued across the ninth. It also explores the other instances of papal involvement in Anglo-Saxon affairs which occurred in this period, to see if Rome was playing different roles in the Anglo-Saxon church. The second half of the chapter examines the less formal sphere of religious culture. With no ecclesiastical literature comparable to that of the preceding centuries to analyse, it focuses on the material culture of religious devotion and on the cult of saints. In doing so, the chapter looks at manuscript decoration, sculpture, church architecture and dedications, and the treatment of relics to see whether these areas reflect any distinctly Roman influences, before exploring evidence for devotion to Roman saints in the ninth century, making use of a range of sources including the *Old English Martyrology*. Ultimately, the chapter aims to gain a broad understanding of the impact of Rome on religious life in this turbulent century and of continuities and disruptions across the period.

The third chapter explores the role of Rome and its popes in the exercise of power and construction of royal authority in England. The eighth century had seen the scale and intensity of kingship increase, and closer ties forged between powerful Anglo-Saxon kings, popes and Charlemagne (768-814). Against this background, the chapter starts by considering the direct papal involvement in Anglo-Saxon politics in the reign of

Coenwulf of Mercia, a king who was able to obtain papal support in his conflicts with the southern archiepiscopate. Such papal involvement is also apparent in the first of a series of royal journeys to Rome, analysed in the second part of this chapter, when Pope Leo III (795-816) and Charlemagne took a remarkable interest in the fate of the exiled Northumbrian king Eardwulf (796-806, 808-?). The chapter goes on to examine later royal visits to Rome, especially those of the West-Saxon king Æthelwulf in 855 (839-58) and his infant son Alfred in 853, also looking at how these visits were subsequently presented to an insular audience in the 890s. In a final section, it explores the issue of royal payments to Rome. These have previously been seen in terms of the development of Peter's Pence but, placed in their contemporary context, they provide fascinating evidence of how kings thought Rome could help with the burdens of rulership.

The fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis move away from the more tangible subject matter of the preceding chapters to explore the place of Rome in Anglo-Saxon ideas about their location in Christian time and space. Chapter four considers the role of Rome in Anglo-Saxon visions of the past, concentrating less on what Anglo-Saxons 'knew', although an appreciation of this is important, and more on how they imagined the Roman past and linked their own to it in historical texts and other writings. A first section examines perceptions of the Roman past before the reign of Alfred, focussing on Bede's historical thought and its impact on the early ninth century, but also considers other ideas about Rome and its links to Britain. The second part of the chapter focuses upon the texts produced in the reign of Alfred, examining first the appearances of Roman and Anglo-Roman history in the vernacular translations and then exploring the texts composed afresh in this period. It asks how the Roman past was portrayed and used, and whether Alfred and his assistants located their own past in wider Rome-centric historical narratives.

The final, fifth chapter of this thesis explores how the Anglo-Saxons conceived their geographical relationship to Rome in the ninth century. Recently, scholars have begun to investigate the Anglo-Saxons' sense of space and their geographical perceptions, considering how they received and interpreted classical and late antique geographical knowledge which placed them on edge of the world. Much of this work is based on the assumption that the Anglo-Saxons cannot have felt marginal, and looks for ways in which they escaped this location. This chapter eschews such preliminary assumptions, aiming to understand the parameters of Anglo-Saxon geographical perceptions, where they located both Rome and themselves, and whether this changed across the ninth century. To this effect, a first section examines the classical and Christian thought inherited by the Anglo-Saxons, and how this knowledge was interpreted and redeployed before the late ninth century. Following this, the chapter goes on to survey the 'international' contacts in Alfred's reign, asking whether these were indicative of a curiosity about the wider world. It then finishes by analysing the geographical dimension in the texts composed and translated in this period and particularly the material in the *Old English Orosius*, to see if its reworking of the original's geographical passages reflects developments in the court.

By focussing on the ninth century, this thesis seeks to redress the historiographical imbalance between religion and culture on the one hand, and politics on the other, to gain a thorough appreciation of the role of Rome in these various fields of experience. Moreover, through looking at the part played by the city – both as a place and an idea – across the century, it aims to understand the nature of this difficult and dynamic period, identifying continuities and discontinuities. Yet it is also, by grounding the analysis in an understanding of seventh- and eighth-century Anglo-Roman history, able to assess longer-term continuities from the earlier period and whether they shaped ninth-century

thinking about, and interaction with, Rome. It is hoped that this study will contribute to a better understanding of external influences and ideas on Anglo-Saxon England – beyond the Frankish connections which have dominated previous analyses – and, by extension, of how Rome interacted with, and was perceived in, other areas of early medieval Europe. Beyond this, it also aims to add to our knowledge about Anglo-Saxon travel and communication, about the church and religious culture, about politics and ideology, and about historical and geographical thought, as well as how the Anglo-Saxons interpreted their Romano-Christian heritage. Lastly, I hope this thesis will further understanding of the ninth century, a difficult and dynamic period to be sure, but one that deserves to be considered in its entirety and, in religious and cultural terms, to be more than a comma between the early and late Anglo-Saxon periods.

Chapter 1

Contact and Communication

By the start of the ninth century, the Anglo-Saxons had been in direct contact with the city of Rome and its bishops for over two hundred years, the last 150 of which had seen them travelling directly between Britain and Rome. From the first journey of Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid in 653, the volume of this travel accelerated so fast that Bede thought the end of the first quarter of the eighth century stood out from the other periods of universal history as a time when ‘many of the English, both nobles and commoners, men and women, leaders and people in private life, were wont to go from Britain to Rome, inspired by divine love.’³⁹ Bede’s statement, echoed in the final book of his *Historia ecclesiastica*, has helped shape the historical commonplace that in the eighth century ‘inexhaustible streams’ of travellers bridged the gap between England and Rome, carrying – among other things – letters, books, and pious intentions.⁴⁰ Such an impression is confirmed in the writings of other eighth-century churchmen, such as Boniface, whose surviving letter-collection allows us a glimpse of a monastic world in which visiting Rome was a prominent concern. He famously wrote that the ‘frequent journeys’ of religious Anglo-Saxon women to Rome left many dead and few with virtue,

³⁹ *DTR*, 66, 534 p. 236.

⁴⁰ H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1972), p. 12; Bede’s well-known statement is at *HE*, v.7; see also the statements relating to earlier journeys to Francia and Ireland at *HE*, iii.8, iii.27. There are two lists of eighth-century travellers, W. Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims to Rome and the Schola Saxonum* (Fribourg, 1937), pp. 126-7; and S. Matthews, *The Road to Rome: Travel and travellers between England and Italy in the Anglo-Saxon centuries* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 63-65, who expands Moore’s list and, despite some obvious errors, provides a useful guide.

such that there was scarcely a town between England and Rome without its own complement of English adulteresses and harlots.⁴¹

Emerging from a background where Anglo-Roman travel was commonplace, the history of ninth-century contact between England and Rome remains largely unwritten.

Historians tend to focus their attentions upon the immediate contexts and aftermaths of journeys and letters; rarely have contact and communication been objects of study in themselves.⁴² Yet direct Anglo-Roman contact was one of the most immediate, and most significant, ways in which Rome featured in Anglo-Saxon life, and studying it is a first step to understanding the place of Rome in the Anglo-Saxon world. An appreciation of contacts and communication will also help us approach enquiries about the role of Rome in other aspects of Anglo-Saxon England. This chapter aims to understand the ‘connectedness’ of England and Rome in the ninth century, the extent and vitality of contacts, and whether there are any discernible patterns. In doing so, it not only gives an overview of particular groups of sources and instances of contact, but also lays the groundwork for the rest of the project.

Journeys lie at the heart of all instances of Anglo-Roman contact and communication, and this chapter begins by investigating who went to Rome and why. It goes on to examine the nature and frequency of ninth-century correspondence between England and the papacy, before finally investigating the evidence for Anglo-Saxons in Rome, in order to appreciate what impression they left on the city and the extent of contacts attested only in Roman sources.

⁴¹ Boniface, *Epistolae*, ed. M. Tangl, in *Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, MGH Epp. Sel. I (Berlin, 1916), no. 78; trans. E. Emerton, in *The Letters of Saint Boniface* (New York, 1940), no. 62; and see B. Yorke, ‘The Bonifacian mission and female religious in Wessex’, *Early Medieval Europe* 7.2 (1998), 145-72, particularly 148-53, on the concerns with pilgrimage in Boniface’s letters to religious women.

⁴² The recent work of Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change* (Woodbridge, 1998); and Matthews, *Road to Rome*, goes some way to remedying this situation.

Journeys to and from Rome

In the early medieval period, journeys were the life-blood of all forms of contact and connection. Lacking other means of communication, all movements of goods and ideas necessarily presupposed the movement of people to convey them. I have subdivided the study of ninth-century journeys into three categories, each of which reflects the nature of the evidence about them. The first category relates to attested journeys, those to which the sources make direct reference, while the second are assumed journeys, expeditions to or from Rome which can be accurately inferred from the sources in, for example, the sending of a letter. My third category is simply entitled ‘contact’, and consists of material evidence, relevant later sources, and general or unspecific evidence which contribute to the overall picture of connectedness without attesting to specific journeys. Taken together, these various layers will form as complete a picture as possible of direct contact between England and Rome. A list of travellers to and from Rome is provided in appendix one and should be read in conjunction with this section.⁴³

Attested Journeys

In 804 at the synod of *Aclea*, Æthelric, son of Æthelmund, divided his inheritance among a number of minsters and his mother, and made provision for the security of her

⁴³ Matthews, *Road to Rome*, pp. 66-7, offers a provisional attempt to list ninth-century travellers to Rome, but contains many errors and omissions of detail.

inheritance against the Berkeley people (*Berclinga*).⁴⁴ The dispositive section of this charter is preceded by a narrative proem which relates how the land was acquired, booked, and – for a period – entrusted to others while its owner ‘sought St Peter and St Paul’ for his soul’s benefit.⁴⁵ If we accept that the charter’s dating clause is accurate and that the council of *Clofesho* where the land was originally booked met in 798, then a date of around 800 for this pilgrimage to Rome – for that is what it undoubtedly was – would seem correct.⁴⁶ With Æthelric, therefore, we have the first recorded instance of an Anglo-Saxon journeying to Rome and back in the ninth century.

The journeys which followed Æthelric’s pilgrimage form the first of three groups of Anglo-Roman travellers in the ninth century. Rather than consisting of lay pilgrims, this first group was characterised by the involvement of high-status individuals and by their political motivations. In 801, shortly after Æthelric’s journey, a party travelled to Rome led by Archbishop Æthelheard of Canterbury (792-805), who was accompanied by two bishops and two laymen of thegnly rank.⁴⁷ This well-attested expedition was part of a joint effort by the archbishop and the Mercian king Coenwulf (796-821) to obtain papal permission for a reversion of the southern episcopate to its earlier structure, following the elevation of Lichfield to metropolitan status in the reign of Offa.⁴⁸ 814 saw another archiepiscopal visit to Rome, when Æthelheard’s successor Wulfred travelled there: a journey that is interpreted in terms of his subsequent attack on the lay-lordship of

⁴⁴ See Appendix 1:1, where further details and source references are given; see also S 1433; trans. *EHD* 84. See P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 174-6, on the minsters and people involved; and see C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils, c. 650-850* (Leicester, 1995), pp. 67-71, 309-11 on the synod and *Aclea*; and P. Wormald, ‘Charters, law and the settlement of disputes in Anglo-Saxon England’, in *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. W. Davies and P. Fouracre (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 152-7, on the dispute.

⁴⁵ Appendix 1:1.

⁴⁶ The attempts of Wormald, ‘Settlement of disputes’, n.26; and Cubitt, *Church Councils*, p. 281; to shift the date of the *Clofesho* synod at which the land was originally given back from 798 to 804 and the *Aclea* synod to around 807 seem unnecessary if we remember that the land in question was given to Æthelric by *propinqui* (kinsmen) not his father, and not necessarily on the latter’s death in 802.

⁴⁷ Appendix 1:2-6.

⁴⁸ On which, see chapter two, pp. 78-80.

minsters in 816, for which he may have been seeking papal approval from Leo III.⁴⁹ Indeed, the motives behind most of these expeditions involved obtaining papal and, before 814, imperial support for various causes. This was apparent when, in 808, the deposed Northumbrian king Eardwulf journeyed to Charlemagne's court and then to Rome, returning later that year accompanied by papal and imperial legates who ensured he was safely returned to Northumbria.⁵⁰ Generally, these journeys arose from cooperation and conflict between the leading archiepiscopal and royal powers typical of the later Mercian supremacy. In fact, it was through documentation promulgated at the frequent supra-regional assemblies which were characteristic of this interaction, that Æthelric's pilgrimage originally came to light and that, in 824, a papal messenger (*praeco*) named Nothelm witnessed a document from a similar meeting.⁵¹

Whereas this first group of travellers journeyed to Rome between 800 and 825, the second distinct group travelled to Rome in the middle fifty years of the ninth century, and can be largely described as both royal and West-Saxon.⁵² King Æthelwulf of Wessex (839-58) orchestrated much of this, sending his infant son Alfred to Rome in 853 and journeying to Rome himself in 855 'with a multitude of people'.⁵³ Whilst these are undoubtedly the two most renowned instances of Anglo-Roman travel in the whole century, it must be remembered that earlier, in 839, the *Annals of St Bertin* record that 'the king of the English (*rex Anglorum*) sent envoys...to ask the Emperor to grant him permission to travel through Francia on his way to Rome on pilgrimage.'⁵⁴ This king was almost certainly Æthelwulf's father and predecessor Ecgberht (802-39), and although he

⁴⁹ Appendix 1, 11-12; and see *EHCC*, pp. 133-4, 180-97.

⁵⁰ Appendix 1:7-10.

⁵¹ Appendix 1:13.

⁵² Matthews, *Road to Rome*, p. 66, dates the journey of an anonymous noble who sought a cure for blindness in Rome to c.850. First mentioned in Lantfred, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, 16, ed. and trans. M. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 298-9, around 972-4x5, this was actually a posthumous miracle and thus occurred between c.862x7 and 971.

⁵³ Appendix 1:15-20.

⁵⁴ Appendix 1:14.

was unable to make the journey himself, dying shortly after securing permission, his son subsequently made the trip ‘with great state’, taking the youngest æthelings with him.⁵⁵ Later, in 874, having been driven from his kingdom by the ‘great heathen army’, the Mercian king Burgred (852-74), a long-time West-Saxon ally, retired to Rome where he died and was buried.⁵⁶ Although Burgred’s journey was prompted by force, it shows that even at the height of the conflict with the vikings Rome was still a feasible destination, perhaps now one of sanctuary as well as pilgrimage.

The final and most homogenous group all made their way to Rome in the penultimate decade of the ninth century. Again, these journeys have a somewhat royal and West-Saxon character, if not in terms of their participants – who were Southumbrian ealdormen and churchmen – but in terms of motivation. Of the five journeys made, four were by men carrying ‘the alms of King Alfred and the West-Saxons’ to Rome, and the fifth was by couriers carrying letters in lieu of any ‘expedition’ to Rome that year.⁵⁷ It seems that Pope Marinus’s gift of wood from the true cross to Alfred in 883 initiated this exchange, the annal for that year then recording Sighelm and Æthelstan’s journey to Rome to deliver the alms ‘which Alfred had promised thither’.⁵⁸ Similar expeditions were then made in 887, 888, and 890, with 889 being the year of the abortive trip. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* provides the only evidence of these journeys, which represent regularized and sustained Anglo-Roman contact during the reconstruction phase of Alfred’s rule.⁵⁹

It is immediately apparent that the frequency of directly attested Anglo-Roman travel across the ninth century fits with the more general pattern of ninth-century evidence. The first quarter of the century saw things continue much as they had in the eighth, with a

⁵⁵ On the identification with Ecgberht, see *CC*, pp. 218-24; for Æthelwulf and his sons, appendix 1:16-18.

⁵⁶ Appendix 1:21, and see 22-30; see *ASC*, 866-78 for the ‘great heathen army’.

⁵⁷ Appendix 1:31-7.

⁵⁸ *ASC*, 883 BC; appendix 1:31-2.

⁵⁹ *ASC*, 887-90.

large group of travellers making their journeys for reasons connected with the Anglo-Saxon and continental politics of the time. In fact, after an apparent decline in travel to Rome beginning c.830, this frequency of attested travel was not matched until the 880s, when – in a profoundly changed political landscape – Alfred regularly sent retainers to Rome bearing alms. Between 825 and 875 – years from which few non-diplomatic texts survive – there is little evidence of Anglo-Roman travel, although it is remarkable that contact continued when the viking depredations were at their worst, albeit contact of an irregular and wholly royal nature.⁶⁰ It is also worth noting that attested ninth-century travellers almost always went from Britain to Rome and generally returned. There were exceptions, such as Burgred’s one-way trip and that of the papal legate Aldulf who journeyed from Rome to England on more than one occasion, but these are a clear minority.⁶¹ Similarly notable is the homogeneity of the various groups of travellers, especially the second with its all-royal protagonists and the third with all travellers acting on behalf of King Alfred. The ninth century also stands out from the eighth, with its greater variety of travellers, for the consistently high-status nature of Anglo-Roman travel, in terms of either the travellers themselves or the motivations behind their journeys.⁶²

The uniformly high status of attested travel to Rome deserves further comment; were such journeys the mainstay of Anglo-Roman travel, or were they the only ones likely to be recorded? An examination of two examples from charters may prove instructive here. The first, Æthelric’s pilgrimage, was not strictly low-status; Æthelric was a wealthy layman whose father had been ealdorman of the Hwicce, although there is no evidence

⁶⁰ S. Coupland, ‘The vikings in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England to 911’, in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume II, c.700-900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 190-201.

⁶¹ Appendix 1:7, 10, 13, 21.

⁶² See the lists of eighth-century travellers in Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims*, pp. 126-7; and Matthews, *Road to Rome*, pp. 63-65; also *ECEC*, pp. 36-44; and B. Colgrave, ‘Pilgrimages to Rome in the seventh and eighth centuries’, in *Studies in Language, Literature, and Culture of the Middle Ages and Later*, eds. E. Bagby Atwood and A. Hill (Austin, TX, 1969), pp. 156-72.

that he possessed equivalent rank to that of his father under Offa.⁶³ More importantly, his journey was a private pilgrimage, not connected to any wider royal and ecclesiastical affairs of the time. The second example is that of Nothelm, a papal messenger who witnessed the resolution of a land-dispute at a council held at *Clofesho* in 824 and attended by the Mercian king Beornwulf and Archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury.⁶⁴ It is impossible to be sure of Nothelm's business, but his position in the witness list among a group of men who may represent the royal household, could indicate that he was carrying information from the newly-elected pope to the king.⁶⁵ Again, one might hesitate to describe this contact as low-status, but it does appear to be part of a lower-level contact between popes and Anglo-Saxon kings which was considered unremarkable and less likely to be recorded. These examples suggest that not all ninth-century travel to Rome was by royalty or concerned with high politics; rather, lower-level and private journeys did occur. Moreover, evidence of both journeys survives by virtue of the fact they are recorded in grants of land to a major ecclesiastical community whose archive largely survived the viking raids of the ninth century and later depredations.⁶⁶ Given the significant disruption to most religious communities in the middle years of the ninth century, the possibility of the large-scale loss of records concerning lower-level journeys to Rome is a real one.

Perhaps the single most important source for Anglo-Roman contact, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* alludes to many of the major ninth-century Anglo-Roman expeditions, even if one requires other sources – often letters and continental annals – to gain greater

⁶³ Appendix 1:1; on Æthelric's father, Æthelmund, see S 58, S139, S148, S153, ASC, 802; and Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 38-9, 174-6.

⁶⁴ Appendix 1:13.

⁶⁵ S1433; this group included Bynna 'frater regis', see also S1436 and S1437, and Bola, termed 'pedisecus' in S1436 and S1434, and the priest Piot, who attests many other charters including S1433, S1436; this 'court' group would repay further study.

⁶⁶ That community was Worcester; on ninth-century ecclesiastical continuity, see J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 291-323, esp. 306-8.

understanding of the bare facts contained therein.⁶⁷ Indeed, except for the abortive pilgrimage of 839, the *Chronicle* records all the journeys of the second and third groups of travellers, and provides the sole witness to the third group.⁶⁸ Yet, does this general agreement between the *Chronicle* and the full record of travellers mean that it provides a broadly accurate testimony to the limited and largely royal nature of ninth-century travel? By examining the more varied first group of travellers we can gain a greater understanding of what the *Chronicle* was likely to record, an illustrative example being the 801 expedition to Rome, for which the *Chronicle* simply states that ‘Archbishop Æthelheard and Cyneberht, bishop of the West Saxons, went to Rome.’⁶⁹ A series of letters written by Alcuin sheds more light on the journey itself. In a letter to Charlemagne written in 801, Alcuin revealed that Ceolmund, a former thegn of Offa, and Torctmund, a loyal retainer of the murdered Northumbrian king Æthelred I, were travelling with Æthelheard.⁷⁰ He did not mention Cyneberht. Writing to Archbishop Eanbald II of York, he referred to ‘our friends Ceolmund and Torctmund’ after mentioning that ‘two other bishops’, whom he did not name, were travelling with Æthelheard.⁷¹ The striking dissonance between the two accounts reveals that Alcuin’s principal concerns were Northumbrian and Mercian-archiepiscopal affairs, and that these were less likely to be recorded by a chronicler most concerned with West-Saxon affairs. Ultimately, the *Chronicle* may give a fairly complete account of high-status, West-Saxon travel to Rome in the ninth century, but it cannot be said to do the same for the other kingdoms, or for lower-level or private travel. These did occur, but our knowledge of

⁶⁷ Of all attested journeys, the ASC mentions those in 801, (808-9 in MS DE only), 814-5, 853, 855-6, 874, 883-90, it does not mention Æthelric c.800, Nothelm in 824, and the abortive 839 journey, but is the only source for 814-5 and 883-90.

⁶⁸ Appendix 1:14-37, although the *Liber Vitae of Brescia* records some probable travellers who were not mentioned in the ASC but accompanied expeditions recorded therein, see appendix 1:17, 19-20, 22-30. Burgred was not West Saxon, but was closely involved with the West-Saxon royal house.

⁶⁹ ASC, 801; appendix 1:2-3.

⁷⁰ Appendix 1:5-6.

⁷¹ Appendix 1:3-6.

them is based on other documents such as charters and letters which were less likely to survive. Consequently, we are left with an impression of directly-attested travel as high-status and official, in that it concerned the affairs of church and kingdoms. Still, many more people travelled to Rome in the ninth century than those to whom the historical record directly attests, and it is with those people that the rest of this section is concerned.

Assumed Journeys

By assumed journeys, I mean journeys between Britain and Rome for which no direct evidence survives, but which we can reasonably assume from other evidence to have occurred. The most obvious example is that of an Anglo-papal letter: while the journey of the courier who carried it is rarely visible, the letter's existence generally indicates that a journey took place.⁷² Not all ninth-century letters were carried by a courier or messenger. For example, when Archbishop Æthelheard travelled to Rome in 801, he or a member of his party was carrying at least two letters from King Coenwulf to Leo III, and on his return he seems to have brought Leo's reply, as well as two papal decrees.⁷³ At the same time, we must avoid assuming that whenever a directly attested journey is in chronologically close proximity to a letter, the traveller must have carried the letter. Matthews proposes that Abbot Beornhelm – who took alms to Rome in 890 – must also have taken the letter of Plegmund to which Formosus refers in his letter to all the bishops of England.⁷⁴ Considering that Formosus was not elected pope until 891, and that neither letter can be more closely dated than to the parameters of Formosus' pontificate (891-6),

⁷² Appendix 1:35-6, provides a rare example of a courier journey being recorded in other sources.

⁷³ On these letters, see Appendix 2:5-9; the second part of this chapter examines ninth-century Anglo-papal correspondence in full.

⁷⁴ Matthews, *Road to Rome*, pp. 15; these letters are appendix 2:23-4.

it does not follow that Beornhelm carried Plegmund's letter. While less apparent than directly attested travel, assumed journeys add another layer to the picture of the connectedness of Anglo-Saxon England and Rome.

From the twenty identifiable Anglo-papal letters and privileges sent in the ninth century, fifteen of them were probably carried by couriers or messengers, or by travellers who are otherwise invisible in the historical record. Four of these courier journeys were directly attested and so examined above, leaving us with eleven additional journeys.⁷⁵ Two of these journeys fall in the 810s, enhancing the impression that the first quarter of the ninth century was one of frequent contact with Rome.⁷⁶ We only have evidence of one courier-journey between 825 and 870, when Leo IV sent a (now fragmentary) letter to Archbishop Ceolnoth of Canterbury (833-70) and King Berhtwulf of Mercia (840-c.852) in 851.⁷⁷ The real impact of considering courier-journeys to Rome comes in the final thirty years of the ninth century, in which eight of these trips fall. Plegmund's lost letter to Formosus and the pope's letter to all the English bishops show that the frequent Anglo-papal contact of the 880s was carried into the mid 890s.⁷⁸ Yet it is the 870s that are most illuminated by these assumed journeys, with five occurring between 873 and 878.⁷⁹ This was a decade which saw the most protracted fighting against the vikings, who overran East-Anglia, Northumbria and Mercia and invaded Wessex numerous times, nearly conquering it 878.⁸⁰ That archbishops and kings were able to remain in contact with the pope in such unsettled times points to the robust and regular nature of Anglo-papal

⁷⁵ Appendix 1:7, carried appendix 2:10; appendix 1:8 carried appendix 2:11; and appendix 1:35-6 carried appendix 2:22.

⁷⁶ Appendix 2:12-3.

⁷⁷ Appendix 2:14.

⁷⁸ Appendix 2:23-4; also, in 883 couriers carried Marinus's gift of a piece of the true cross as well as a letter (appendix 2:21) to Alfred.

⁷⁹ Appendix 2:16-20. It is possible that these five courier-journeys should be reduced to three, as on two occasions one set of couriers may have carried two letters.

⁸⁰ ASC, 866-79; and see R. Abels, 'Alfred the Great, the *micel hæðen here* and the viking threat', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 265-79.

relations, and shows the whole period from Alfred's accession to his death to be one of considerable connectedness.

Another group of assumed journeys relate to the acquisition of the *pallium*, a liturgical vestment which was given to each archbishop by the reigning pope as a symbol of his office.⁸¹ As metropolitan bishops were unable to exercise their full authority until it had been granted, and as attainment of the *pallium* required 'at least the sending of an envoy and of a petition to Rome', we can reasonably assume that every archiepiscopal election was followed by a journey to Rome to collect the pall.⁸² We might also assume that it was normal practice for the envoy to return with the *pallium*, as Alcuin did in 780-1 when collecting the *pallium* for the newly-elected Archbishop Eanbald I of York (779/80-796).⁸³ Two ninth-century examples from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* also show a gap of at least a year between the archiepiscopal election and the receipt of the *pallium*.⁸⁴ A *pallium*-gathering expedition thus probably involved one set of envoys travelling both legs, broken by a stay in Rome while procedural work was carried out.

In the ninth century, seven archbishops were elected and consecrated, four in Canterbury and three in York.⁸⁵ It is recorded that Wulfred and Ceolnoth in Canterbury and Wulphere in York received their *pallia*.⁸⁶ While there is no record for the other four, it seems reasonable to suppose that they did petition for and obtain their *pallia*. Indeed, we should only assume no *pallium* was received if there is evidence to that effect and,

⁸¹ On the development of the *pallium*, see *ECEC*, pp. 18-22; see also chapter two, pp. 75-7.

⁸² *ECEC*, p. 21.

⁸³ *Vita Alcuini*, ch. ix, ed. W. Arndt, MGH SS 15.1 (Hanover, 1887), 190, written at Ferrières between 821-9; on which see D. Bullough *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 21-2, and pp. 333-6 on Alcuin's journey to Rome.

⁸⁴ They are Wulfred's election and receipt of pallium, *ASC*, 805-6; and that of Ceolnoth, *ASC*, 833-4.

⁸⁵ Excluding the short-lived archiepiscopate of Suithred (possibly contested by Feologild), on which see *EHCC*, pp. 142-3.

⁸⁶ On Wulphere's receipt of the *pallium*, see the twelfth-century *Historia regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham which has contemporary materials at its core. *Historia regum*, 67, ed. T. Arnold, *Symeonis Monachis Opera Omnia*, (2 vols., London, 1885), II, 71; on this text, see *CC*, 116-26.

lacking this, can therefore add seven more return journeys to our picture of ninth-century Anglo-Roman travel. Two such journeys occurred in the first decade, with Wulfred receiving his *pallium* in 806 and Wulfsige of York receiving his sometime after 808, although the meagre record of Northumbrian history in this period makes precision impossible.⁸⁷ Wulfhere received his *pallium* in 854, apparently the last archbishop of York to do so in this century. Two Canterbury-to-Rome expeditions date to the last thirty years of the century, when someone would have been dispatched to collect Æthelred's *pallium* shortly after his election in 870, and to collect Plegmund's around 890.⁸⁸ As with the courier-journeys, these instances of assumed contact reinforce the impression that the first quarter of the ninth century and the 850s saw frequent travel, also showing that the Southumbrian metropolitan was in contact with Rome right at the start of the 870s. They also shift our understanding of the connectedness of Anglo-Saxon England and Rome; in this case for the 830s. To this decade we can now add two journeys, one to fetch Ceolnoth's *pallium* in 833-4, and another to fetch that of Archbishop Wigmund of York after his election c.836.⁸⁹ Although these trips do not necessarily represent a continuity of the frequent contacts of the first quarter of the ninth century, they do show that both archbishops remained in touch with the papal centre in this decade.

As hoped, then, this examination of assumed journeys adds another layer to the picture of travellers to and from Rome in the ninth century. In part, this layer reinforces the patterns of attested contact, as many of the assumed journeys occurred at times when other high-status journeys were taking place, as in the first quarter of the century. Yet, others travelled at times when there was little directly-attested contact, for example those who

⁸⁷ See D. Kirby, 'Northumbria in the ninth century', in *Coinage in Ninth-Century Northumbria*, ed. D. Metcalf (1987), pp. 20-1; on the problems with the archiepiscopal chronology; Eanbald II c.808 probably left Northumbria on the return of his opponent Eardwulf in 808, leading to Wulfsige's election.

⁸⁸ ASC, 870, notes Ceolnoth's death, ASC, 888 notes Æthelred's death; on the elections of Æthelred and Plegmund, see *EHCC*, pp. 149-50, 152-3.

⁸⁹ ASC, 833-4; Wigmund's election around 836 is suggested by *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, 836, ed. and trans. R. Darlington, P. McGurk, and J. Bray (2 vols., Oxford, 1995), I, 254-5.

fetched *pallia* in the 830s and those couriers who, in the 870s, facilitated Anglo-papal communication in a decade of instability and turmoil. These assumed journeys represent a lower-level and consequently less visible form of Anglo-Roman travel, but they were still made at the behest of royal, archiepiscopal, and papal authorities. They thus do little to change the impression that kings and archbishops dominate the record of ninth-century Anglo-Roman travel.

Contact

In an important article on Anglo-Roman travel, Simon Keynes argued that:

The paths leading from England...to Rome, would have been well-trodden in the eighth and ninth centuries, as at other times, by men on official business of church and state, by merchants in search of markets, by exiles and malcontents in search of vindication, by persons bearing alms for the shrine of the apostles, and, of course, by a constant stream of pilgrims.⁹⁰

So far we have seen many ninth-century travellers who fit these categories, although the record is dominated by those on what Keynes calls ‘official business’.⁹¹ There were also ‘exiles and malcontents’, predominantly royal ones such as Eardwulf and Burgred, but also others like Torctmund.⁹² Furthermore, a number of lower-level journeys were made on behalf of senior clerics or kings and related to ‘official business’. Thus far, then, the impression of Anglo-Roman travel is one of high status and official journeys, and Keynes’ merchants and ‘constant stream of pilgrims’ are notable only for their absence from the historical record. Of course, records of such ‘official’ travel are more likely to

⁹⁰ S. Keynes, ‘Anglo-Saxon entries in the *Liber Vitae* of Brescia’, in *Alfred the Wise*, ed. J. Roberts, J. Nelson and M. Godden (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 99, and see also p. 116.

⁹¹ Appendix 1:31-7.

⁹² Appendix 1:5-6, 9, 21-2.

survive, especially when relating to West-Saxon kings. To ascertain whether there was a barely-visible current of lower status or private travellers, I will now examine evidence that relates to ‘contact’, but which neither attests to specific journeys, nor allows us to reliably infer that such journeys did take place.

Eighth-century evidence points to a constant traffic of low-level private journeys to Rome, but whether these continued into the ninth century is uncertain. The famous statements by Bede and Boniface, quoted at the start of this chapter, indicate that the first half of the eighth century saw vast Anglo-Saxon pilgrimage to Rome. On the continent, the decrees of Frankish councils from the mid-eighth to the first quarter of the ninth century sought to regulate the practice of pilgrimage, attempting to ensure that genuine pilgrims received hospitality, safe passage, and exemption from tolls.⁹³ These documents suggest that a constant flow of pilgrims travelled through Carolingian territory, and a letter of Charlemagne to Offa of Mercia (757-96) shows that at least some of them were Anglo-Saxon.⁹⁴ Written in 796, Charlemagne guaranteed that genuine pilgrims ‘to the thresholds of the blessed Apostles’ could go free of molestation and tolls, but the merchants who ‘fraudulently mingled among them for the sake of commerce’ would have to pay the tolls.⁹⁵ Not only showing that Anglo-Saxon pilgrims were such a common phenomenon that merchants used them as camouflage, this letter also provides rare written evidence of mercantile activity.

Certain pieces of evidence suggest that this high volume of traders and pilgrims continued into the ninth century. For example, Alcuin (c.735-804) wrote to his pupils in Rome in 801, asking ‘why has no letter sped across the Alps by the hands of the returning

⁹³ On these capitularies, see Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, pp. 72-82.

⁹⁴ Alcuin, *Ep.*, 100; trans. *EHD*, 197; on Charlemagne’s relationship with Offa, see D. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (rev. edn, London and New York, 2000), pp. 146-8; and J. Nelson, ‘Carolingian contacts’, in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, eds. M. Brown and C. Farr (London, 2001), pp. 126-143; and *CC*, pp. 169-99.

⁹⁵ Alcuin, *Ep.*, 100; trans. 40; also trans. *EHD* 197.

Saxons to the chapel in the city of Troyes and thence by the hands of our people to the venerable shrine of Tours?’⁹⁶ If Alcuin is to be taken literally, then the route from Rome to Troyes was dominated by Anglo-Saxon travellers to such an extent that they formed a postal service – a remarkable statement of the vibrancy of this otherwise invisible travel.⁹⁷ Later, in 808, Leo III wrote to Charlemagne and thanked him for the information about the deposition of the Northumbrian king Eardwulf, but told the emperor that ‘we had already learned this through the Saxons’.⁹⁸ This is a clear reference to information carried by people travelling in a non-official capacity, and suggests that the arrival of traders and pilgrims in Rome was a regular occurrence and provided the papacy with a steady stream of news.

Alongside these private journeys, there is evidence of further higher-status contacts. The correspondence between Leo III and Coenwulf at the start of the ninth century suggests that the Mercian king honoured Offa’s promise of regular payments to Rome, albeit at a rate of 120 mancuses per annum instead of 365.⁹⁹ Even if these payments did not outlast Coenwulf’s rule, they point to annual visits to Rome made on behalf of the king across the first quarter of the century. Also, referring to the period 815-21, the document that records the resolution of the Kentish minsters dispute between Coenwulf and Wulfred reveals that the Mercian king had smeared Wulfred at the apostolic see and, as part of the reconciliation, he offered to clear the archbishop’s name there.¹⁰⁰ This example is testament both to the close connections in these years, and the fact that much more contact had taken place, something also illustrated by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 816-

⁹⁶ Alcuin, *Ep.*, 215; trans. 120, and see Matthews, *Road to Rome*, p. 16.

⁹⁷ Troyes was on the route from England to Rome, suggesting Alcuin was referring to Anglo-Saxon travellers; in 990 Archbishop Sigeric passed within 20 miles of Troyes, stopping at Blessonville, Bar-sur-Aube, Brienne, and Donnemont. See V. Ortenberg, ‘Archbishop Sigeric’s journey to Rome in 990’, *ASE* 19 (1990), 230-1.

⁹⁸ *Leonis III papae epistolae* X, ed. K. Hampe, MGH Epp. V (III) (Berlin, 1899), 2.

⁹⁹ Appendix 2:2, 4, 7; and see chapter three, pp. 162-3 for a more detailed discussion.

¹⁰⁰ S1436; and see chapter two, pp. 82-3.

7. These annals record papal elections, suggesting that knowledge of these events had been brought to England and noted down in materials later used in the composition of the *Chronicle*.¹⁰¹ The one ninth-century papal coin found in England, a joint issue of Pope Stephen IV (816-7) and Louis the Pious found at East Dean in East Sussex, may also indicate further travel in this period.¹⁰² A lead bulla of Paschal I (817-24) found in the Frome Valley is a more certain indicator of Anglo-Roman travel.¹⁰³ Such objects rarely survive, and this one perhaps indicates that others besides the Mercian king were able to obtain privileges from Paschal I.

This evidence of ‘contact’ points to a high volume of private, low-level travel, and also the more ‘official’ travel in the first quarter of the century, but whether this continued throughout the middle fifty is less clear. In his will, composed in the mid 830s, the Kentish reeve Abba stated that whoever succeeded to his property should carry his wergild of 2000 pence to ‘St Peter’.¹⁰⁴ We cannot know when and whether Abba’s wergild was conveyed to Rome, as we can also not know how many journeys were made as a result of Æthelwulf’s will of c.856-8, in which the king ‘ordered that every year a great sum of money, namely three hundred mancuses, should be taken to Rome’.¹⁰⁵ These documents do tell us that, despite increasing military activity and instability, bequests of money to Rome remained an option for well-off individuals, and that journeys were being made for such reasons. As for lower-level pilgrims and traders,

¹⁰¹ ASC, 816-7.

¹⁰² This coin is no. 2004.0044 on the Early Medieval Corpus database, see <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/> (accessed 4/08/2008); on the papal issues of this period, see P. Grierson, and M. Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage I: The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 259-266; and see A. Rovelli, ‘Coins and trade in early medieval Italy’, *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009), pp. 45-76, esp. 69-76, on the circulation of Italian coins north of the Alps.

¹⁰³ The bulla is Find ID no. HESH-ADE183 on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, see http://www.findsdatabase.org.uk/hms/pas_obj.php?typr=find&id=00140DADE2BO1BE1 (accessed 6/08/2008).

¹⁰⁴ S 1482; trans. F. Harmer, *Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1914), 2.

¹⁰⁵ Asser, ch. 16; and see chapter three, pp. 163-4.

there are no incidental references to them in the meagre epistolary record of these years. The list of popes in British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian B.vi points to some Anglo-Roman contacts in the barren years of the 860s. Copied and updated from a late-eighth-century exemplar in 805-13, the list was updated a number of times across the middle years of the century finishing with the name of Hadrian II (868-72).¹⁰⁶ We cannot be certain about how this information was transmitted or by whom, but it does indicate continued contact with Rome.

As we have already seen, the final quarter of the ninth century – particularly the 880s – saw regular journeys to Rome made on behalf of King Alfred. It may also have seen a journey made on behalf Ealdorman Alfred, whose will stipulated that his wife was to take his two wergilds to Rome.¹⁰⁷ Papal letters to England in these years are characterised by a hortatory tone, for example, John VIII exhorted Burgred to take action against fornication and, later, Formosus wrote to all the bishops of England severely admonishing them for not taking action against ‘the abominable rights of pagans’.¹⁰⁸ John VIII wrote that ‘we have heard’ of men marrying nuns and ‘their own kindred’, and Formosus had considered excommunication ‘having heard’ of the flourishing paganism in Britain, but from whom had they heard of these events? It seems most likely that, as with Leo III in 808, the popes gathered this information from Anglo-Saxons travellers to Rome, most probably from private or lower-level travellers whose journeys are otherwise invisible. Elsewhere, in a letter to Archbishop Æthelred of 877-8, John VIII reassured the metropolitan that he would not believe ‘whatever adverse things may be related to us concerning you by any man’ without investigation.¹⁰⁹ The context suggests that Alfred

¹⁰⁶ London, British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian B.vi, fol. 107v; and see D. Dumville, ‘The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists’, *ASE* 5 (1976), 24-5, 28.

¹⁰⁷ S 1508; trans. *EHD*, 97.

¹⁰⁸ Appendix 2:16, 24.

¹⁰⁹ Appendix 2:20.

may have been one of the people relating adverse things about his archbishop, yet the passage also implies that others might do so. Such papal allusions, then, suggest that Alfred's reign saw more than just couriers and alms-carriers travelling to Rome.

While these brief hints in papal letters point to an undercurrent of travellers to Rome, they are unspecific, and it is only when we turn to tenth-century texts that we find evidence that some of those late ninth-century travellers were pilgrims and traders. By prescribing that 'at a pilgrimage South [to Rome], each man [is to contribute] fivepence', the 'Exeter Guild Statutes' – which survive in a gospel-book dating to the first half of the tenth century – suggest that such journeys were common.¹¹⁰ In 921, the annalist Flodoard of Rheims records that 'many of the English set out for Rome and were killed by stones in the defiles of the Alps by the Saracens.'¹¹¹ Again in 923, Flodoard noted the slaughter of 'a large number of English' pilgrims by Saracens in the Alps, and similar notices appear in his annals until 951.¹¹² These texts point to a high volume of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims to Rome early in the tenth century and it seems reasonable to assume some continuity of practice from the ninth. The early-eleventh-century *Honorantie civitatis Papie*, which incorporates tenth-century material, outlines the *decima* tax which merchants were required to pay on crossing the Alps into Italy. It reveals that Anglo-Saxon merchants frequently protested at this imposition causing violent uproar, and so a treaty was negotiated with 'the king of the Angles and Saxons (*Rex Anglorum et Saxonum*)' whereby they were exempted from this tax for a payment of fifty pounds of silver and other items every three years.¹¹³ If McCormick's identification of Alfred as the king in

¹¹⁰ 'Exeter Guild Statutes', ed. B. Thorpe, *Diplomatarium Anglicum Ævi Saxonici* (London, 1865), p. 613; trans. EHD 137.

¹¹¹ Flodoard, *Annals*, 921, ed. P. Lauer, *Les Annales de Flodoard* (Paris, 1905), p. 5; trans. S. Fanning and B. Bachrach, *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims 919-66*, (Toronto, 2004), p. 5.

¹¹² Flodoard, *Annals*, 923, 929, 933, 939, 940, ed. Lauer, pp. 19, 44-5, 57, 74, 79; trans. Fanning and Bachrach, pp. 10, 19, 24, 32, 34.

¹¹³ *Die Honorantie civitatis papie*, 2, ed. C. Brühl and C. Violante (Cologne, 1983), p. 19; trans. R. Lopes and I. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 56-8.

question is correct, then this would point to a high volume of Anglo-Saxon merchants passing through Pavia in the late ninth century, many of whom could have gone on to Rome.¹¹⁴ Even if a later king is meant, the historical aspect of this regulation allows us to project this volume of merchants backward into the late ninth century, and before.

Ultimately, I think it is fair to argue from these texts that the period 875-900 saw Anglo-Saxon merchants and pilgrims travelling to Rome, quite possibly in large numbers.

This evidence of ‘contact’ adds much to the record of attested and assumed journeys, dominated by kings, archbishops, and those making journey on their behalf. Further journeys were made on behalf of Coenwulf, Wulfred, Æthelwulf and Alfred, but there were also travellers carrying bequests to St Peter’s, and a stream of pilgrims and merchants who might carry letters to Alcuin or provide the pope – possibly via the *Schola Saxonum* – with information on the political and religious health of Anglo-Saxon England. It is hard to say more about these lower-level, private travellers, the evidence for whom is slight. When it does exist, however, it hints at a considerable Anglo-Saxon presence on the roads to Rome. Despite this, such additions to the picture of ‘connectedness’ do little to shift its overall pattern, with the first and final quarters of the century seeing regular contact, and the middle fifty years offering much less evidence for travel to and from Rome. Whether this was due to an actual lessening in Anglo-Roman travel, or results from the nature of the sources and their survival, is an impossible question to answer. These years certainly saw an escalation of viking activity in England and on the continent which may have made travel dangerous and less desirable. Yet, as we have seen, royal journeys were made, letters carried, *pallia* collected, and bequests of money were conveyed to Rome in these years, not to mention less tangible factors such as

¹¹⁴ M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 679-80; and see N. Middleton, ‘Early medieval port customs, tolls and controls on foreign trade’, *Early Medieval Europe* 13 (2005), 324-5; on Anglo-Saxon goods in Rome, see below.

the transit of information added to the papal lists. While one may reasonably suspect that, along with attested and assumed journeys, the overall volume of lower-level travellers to Rome will have dropped in these years, it is unlikely to have ceased altogether. The paths to Rome remained ‘well trodden’.

Anglo-papal correspondence

Letters are perhaps the most important source for studying ninth-century Anglo-papal relations, which are illuminated by few other texts. Helping to flesh out the bare accounts of annals, they can also give us a sense of personality, ambition, and temperament, something rare among the idealised personalities of early medieval Europe. Letters also reveal the issues discussed by people separated by significant distance and, importantly, the terms on which that communication took place. Given their importance, it is surprising that no serious attempt has been made to re-construct and catalogue the Anglo-papal correspondence of the ninth century, or of the entire period.¹¹⁵ That is what this section will attempt – in conjunction with appendix two, a list of ninth-century Anglo-papal letters and privileges – as a first step to understanding the extent and vitality of written communication between leading figures in England and in Rome. In doing so, it will incorporate letters which, whilst not surviving, we know from direct mention or

¹¹⁵ V. Ortenberg, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Church and the papacy’, in *The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, ed. C.H. Lawrence (Stroud, 1999), pp. 52-55, gives a limited overview of all Anglo-papal correspondence. There exists a ‘Provisional List of Papal Letters and Privileges’ on the (old) *British Academy and Royal Historical Society Anglo-Saxon Charters website*, <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/England%26Rome/popes.html> (accessed 10/09/08). Provisional is the operative word as this list relies on P. Jaffé, ed., *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum ab condita ecclesia ad annum post Christum natum MCXCVIII*, revised by W. Wattenbach, S. Loewenfeld, F. Kaltenbrunner, and P. Ewald (2 vols., Leipzig, 1885-8), I, following it into many errors.

probable assumption to have existed, to gain as fuller picture as is possible of written communication between England and Rome in the ninth century.

Before the ninth century, the majority of Anglo-papal correspondence that survives does so in the works of Bede and his contemporaries. In his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede inserted many of the conversion-age letters verbatim into his text, while in the *Historia abbatum* he included correspondence relating to his monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow, as did the anonymous author of the *Vita Ceolfridi*.¹¹⁶ Stephen, author of the *Vita Wilfridi*, also inserted papal letters he deemed relevant to his subject into his text.¹¹⁷ In fact, there are few extant Anglo-papal letters from the eighth century other than those contained in such early works.¹¹⁸ At the end of the eighth century, however, there was a flurry of epistolary activity concerning the newly promoted archiepiscopal see of Lichfield. Indeed, these letters between Coenwulf of Mercia and Archbishop Æthelheard of Canterbury on the one hand, and Leo III on the other, provide the majority of our evidence about the elevation and demotion of the Mercian see.¹¹⁹ The first phase of this correspondence saw Coenwulf asking Leo to demote Lichfield hinting instead that London should be made the sole southern metropolitan as Gregory I had intended.¹²⁰ In his reply, Leo flatly rejected this suggestion, staunchly defending the actions of his papal predecessor.¹²¹ From these two letters we can also reconstruct an exchange between Æthelheard and Leo. Coenwulf's letter requested that the pope 'examine...the letter in

¹¹⁶ *HE*, i.32, ii.10-11, ii.17-18, iii.29; Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 19, ed. C. Plummer, *Beda opera historica* (2 vols., Oxford, 1896), I, 383-4; trans. D. Farmer, in *The Age of Bede*, eds. J. Webb and D. Farmer (rev. edn, London, 1983), pp. 20-8; *Vita Ceolfridi*, 30, 39, ed. C. Plummer, *Beda opera historica* (2 vols., Oxford, 1896), I, 399-404; trans. D. Farmer, in *The Age of Bede*, eds. J. Webb and D. Farmer (rev. edn, London, 1983), pp. 224-28; though see J. McClure, 'Bede and the Life of Ceolfrid', *Peritia* 3 (1984), 71-84, for the possibility of Bedan authorship.

¹¹⁷ *VW*, chs. 51, 55.

¹¹⁸ There are rare exceptions, such as the letter of Paul I to King Eadberht of Northumbria and Archbishop Egbert of York, ed. HS, III, 394-6, trans. *EHD* 184.

¹¹⁹ These letters are Appendix 2:1-7, full references are contained therein; on this dispute, see chapter two, pp. 78-80.

¹²⁰ Appendix 2:2.

¹²¹ Appendix 2:4.

which Archbishop Æthelheard wrote to you’, and Leo’s reply confirmed that ‘just as your excellency requested’ he had read Æthelheard’s letter and had replied to it, telling the archbishop that he had excommunicated the rebellious Kentish priest Eadberht Praen from whom Æthelheard had fled, doubtless due to his pro-Mercian stance.¹²² The two surviving letters, then, point to a wider epistolary exchange consisting of at least four letters, and it is possible that more had been sent with Abbot Wada on his unsuccessful mission to Rome in 796.¹²³

The second phase of this epistolary exchange consists of three letters reconstructed from a single surviving letter of Leo III to Coenwulf from 802, which is remarkably different in tone. Leo’s letter relates how on arriving at Rome in 801, Æthelheard delivered to him a ‘missive (*sillabas*)’ containing two letters from Coenwulf.¹²⁴ It is clear that these letters contained much that was pleasing to Leo. The pope also noted that he had read ‘how for the sake of our Apostolic office you [Coenwulf] would, had you been at hand, have laid down your life on our behalf’.¹²⁵ This appears to be a reference to the attempts made in 799 by Leo’s opponents to mutilate and imprison him; he survived and escaped to Charlemagne’s court, but news of this event spread swiftly, probably reaching England to be later recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for that year.¹²⁶ Coenwulf’s theoretical offer of support for Leo illustrates the degree to which the Mercian king was aware of continental politics, and may in part account for the pope’s change of heart with respect to Lichfield. Indeed, in his letter to Coenwulf, Leo informs the king of his

¹²² Appendix 2:1, 3; on Eadberht’s uprising, *EHCC*, pp. 121-5; see also Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 148-9, and *CC*, pp. 139-42.

¹²³ On Wada’s ‘embassy’, see Appendix 2:2.

¹²⁴ Appendix 2:5-7; on Æthelheard’s journey, see appendix 1:2.

¹²⁵ Appendix 2:7.

¹²⁶ *LP*, 98:11-7; *Annales regni Francorum*, 799, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. VI (Hanover, 1895), 106-7; trans. B. Scholtz, in *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard’s Histories* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1970), pp. 77-8; *ASC*, 799; and see M. Becher, ‘Karl der Große und Papst Leo III. Die Ereignisse der Jahre 799 und 800 aus der Sicht der Zeitgenossen’, in *799 – Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit*, ed. C. Steigemann and M. Wemhoff (2 vols, Mainz, 1999), I, 22-36.

decision to fully restore Canterbury's metropolitan rights, something we should attribute to Æthelheard's embassy as well as Leo's near mutilation.¹²⁷ These letters are a further testament to both the close relations between the pope and leading figures in Southumbria at the start of the ninth century, and to the ways in which journeys and letters could act as different types of complementary communicative action. What is more, they demonstrate how the small amount of surviving correspondence often presupposes or refers to other now lost letters, enhancing the impression of connectedness.

A particularly revealing instance of lost correspondence relates to the journey of the deposed Northumbrian king Eardwulf to Rome and back in 808. Insular annalistic sources are relatively quiet about this event, the *Royal Frankish Annals* giving the most information on Eardwulf's journey via Charlemagne's court at Nijmegen and his return with envoys from pope and emperor.¹²⁸ It is three letters of Leo III to Charlemagne preserved in a single manuscript that reveal a world of intense and regular contact between pope and emperor on the one hand, and the two Anglo-Saxon archbishops, and kings of Northumbria and Mercia on the other.¹²⁹ The first letter shows that the papal messenger and deacon Aldulf, a 'Saxon from Britain' who later accompanied Eardwulf back to his kingdom, had previously been sent by Leo to Archbishop Eanbald II of York with an 'exhortatory letter' requesting that the archbishop explain his opposition to Eardwulf.¹³⁰ The second letter reveals that Eanbald had sent a messenger – presumably carrying a reply – who, along with Aldulf, went straight to the pope, attempting to overtake Eardwulf and deliberately avoiding Charlemagne, who consequently suspected

¹²⁷ Appendix 2:7.

¹²⁸ Appendix 1:9.

¹²⁹ These letters edited in *Leonis III papae epistolae X*, ed. K. Hampe, MGH Epp. V (III) (Berlin, 1899), 2,3,4; on these events see Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 129-33; J. Nelson, 'England and the Continent in the Ninth Century: I, ends and beginnings', *TRHS* 6th series 12 (2002), 17-21; CC, pp. 145-56.

¹³⁰ *Leonis epistolae*, ed. Hampe, 2; Appendix 2:10.

they bore ‘a deceitful embassy’.¹³¹ These letters thus attest to two further journeys and two more lost Anglo-papal letters, yet they also suggest that correspondence was far more widespread than this. In the first letter, Leo mentions that Eardwulf ‘used to direct his messengers to us’, and that Charlemagne had forwarded to him letters from Eanbald, Coenwulf, and Wado, a Northumbrian Ealdorman who had fought against Eardwulf in 798 and lost.¹³² Later, attempting to placate the emperor over Aldulf’s apparent deceit, Leo told Charlemagne he was sending him the letters ‘which were sent to us from the Saxon region’ asking that they be returned.¹³³ He doubtless meant Eanbald’s letter, but the plural hints at the existence of other letters sent to the pope by the anti-Eardwulf faction in Britain. These letters are a startling testament not only to the extent of Frankish and papal knowledge of and involvement in Anglo-Saxon affairs, but also to the amount of correspondence that resulted from this involvement.

The remarkable connectivity of the 800s probably continued throughout the 810s, and letters were doubtless exchanged over the Kentish-minster conflict between Coenwulf and Wulfred.¹³⁴ After this, however, things go quiet and the second quarter of the century is devoid of surviving correspondence. If Ecgbert’s messengers of 839 went on to Rome they would have carried letters to the pope, but there is no evidence that they did.¹³⁵ We have to wait until the 850s before Anglo-papal relations are again illuminated by letters, and even then it is by two brief fragments. The first, from Leo IV to Archbishop Ceolnoth and the Mercian king Berhtwulf, argues that pastors should not exceed the standards affixed by ‘our fathers’ in canons and secular legislation. Utterly without context, it offers a tantalising glimpse of the perhaps regular relations between the

¹³¹ *Leonis epistolae*, ed. Hampe, 3; Appendix 2:11.

¹³² *Leonis epistolae*, ed. Hampe, 2; on Wado see *Historia regum*, 59, ed. Arnold, II, 59.

¹³³ *Leonis epistolae*, ed. Hampe, 3.

¹³⁴ This is implied by S1436.

¹³⁵ See appendix 1:14.

Mercian king, southern archbishop and pope in regulating religious matters.¹³⁶ The second fragment does not lack in context, as it is Leo IV's message to Æthelwulf concerning Alfred's consular investiture which we may now accept as genuine.¹³⁷ From this latter extract we might assume that Æthelwulf sent other now lost letters to the pope requesting notification, but it is the former fragment that hints at a much wider discourse taking place over religious and pastoral standards.

No correspondence survives from the 860s and the next surviving letters are to be found in the early 870s, in the form of two fragmentary letters from John VIII. These are slightly more revealing than the previous fragments; one, addressed to Burgred in 873-4 shortly before he was deposed, urged him to root out the fornicators in his kingdom and, if this was too difficult, to inform the pope 'by your letter' so that he might reprove the miscreant.¹³⁸ The other, addressed to both archbishops and all the Anglo-Saxon clergy in c.873-5, urged them to adopt correct clerical vestments, as those from England living in Rome had already done.¹³⁹ Neither letter refers to lost correspondence, but John's knowledge of Burgred's 'adversities' and his comments on standards of dress show that the pope was well informed, most probably, as I argued above, by Anglo-Saxon pilgrims and merchants. Furthermore, John's request to be informed about fornicators 'by your letter' points to the potentially suggests the possibility of more, now-lost correspondence. Despite the severe viking pressure of this time, these epistolary fragments imply both familiarity and connectedness in Anglo-papal relations.

The final quarter of the ninth century saw a good deal of Anglo-papal communication; two well-known letters survive in complete or near complete form and these allow us to

¹³⁶ Appendix 2:14.

¹³⁷ Appendix 2:15; on this letter see chapter three, pp. 141-4.

¹³⁸ Appendix 2:16.

¹³⁹ Appendix 2:17.

reconstruct sequences of correspondence that saw the sending of a further three letters. In addition, other sources suggest further epistolary exchange. It is clear that, in a letter of 878 to archbishop Æthelred, John VIII was replying to the archbishop, whose now-lost letter he had ‘perused’ and with whose ‘faithful devotion to the apostolic see’ he was most pleased.¹⁴⁰ John empathised with Æthelred’s sufferings and adversities which, in addition to viking depredations, included attacks on the church by the king, whom he told ‘to resist strenuously’.¹⁴¹ He also made clear that he had sent a further now-lost letter, in which he had ‘been at pains to admonish and exhort your king’ to support Æthelred in all things.¹⁴² From this, it seems that Æthelred had been in conflict with Alfred – for that is who the king in question must be – and had written to the pope to enlist his support, resulting in Alfred being admonished by letter.¹⁴³ John went on to say that he would not believe ‘whatever adverse things may be related to us’ without investigation, suggesting that Alfred might send letters and envoys to the pope slandering his archbishop.¹⁴⁴ Not only does this letter attest to the existence of two others, but it hints at the type of wider exchange we saw with the deposition of Eardwulf, although perhaps not on the same scale.

We know from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that Anglo-papal correspondence continued in the 880s, which records the transit of West-Saxon alms to Rome. While it would be reasonable to assume that letters from Alfred to the pope accompanied every gift of alms were carried, there is only one explicit mention of letters when in 889 ‘King Alfred sent

¹⁴⁰ Appendix 2:18, 20; on its probable dating to mid 878, see D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 100.

¹⁴¹ Appendix 2:20; on these complaints, see J. Nelson, ‘“A king across the sea”: Alfred in continental perspective’, *TRHS* 5th series 36 (1986), 45-6, 61-2.

¹⁴² Appendix 2:19; Whitelock, *EHD*, p. 881, doubts the letter ever arrived, but see Pratt, *Political Thought*, p. 100.

¹⁴³ I am not convinced by the attempt of P. Wormald, ‘Living with King Alfred’, *Haskins Society Journal* 15 (2006), n.30, to make Burgred the recipient of papal displeasure, not least because the end of the letter suggests the dispute was ongoing.

¹⁴⁴ Appendix 2:20.

two couriers with letters'.¹⁴⁵ However, we can be fairly sure that when Marinus sent Alfred a sliver of the true cross in 883, he sent a letter with it explaining the gift.¹⁴⁶ Although we have little insight into the subjects of these letters, they show the continuance of regular epistolary contact with successive popes. Finally, writing at some point in his pontificate (891-6) to the bishops of England, pope Formosus lambasted them for their lax attitude to an apparent resurgence of paganism. He goes on to state that 'our beloved brother Plegmund has informed us' of improving religious standards – something he must have done by letter at some point after his election in 890 – persuading the pope to 'withdraw the sword of anathema'.¹⁴⁷ While each of these letters only provides a snapshot of Anglo-papal relations, together they show that kings and archbishops remained in written contact with successive popes throughout this turbulent final part of the ninth century.

When compared to the eighth century, then, ninth-century Anglo-papal letters appear relatively abundant, yet, while each surviving letter illuminates a moment in Anglo-papal relations, sufficient material to make a sustained analysis of such relations rarely survives; there is no *Codex Anglo-Saxonicus* to rival the Frankish *Codex Carolinus*. Also, our knowledge of Anglo-papal exchanges are almost always one-sided; Coenwulf's letter to Leo III in 798 is the only surviving letter from England to Rome in this period, forming part of the most comprehensive series of surviving letters.¹⁴⁸ Is it possible, despite this, to get a sense of what constituted 'normal' Anglo-papal correspondence, both in terms of levels and matters discussed? Surviving letters usually deal with major matters of church and state, principally disputes between archbishops and kings or supra-regional religious observance. In addition, Anglo-Saxon correspondents were always

¹⁴⁵ ASC, 889; appendix 2:22.

¹⁴⁶ ASC, 883 BCDE; appendix 2:21.

¹⁴⁷ Appendix 2:23-4.

¹⁴⁸ Appendix 2:2.

either kings or archbishops, although the pope sometimes addressed letters to all bishops, and the exiled Northumbrian ealdorman Wado probably wrote to the pope in 808, showing such correspondence was not necessarily restricted to high office.¹⁴⁹ Also, while most letters deal with urgent matters, John VIII's request that Burgred inform him of recalcitrant fornicators 'by your letter' suggests that correspondence could be more everyday, and that the subsequent letters of admonition might have reached a wider, lay audience. Moreover, despite the fragmentary nature of the record, letters to otherwise obscure recipients such as to Berhtwulf of Mercia and Archbishop Wulphere of York survive, begging the question as to whether it was 'normal' for the pope to be in contact with both archbishops and all major kings all of the time.¹⁵⁰ They certainly were in the 800s, 850s and 870s, but this may have depended more on the attitudes of individual popes such as Leo III and John VIII than any institutional continuity. One might argue that letters to important individuals or concerning major events such as the demotion of Lichfield were more likely to survive, distorting the nature of the record. Although it is worth noting that, other than Formosus' bombastic epistle, Anglo-papal letters survive narrowly, in a single manuscript or by being copied into one later work, and also in a somewhat dispersed fashion.¹⁵¹

In this respect it is most telling that many of these letters represent only a single utterance in a wider discourse. This is, in part, obvious; the five complete letters examined here directly attest to the existence of seven others which, while they do not survive, can be

¹⁴⁹ Appendix 2:4, 17, 24.

¹⁵⁰ Appendix 2:14, 17.

¹⁵¹ See the detail in appendix 2, and Whitelock, *EHD*, pp. 620-2, which remains the best summary of the survival of Anglo-papal correspondence. The almost complete disappearance of ninth-century papal registers is an important contributing factor in the fragmentary nature of the record. John VIII's is the only one to have survived relatively intact, by virtue of the fact that it was copied from the papal archive at a Roman monastery belonging to Monte Cassino. See D. Lohrmann, *Das Register Papst Johannes' VIII. (872-882) Neue Studien zur Abschrift Reg. Vat. I, zum verlorenen Originalregister und zum Diktat der Briefe* (Tübingen, 1968), pp. 95-117, 164-85. On the survival of papal letters from this period, especially in later canonical collections, see D. Jasper and H. Fuhrmann, *Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington, DC, 2001), pp. 102-33.

partly reconstructed. Other evidence, such as Leo III's letters to Charlemagne and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* annals for the 880s, attests to the one-time existence of four more letters, and hints that many more were written. Yet it is also broader and less apparent, in that letters such as the fragment of Leo IV to Berhtwulf and Ceolnoth concerning pastors, or that of John VIII to Æthelred over marriage, both point to the existence in the second half of the ninth century of a wider, more continual dialogue over correct standards of behaviour among the clergy and laity, of questions and answers in the best tradition of the *libellus responsionum*.¹⁵² Ninth-century Anglo-papal letters point to a world in which Anglo-Saxon courts and churches were more closely connected to the Lateran and St Peter's than has previously been thought.

Alongside the letters, papal decrees and privileges survive from the ninth century, the first of which formally restored Canterbury to its former position thus ending the archbishopric of Lichfield.¹⁵³ Dated 18 Jan 802 and probably obtained by Æthelheard whilst in Rome, this formal letter, with its invocation of Petrine authority, anathema, papal subscription and dating clause, should be seen in terms of the epistolary exchanges and journeys outlined above.¹⁵⁴ It is doubtless this document that is repeatedly referred to – as Leo's 'decree', 'permission' and 'apostolic injunction' – in the declaration of the 803 synod of Clofesho at which the Southumbrian bishops ratified the change.¹⁵⁵ At the same synod, another decree was passed which sought to stop minsters electing 'laymen and seculars as lords', forcing them to 'comply with their monastic obligations by the rule and

¹⁵² Appendix 2:14 and 18; the *libellus responsionum* consists of a series of responses by Gregory the Great to questions from Augustine of Canterbury, contained in *HE*, i.27.

¹⁵³ Appendix 2:8.

¹⁵⁴ Appendix 2:8; the subscription reveals it was written by Sergius a *scriniarius* (notary) and the dating clause states that it was distributed by Eustace the *primicerius* (head of the papal chancery), on the Lateran writing office, see T. Noble, *The Republic of St Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825* (Philadelphia, PN, 1984), 218-22.

¹⁵⁵ S 1431a; trans. *EHD*, 210.

observance of discipline'.¹⁵⁶ This document is of interest not only because it preceded Wulfred's attack on the lay lordship of minsters in 816, but because it did so with a 'mandate from the apostolic lord pope Leo (*mandatum a domno apostolico Leone papa*).'¹⁵⁷ This must, then, refer to a lost bull granted by Leo to Æthelheard, as it could not have been mistaken for that which referred to Lichfield. Indeed, when one reconsiders the wording of the first Clofesho decree, that Æthelheard had visited Rome 'about many of the rights of the churches of God' and, once there, had related 'other necessary matters of business' to Leo, it seems likely that the question of lay lordship had always been on his mind.¹⁵⁸ These decrees throw new light on Æthelheard's journey to Rome and the problems facing the church c.800, suggesting that lay lordship was already seen as a major issue.

Alongside these decrees, two papal privileges were issued to Coenwulf of Mercia in the first quarter of the ninth century. Earlier seventh- and early-eighth-century privileges exempted minsters from a degree of diocesan control and safeguarded their rights and lands from encroachment, in contrast, these ninth-century documents privileged the Mercian king as a lay lord of minsters.¹⁵⁹ The immediate precedent for this was a privilege granted to Offa by Pope Hadrian I, known from the papal formulary known as the *Liber Diurnus* which granted Offa and his wife authority over all the monasteries they had built, acquired, and dedicated to St Peter.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, the two ninth-century bulls granted Coenwulf and his heirs the right to dispose of all the minsters that they had

¹⁵⁶ Appendix 2:9.

¹⁵⁷ Appendix 2:9; it also refers to the 'privileges granted by the Apostolic see'.

¹⁵⁸ S 1431 a; and see appendix 2:7; see *EHCC*, pp. 179-80.

¹⁵⁹ D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England 940-1216* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1963), pp. 575-9, is misleading and *ECEC*, pp. 22-33 is to be preferred. For a recent overview of the earlier privileges, see H. Anton, *Studien zu den Klosterprivilegien der Päpste im Frühen Mittelalter. Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Privilegierung von St. Maurice D'Agaune* (Berlin and New York, 1975), pp. 62-83, 170-1; and, S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c.600-900* (Cambridge, 2006), pp.133-4.

¹⁶⁰ *Liber diurnus Romanorum pontificum*, ed. Hans Foerster (Bern, 1958), no. 93; *ECEC*, pp. 29-30.

acquired or inherited.¹⁶¹ Received from Leo III c.811, the first of these paid particular attention to the monastery where he was to be buried, namely Winchcombe, while the second, granted by Paschal in December 817, confirmed the privileges already granted over the many monasteries, as well as their estates, possessions and tenants.¹⁶²

Coenwulf's privileges were most probably a response to successive ecclesiastical attacks on lay lordship.¹⁶³ As we have seen, Æthelheard had papal approval for his condemnation of lay lordship in 803, something Wulfred apparently secured before launching his attack at the 816 Council of Chelsea, having gone to Rome and returned in 815 'with Pope Leo's blessing'.¹⁶⁴ It is also worth noting that the mid-tenth-century forger of S 183 may have used an early-ninth-century privilege to concoct his immunity clause and dispositive section, hinting that other papal privileges of this period may have survived to benefit the efforts of the Benedictine reformers.¹⁶⁵ Perhaps other lay lords of minsters had sought papal privileges to preserve their monastic property from the claims of the episcopate. Ultimately, these decrees and privileges demonstrate further the close contacts between England and Rome in the first quarter of the ninth century, showing the importance that kings, archbishops, and possibly other lay elites, assigned to papal authority, in matters of piety and property.

¹⁶¹ Appendix 2:12-13; preserved in twelfth-century and thirteenth-century Winchcombe cartularies, *ECEC*, pp. 30-2, 255-7, argued for their originality and reconstructed the dating clause of the latter. P. Chaplais, 'Some early Anglo-Saxon diplomas on single sheets: originals or copies?', in *Prisca Munimenta*, ed. F. Ranger (London, 1973), pp. 87, argued that they were forged, but *EHCC*, pp. 185-6, defended their authenticity.

¹⁶² Appendix 2:12-13.

¹⁶³ See chapter three, pp. 131-4; and *EHCC*, p. 186

¹⁶⁴ *ASC*, 815; while the Old English *bledsunge* or *bletsunge*, equivalent to the Latin *benedictio*, does not equate to a papal decree, Wulfred may have obtained one.

¹⁶⁵ Appendix 2:12a.

Anglo-Saxons abroad

Little specific information about the journeys of ninth-century Anglo-Roman travellers survives but we can be confident that, in the ninth century as today, the conditions and nature of a journey to Rome depended upon the status and motivation of the traveller.¹⁶⁶

Royal visitors such as Æthelwulf travelled with a sizeable entourage, and his journey in 855-6 was said to have taken place ‘with great state’, the *Liber Pontificalis* noting that he arrived with ‘a multitude of people’.¹⁶⁷ Other royal travellers such as the deposed Burgred or Eardwulf would have been accompanied by entourages of loyal retainers, and it is unlikely that any high-status traveller, lay or clergy, went without multiple companions.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, it seems higher-status travellers grouped together despite making the journey for differing reasons, as when Æthelheard was accompanied by at least two bishops and two high-status laymen in 801.¹⁶⁹ More lowly pilgrims doubtless grouped together for mutual safety and security, as merchants would also have done; and references to merchants disguising themselves as pilgrims to avoid tolls suggests the two groups may also have travelled together.¹⁷⁰

McCormick has shown that the Franks – who considered the journey to Rome a relatively easy one – preferred to travel in autumn, but with the extra distance and sea crossing, spring would be the best time for Anglo Saxons who wanted to return within the year to

¹⁶⁶ Much has recently been on Mediterranean travel in this period, principally McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*; M. Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims: Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean World, A.D. 300-800* (University Park, PA, 2005), especially pp. 16-42, and O.R. Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2003). Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, and Matthews, *Road to Rome*, pp. 18-38, explore the logistics of Anglo-Roman travel in the Anglo-Saxon period.

¹⁶⁷ Appendix 1:18.

¹⁶⁸ The eight persons listed with Burgred and Æthelswith in the *Liber Vitae of Brescia* may represent their retainers; Appendix 1:21-30.

¹⁶⁹ Appendix 1:2-6.

¹⁷⁰ Alcuin, *Ep.*, 100; trans. *EHD* 197.

depart.¹⁷¹ Yet many preferred to overwinter in Rome, as Æthelheard, Wulfred, and Æthelwulf must have done, allowing their groups to travel more slowly and visit local churches and shrines and, if they were of sufficient rank, the Frankish court.¹⁷² The exception to these examples would have been couriers who travelled quickly and in small groups, and the example of Eardwulf and Aldulf is illustrative here. Leo III's letters to Charlemagne reveal that by April 808 the deposed Northumbrian king was in Francia, and that a messenger had been dispatched to Northumbria.¹⁷³ It then seems that this papal messenger Aldulf, along with Archbishop Eanbald's legate, had left Britain for Rome, bypassing Charlemagne in an effort to reach Rome before the slower moving Eardwulf.¹⁷⁴ Eardwulf then travelled back to Northumbria accompanied by Aldulf in the same year, showing that a high-status traveller could make the return journey in a year, stopping in both Francia and Rome, and a single messenger could make the journey between England and Rome three times in a single year.¹⁷⁵

While there is no mention of the routes used by Anglo-Saxon travellers, we know that the southern sea-route was rarely employed in the ninth-century, and that the central or eastern passes such as Great St Bernard, Splügen and Septimer were most common (see map 3).¹⁷⁶ Keynes has taken Æthelwulf's appearance in the *Liber Vitae of Brescia* as evidence that he took an eastern pass such as the Septimer which lead to Brescia.¹⁷⁷ Yet it is possible the king visited the church of Sta Maria 'regina' or the *xenodochium* of Sta Maria 'Brittonum' in Pavia, both dependents of Brescia with the name of the latter

¹⁷¹ McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, pp. 476-81.

¹⁷² Appendix 1:2, 11, 16; on the potential stops en route, see Ortenberg, 'Archbishop Sigeric's journey', pp.228-46; and Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, pp. 52-5.

¹⁷³ *Leonis III papae epistolae X*, ed. K. Hampe, MGH Epp. V (III) (Berlin, 1899), 2-3.

¹⁷⁴ Appendix 1:7-8.

¹⁷⁵ Appendix 1:9-10; Aldulf's final journey was much slower owing to his capture by pirates, and ransoming by Coenwulf.

¹⁷⁶ On routes, see Matthews, *Road to Rome*, pp. 39-44; and Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, pp. 43-52.

¹⁷⁷ Keynes, 'Anglo-Saxon entries', pp. 103-5.

The material originally presented here is not currently available in ORA

Map 3: Routes from England to Rome (including alpine passes)¹⁷⁸

pointing to a frequent through traffic of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, as we saw above, the *Honorantie civitatis Papie* suggests Pavia saw a constant traffic of Anglo-

¹⁷⁸ From: <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/sdk13/asmaps.html> (accessed 12/08/2010)

¹⁷⁹ *Der Memorial und Liturgiecodex von San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia*, eds. D. Geuenich and U. Ludwig, MGH Libri mem. N. S. IV (Hannover, 2000), pp. 93-4; and see CC, p. 238.

Saxon pilgrims and merchants in the later ninth century, indicating the central Great St Bernard Pass was frequently used by Anglo-Saxons.

Describing an imaginary pilgrimage, the colloquy known as *De raris fabulis*, which survives in an early tenth-century-Cornish manuscript, gives us a rare glimpse of the experience of travelling to Rome, describing a ‘very long and filthy route – both swamps...and excrement abound on it –, and [it is] the most irritating and direst route’, only made worthwhile by St Peter.¹⁸⁰ Earlier, Carolingian capitularies had tried to ensure that such pilgrims were provided with food and accommodation, and guaranteed safe conduct and exemption from tolls, providing they carried letters of permission.¹⁸¹ The need to legislate suggests such charity was sometimes forgotten; indeed, St-Josse – a dependent cell of the monastery of Ferrières and stopping place for pilgrims – was a great source of wealth for its owner.¹⁸² Other travellers must have paid the tolls and funded the other aspects of their journey, and, at least on the routes through the Alps and into Italy, a system of hostels, inns, and royal toll-stations provided for travellers while also ‘turning a tidy profit for the imperial treasury.’¹⁸³ Security would always have been a concern for travellers. Writing in the second quarter of the ninth-century, Lupus of Ferrières paints a picture of roads thick with bandits. In one letter to bishop Hincmar he explained that thought it too unsafe to send a large copy of Bede’s *Collectanea* with the letter because, even if his messenger could carry it, ‘one would have to fear an attack of robbers, who would certainly be attracted by the beauty of the book’.¹⁸⁴ Travelling in groups may have

¹⁸⁰ *De raris fabulis*, ed. and trans. S. Gwara, ‘On Uncommon Tales’: a Glossed Latin Colloquy-text from a Tenth-century Cornish Manuscript (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 22-3.

¹⁸¹ Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, pp. 72-5, 80-3; see also, McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, p. 398.

¹⁸² See J. Nelson, ‘England and the continent in the ninth century: II. The vikings and others’, *TRHS* 6th series 13 (2003), 18-21.

¹⁸³ McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, pp. 398-9; and see Middleton, ‘Early medieval port customs’, 319-30.

¹⁸⁴ *Lupi Abbatis Ferrariensis Epistolae*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epp. VI (IV) (Berlin, 1925), no. 76; trans. G. Regenos, *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières* (The Hague, 1966), no. 108.

lessened such threats, but not necessarily that of the viking warbands who roamed north-western Francia in the second half of the century or the Saracen riders who increasingly threatened the Italian peninsula.¹⁸⁵ Still, travelling was always inherently risky in this period and Anglo-Saxons continued to journey to Rome. Even if such travel did decrease in the middle fifty years of the ninth-century, I would put this down to insecurity at home rather than fear of the road.

Ninth-century Anglo-Saxons visiting Rome would have looked upon a city that was markedly different to that visited by their seventh- and early-eighth-century predecessors. The second half of the eighth century to the mid-ninth was a time of stability and prosperity, and successive popes, in alliance with Carolingian rulers, embarked upon grand building projects restoring the urban and Christian fabric of Rome as well as building anew.¹⁸⁶ While this renovation reached its height under Hadrian I and Leo III, it continued until around the mid-ninth century.¹⁸⁷ From Paul I (757-67) onward, relics of the holy dead were increasingly reinterred inside the walls, a process which accelerated in the ninth century, along with the construction of ring crypts in the rebuilt churches to facilitate mass-pilgrimage.¹⁸⁸ Consequently, pilgrims would have spent much more time inside the walls, as can be seen when one compares Archbishop Sigeric's tenth-century itinerary to those composed in the first half of the seventh century which had a predominantly extra-mural focus.¹⁸⁹ The provision of food and accommodation for

¹⁸⁵ On the vikings in Francia, see Coupland, 'The vikings', pp. 190-201; on Saracens in Italy, see H. Kennedy, 'The Muslims in Europe', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume II, c. 700-900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 249-55.

¹⁸⁶ R. Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (rev edn, Princeton, NJ, 2000), pp. 109-142; and P. Delogu, 'The rebirth of Rome in the 8th and 9th centuries', in *The Rebirth of Towns in the West A.D. 700-1050*, eds. R. Hodges and B. Hobley (London, 1988), 32-42; and T. Noble, 'Paradoxes and possibilities in the sources for Roman Society in the early Middle Ages', in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 55-83; on the Franco-papal alliance, see Noble, *The Republic*, pp. 256-76, and *passim*.

¹⁸⁷ Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City*, p. 109; Delogu, 'The rebirth', p. 38.

¹⁸⁸ See the discussion in chapter two, pp. 111-2.

¹⁸⁹ Ortenberg, 'Archbishop Sigeric's journey', 208-225, esp. the map on p. 209; the seventh-century *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae* and *De locis sanctis martyrum* are ed. R. Valentini and G. Zuchetti,

pilgrims also changed, with the *diaconiae* which fed both Romans and pilgrims seemingly losing their charitable functions in the ninth century.¹⁹⁰ Also, according to Hubert, the ‘system of assistance’ for visitors predicated upon *xenodochia* declined, and while many of these institutions had been recently founded or rebuilt by Stephen II, Hadrian I, and Leo III, they disappear from the records as the ‘national’ *scholae* rise to prominence.¹⁹¹ Certain *xenodochia* did remain, including those at the Lateran, the seat of papal governance, and they may have sheltered the many Anglo-Saxons who visited Rome on ‘official’ business.¹⁹²

Anglo-Saxons in Rome

To understand the impression that Anglo-Saxon travellers left on ninth-century Rome, and whether it adds to what we already know, we must examine a historical record which is, perhaps unsurprisingly, centred on the popes who administered both the religious and secular life of the city.¹⁹³ The most important text here is the *Liber Pontificalis*, a collection of successive papal *vitae* which was begun in the early sixth century and written consecutively from the early seventh century till 870 when, excepting a

Codice Topografico della Città di Roma (4 vols., Rome, 1940-53), II, 49-66, 101-31; and see Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, pp. 12-13, 98-102.

¹⁹⁰ Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, pp. 123-5; and see Noble, *The Republic*, pp. 231-33.

¹⁹¹ É. Hubert, ‘Les résidences des étrangers à Rome’, *Settimane* 49 (2002), 193-4.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 193. On the Lateran administration, see P. Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (London, 1970), pp. 109-34; and particularly Noble, *The Republic*, pp. 212-255.

¹⁹³ On that record, see T. Noble, ‘Literacy and the papal government in late antiquity and the early middle ages’, in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), 82-108; and see idem, ‘The papacy in the eighth and ninth centuries’, in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume II, c. 700-900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 563-565.

fragmentary life of Stephen V (885-91), it broke off.¹⁹⁴ The ninth-century lives vary in content, but generally consist of two types of material: partisan accounts of papal involvement in Italian, Frankish, and Byzantine politics, and – most prominently – accounts of the maintenance and restoration of the Christian fabric of Rome, mainly through papal munificence. In line with these principles, the *Liber Pontificalis* only recorded prominent English visitors when they bestowed significant largesse upon St Peter and his people. Æthelwulf's visit, for example, is mentioned in Benedict III's *vita* where, despite many errors, the treasure he gave to St Peter was accurately catalogued, as was his dispensation of bullion to the clergy and inhabitants of Rome.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, the account of Nicolas's pontificate (858-67) relates that his reputation attracted many visitors, including 'some of the race of the English (*Anglorum gente*)' who, around 863-4, placed a silver panel within the oratory of Gregory I in St Peter's.¹⁹⁶ The latter example is of particular value as it provides evidence of Anglo-Saxons travelling to Rome in the 860s, something to which the sources examined above, do not attest. So, even though the *Liber Pontificalis* does not mention many travellers, it still adds to the picture of connectedness by showing that journeys were made by wealthy Anglo-Saxons in this otherwise barren decade.

Some less direct references within the *Liber Pontificalis* hint at an undercurrent of Anglo-Roman contacts. Having rebuilt St Mark's *titulus*, Gregory IV (827-44) furnished it with various precious items which included twelve bowls 'fashioned with English (*anglorum*) workmanship'.¹⁹⁷ Likewise, in various instances of benevolence to Roman churches in

¹⁹⁴ On the *Liber Pontificalis*, see T. Noble, 'A new look at the *Liber Pontificalis*', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 23 (1985), 347-58; and R. Davis, *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes* (1995), pp. ix-xii; and references therein.

¹⁹⁵ *LP*, 106:34 (Benedict III).

¹⁹⁶ *LP*, 107:54 (Nicholas).

¹⁹⁷ *LP*, 103:9 (Gregory IV); both Angle and Saxon are used by the *Liber Pontificalis* and it is clear that 'Saxon' refers to the English, not continental kind, as can be seen in mentions of the '*Schola Saxonum*' (*LP*, 105:73 [Leo IV]), also called the place where the 'gens Anglorum' reside (*LP*, 100:7 [Paschal]).

the early 850s, Leo IV dispensed a number of silver Saxon bowls, and, somewhat obscurely, a Saxon ‘*dextra* (bowl?)’, while in 858 Nicholas gave St Mary’s deaconry ‘in Cosmedin’ a ‘fine silver Saxon bowl’.¹⁹⁸ It is uncertain whether such items were imported for their fine quality – one thinks of the traders passing through Pavia – or brought by wealthy pilgrims and travellers; among the gifts Æthelwulf gave to St Peter were ‘four silver-gilt Saxon bowls’.¹⁹⁹ Still, the relatively large number of references to these objects, and the fact that they were known to be Saxon, even if only among Lateran clergy, suggests that they were relatively widespread objects. While we cannot directly infer any additional travel from these reports, the apparent availability of Anglo-Saxon metalwork and its adoption into the regular patterns of papal munificence reinforces the impression of an undercurrent of barely visible travellers, whether merchants or pilgrims, journeying throughout the ninth century.

Alongside these ‘Saxon bowls’, epigraphic evidence also points to the presence in Rome of otherwise unknown Anglo-Saxons.²⁰⁰ Graffito inscriptions are a common feature of Christian sites from an early date, and a number of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims inscribed their names at martyrial tombs in the extramural catacombs surrounding Rome.²⁰¹ Accurately dating these inscriptions is difficult; Carletti opted for a broad dating range from the seventh century to the early ninth century, a time when large-scale removals of relics from the catacombs resulted in a decrease in visitors.²⁰² More recently, Insley has argued from onomastic evidence that these inscriptions date from the late eighth and early ninth

¹⁹⁸ LP, 105:58, 66, 104 (Leo IV); 107:11 (Nicholas).

¹⁹⁹ LP, 106:34 (Benedict III).

²⁰⁰ On Anglo-Saxon coins in Rome, see chapter three, pp. 156-8.

²⁰¹ C. Carletti, ‘*Viatores ad martyres*. Testimonianze scritte alto-medievali nelle catacomb romane’, in *Epigrafia Medievale Greca e Latina: Ideologia e Funzione*, ed. G. Cavallo and C. Mango (Spoleto, 1995), pp. 197-226, at 209; and idem, “‘Scrivere i santi’: epigrafia del pellegrinaggio a Roma nei secoli vii-ix”, *Settimane* 49 (2002), 351-5.

²⁰² Carletti, ‘*Viatores ad martyres*’, pp. 200-8; and see chapter two, p. 111 on the translations.

centuries, finding similar names in Kentish documentation of this period.²⁰³ While a ninth-century dating must be tempered by our knowledge of the falling use of the catacombs, it is not implausible that many of these inscriptions were made by the early-ninth-century pilgrims whose existence we have already glimpsed in other texts. This graffito thus provides further evidence of the flow of travellers at the start of, if not throughout, the ninth century, as well as indicating some of the sites where Anglo-Saxons worshipped the holy dead.

The Schola Saxonum

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of ninth-century contact between England and Rome was the '*Schola Saxonum*'.²⁰⁴ This term did not refer to a school in the educational sense, but to the community of Anglo-Saxons living near St Peter's basilica, and also to the area they occupied.²⁰⁵ It is first mentioned in Leo III's *vita* when the pope, returning from his flight to Francia in 799, was welcomed by all the Romans and by 'all the *scholae* of the foreigners – Franks, Frisians, Saxons and Lombards'.²⁰⁶ While this mention implies that the *scholae* were groups of a certain *gens*, the author of Paschal's *vita* states that they also occupied a distinct area, writing that the 'whole quarter' of the 'men of the English race' which was 'called *burgus* in their language (*in eorum lingua burgus dicitur*)' was burned down in 817.²⁰⁷ Apparently started due to English carelessness, the fire was only halted by the intervention of the pope who afterwards, noting 'the need of those pilgrims', gave

²⁰³ J. Insley, 'Anglo-Saxons in Rome: the evidence of the names', in *Nomen et Fraternitas*, eds. U. Ludwig and T. Schilp, (Berlin, 2008), pp. 107-13.

²⁰⁴ Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims*, pp. 90-125, remains the most important work on the *Schola Saxonum*.

²⁰⁵ When mentioning the *Schola*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* terms it a *scolu*, in this case probably meaning a band or troop of people, see ASC, 817, 885.

²⁰⁶ LP, 98:17 (Leo III).

²⁰⁷ LP, 100:7 (Paschal I); this term gave rise to the area's current name, the *Borgo*, see, Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City*, p. 82, and pp. 264-5.

them gold, silver, clothes, food, and timber ‘so that they could restore their homes as required in the same place they had been before’.²⁰⁸ Again, in 847 ‘a mighty fire attacked the *vicus* of the saxons’ which incinerated everything including ‘the homes of the Saxons and Lombards’.²⁰⁹ These accounts indicate that the *Schola* occupied an area of some size, and was clearly set apart by the difference of its inhabitants and their timber houses. In addition, the prominence of the fire in Paschal’s *vita*, and its appearance in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for that year, suggests that it was an event of some importance in both Rome and England.²¹⁰ In the first half of the ninth-century, then, there was a burgeoning community of Anglo-Saxons in Rome, and this is a witness to both the close relations and frequent travel between the two areas in this period.

After two serious fires in relatively quick succession, one might expect the *Schola* to have dwindled and disappeared from view after 847. Yet the account of the construction and dedication of the Leonine City suggests that the *Schola* remained a dominant feature of the area surrounding the Vatican. Built following the devastating Saracen sack of St Peter’s and the surrounding area in 846, the *Civitas Leonina* consisted of a walled circuit from Castel S. Angelo around the great basilica and its surrounding churches, all of which lay outside the Aurelian walls.²¹¹ At its dedication in 852, Leo and his entourage processed around the walls and prayed over the gates, saying one ‘over the other postern, which looks toward the *Schola Saxonum* and is, from their name, called the postern of the Saxons.’²¹² Set over this postern was the inscription ‘Rome, the head of the world - its splendour, its hope, (is) golden Rome’, a statement of rejuvenation and renewed aspiration visible to those literate Anglo-Saxons passing through it.²¹³ Not only had the

²⁰⁸ *LP*, 100:7.

²⁰⁹ *LP*, 105: 20.

²¹⁰ *ASC*, 817

²¹¹ Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City*, pp. 117-120.

²¹² *LP*, 105:73; the biographer then records the prayer.

²¹³ *Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae*, ed. J. De Rossi (2 vols., Rome, 1857-88), II.1, 325.

Schola survived, it remained a prominent feature of the *Borgo*. From this we are able to comfortably extrapolate the continued existence of a sizeable Anglo-Saxon community in Rome. It is perhaps telling that none of the other *scholae* left an equivalent imprint on either the contemporary Roman built environment or texts that describe it. The following year, Leo IV dedicated a ‘newly constructed’ church to St Mary which had been built ‘from the ground over the Schola Saxonum’ and endowed it with precious goods.²¹⁴ Rather than signalling the singular or unitary nature of the *Schola*, this statement may well represent papal provision for the devotional needs of the sizeable Anglo-Saxon community.²¹⁵ Whatever the case, it certainly seems that many Anglo-Saxons were residing in the *Schola*, enough to survive multiple catastrophes.

As the account of Rome’s history provided by the *Liber Pontificalis* comes to an end, other sources attest to the continued existence of the *Schola*, and give us an impression of its constituents. The papal biographies describe its occupants rather broadly, as ‘pilgrims (*peregrini*)’, but it seems likely that many were long-term pilgrims. Indeed, the *Schola* probably developed due to the presence in Rome of such long-term or permanent pilgrims who coalesced around St Peter. Burgred, the deposed Mercian king, was one such pilgrim, leaving Britain in 874 to settle in Rome, he was later ‘buried in the church of St Mary in the English quarter’.²¹⁶ Also, as we have seen, John VIII’s letter to both Anglo-Saxon archbishops, related that ‘all the leading men of England who were then living near the blessed apostle Peter’ assembled to discuss clerical dress with the pope or his representatives, the result was that ‘all the English clerics voluntarily gave up the lay habit’ and would dress themselves after the Roman fashion.²¹⁷ There were thus a number

²¹⁴ *LP*, 105:86.

²¹⁵ Moore disproved the interpretation of the *Schola* as a single building or hostel, Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims*, pp. 96-7; and see Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, p. 131.

²¹⁶ *ASC*, 874.

²¹⁷ Appendix 2:17.

of Anglo-Saxon nobles in the *Schola*, as well as a significant number of churchmen, although we cannot know whether they lived a purely contemplative existence or contributed to the running of St Mary's.²¹⁸ As well as providing a residence for these long-term visitors, the *Schola* would have provided the natural place for shorter-term visitors to stay. Although William of Malmesbury's account of Æthelwulf's lavish restoration of the *Schola* is probably an extrapolation from his sources, it is likely that the West Saxon king and his entourage spent much of their year in Rome there.²¹⁹ Indeed, most visitors might have preferred to stay in the *Schola* among those of their *gens*, than in the *xenodochia* which catered for all pilgrims.²²⁰ This Anglo-Saxon corner of Rome, then, seems to have been permanently populated by kings, nobles, and clergy among others, as well as playing host to a transient population of pilgrims and possibly also traders.

The final ninth-century reference to the *Schola Saxonum* comes in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 885, where, in an obit for Marinus, it is said that he 'had freed from taxation the English quarter at the request of Alfred'.²²¹ This statement, reminiscent of the trade agreements between Charlemagne and Offa a century earlier, illustrates the importance of the *Schola* in an international context. It also begs certain questions about its position within the city of Rome itself. The organisation of various groups into the 'scholae of the foreigners' perhaps suggests some contact with papal administration. Later, the popes twice helped the Anglo-Saxons extinguish fires in their quarter and, following the latter instance in the pontificate of Leo IV, the *Schola* was enclosed in the

²¹⁸ Moore thought that the *Schola* possessed a quasi-monastic character from the second half of the ninth century onwards; Moore, *The Saxon pilgrims*, p. 111; whereas Hubert, 'Les residences des étrangers', p. 197, attributes a civic and military character to the *scholae*.

²¹⁹ William of Malmesbury: *Gesta Regum Anglorum. The History of English Kings*, ed. and trans. R. Mynors, R. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, (2 vols., Oxford, 1998-9), I:159.; these sources may have included the spurious S 325.

²²⁰ Hubert, 'Les residences des étrangers', p. 197.

²²¹ ASC, 885.

new walls and a church constructed there. Leo seems to have been assuming administrative responsibility for the *Schola* and its religious life, and this greater integration into the papal administrative remit may also have seen the *Schola* become subject to the tax from which it was later exempted. The popes may also have taken advantage of the sizeable population of Anglo-Saxons in Rome, recruiting them into the Lateran to serve as legates and messengers to their homeland, something suggested by the fact that the only two directly attested papal legates to England in the ninth century were Anglo-Saxons.²²²

When the Saracens assaulted Rome and its environs in 846, the *Schola* played a military role. The Romans sent ‘the Saxons, the Frisians, and the Schola called that of the Franks’ to defend Porto from Saracen plundering, although they were massacred while sitting down to a meal.²²³ Moore took this military assistance as definite evidence of ‘their inclusion in the Roman system of *Scholae Militiae*’ but, as far as I know, there is no actual evidence of such inclusion, and it is more likely that this was a one-off occurrence necessitated by the grave nature of the threat.²²⁴ Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxon community can be glimpsed playing a full role in the religious and political life of Rome, in 799 when Leo III returned and again, in a less formal context, in 864, when Louis II’s men caused a tumult and smashed a precious cross into the mud ‘from there, so they say, the pieces were retrieved by some Englishmen and returned to the cross’s custodians.’²²⁵ While it is hard to be precise about the way in which the *Schola* fitted into the administration of Rome, it clearly played some religious, political, military, and

²²² Appendix 1:10, 13.

²²³ *LP*, 104:46 (Sergius II); on this, see Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims*, pp. 92-5; see also Hubert, ‘Les residences des étrangers’, p.198. The account implies that the *schola* could muster a large war-band, further evidence of the size of the community.

²²⁴ Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims*, p. 94; on the military organisation of this period, see Noble, *The Republic*, pp. 235-6, 246-9

²²⁵ *AB*, 864.

economic role in the life of the city, and may have become increasingly subject to papal governance as the century wore on.²²⁶

Ultimately, the *Schola Saxonum* belongs to the ninth century. There is a tendency among those historians who discuss it to spend a disproportionate amount of time searching for its seventh- or eighth-century origins.²²⁷ Based on mostly twelfth-century texts which are, as Moore long ago showed, completely without basis in contemporary or near contemporary tradition, the question of whether it was founded by Caedwalla, Ine, or Offa is a deeply misleading one.²²⁸ The *Schola* was not begun by a royal pilgrim planting a flag in the ground, rather – as noted above – it probably grew up organically as long-term pilgrims coalesced around Peter's tomb. Nevertheless, this search for origins belies a focus on an age illuminated by the works of Bede, Boniface, and Alcuin as that of travel to and connection with Rome. If the *Schola* originally developed in the eighth century, then in the ninth it became visible, reached maturity and, arguably, its apogee. Indeed, it probably expanded across the course of the ninth century, coming into more contact with papal governance and consequently receiving its own religious provision and becoming taxable. We can thus say with some confidence that the ninth century saw the appearance of a distinct body of Anglo-Saxons living in a particular area around Rome, consisting of both laity and clergy, most of who were probably long-term pilgrims, and who played a role in the politico-religious, military, and economic affairs of the city. In addition, the *Schola* appears relatively regularly throughout the ninth century and while its population may have fluctuated – particularly with two fires and a massacre – it did not disappear.

²²⁶ On the positive economic impact, see Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City*, pp. 82-3.

²²⁷ For example, Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages*, pp. 178-9; Ortenberg, 'Archbishop Sigeric's journey', 204; Birch, *Pilgrimages to Rome*, pp. 131-2, agrees with a more organic development but persists in seeing a nugget of truth in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century texts.

²²⁸ Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims*, pp. 97-104, debunks the later myths of royal foundation, and then (pp. 104-9) dates its probable emergence to 716-738 when he thought levels of pilgrimage soared.

Essentially, this is the most remarkable evidence of the frequency of travel and connectivity between England and Rome in the ninth century, and suggests that this century should be viewed as a time of contact and communication comparable to the eighth century. The existence and prominence of the *Schola Saxonum* supports a central contention of this chapter: that many more people travelled to Rome than the sources suggest, and that, while unquantifiable, this undercurrent of low-level low-visibility travellers was significant in its size and frequency. Despite all its turbulence and insecurity, we must consider England and Rome to have been closely connected in the ninth century.

Chapter 2

Religion and the Church

Discussing ecclesiastical relations between Rome and Anglo-Saxon England in his *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, Wilhelm Levison wrote of a ‘routine intercourse’ between the two places.²²⁹ That contact between two ecclesiastical centres separated by over 900 miles could, in this period, be considered routine is remarkable in itself. It does, however, reflect the crucial role Rome and its bishops played in the development of the Anglo-Saxon church – as recorded in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* – and in the nature of its religious expression.²³⁰ Bede not only gave Rome a pre-eminent place in his narrative of the conversion, he portrayed the city as the spiritual, material, and organisational head of the church.²³¹ Other early writers expressed similar ideas; Aldhelm of Malmesbury (d.709/10) and Stephen, biographer of the controversial bishop Wilfrid, were both forceful exponents of the primacy of the Roman church and its ecclesiastical forms.²³² Such notions were not merely literary, as is shown by the predominance of Roman saints in early church dedications, by the frequent journeys of pilgrims, and by a desire to replicate the religious practices of Rome.²³³ This desire is evident in, for example, canon thirteen of the reforming synod held at Clofesho in 747,

²²⁹ *ECEC*, pp. 15-44 at 16.

²³⁰ *HE*, i.23-33, ii.1-11, 14-20, iii.7, iv.12, 15-6, v.11.

²³¹ See *HE*, especially iii.25-6, v. 21-2; and also Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 2-6 ed. C. Plummer, *Bedae opera historica* (2 vols., Oxford, 1896), I, 365-9; trans. D. Farmer, in *The Age of Bede*, eds. J. Webb and D. Farmer (rev. edn, London, 1983), 188-93; and see J. Wallace-Hadrill, ‘Rome and the early English Church: some questions of transmission’, in his *Early Medieval History* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 114-37.

²³² See Aldhelm’s letter to Geraint, King of Dumnonia, Aldhelm, *Epistolae*, iv, ed. R. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH Auct. ant. XV (Berlin, 1919), 480-6; trans. M. Lapidge and M. Herren, *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Ipswich, 1979), pp. 155-60; and G. Dempsey, ‘“Claviger aetherius”: Aldhelm of Malmesbury between Ireland and Rome’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries* 131 (2001), 5-18; VW, *passim*.

²³³ On dedications, see *ECEC*, pp. 33-6; and M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 122-41; on pilgrimage, see chapter one, pp. 20-1 and references therein.

which decreed that services be held ‘according to the written copy which we have from the Roman church’ and that the calendar of saints’ feasts be likewise synchronised with that of the eternal city.²³⁴ While the picture may be more complex than early writers sometimes allow, Rome’s impact is undeniable; the papacy helped shape and supervise the Anglo-Saxon church, and the city influenced the character of Christianity in England, the minds of its writers, and expressions of religious devotion.

By the ninth century, the picture is somewhat less clear. The history of the church in this period is poorly documented, and this is especially the case in the central fifty years of the century; the time when viking activity was most severe. As well as despoliation by viking war-bands, minsters – the aristocratically founded ‘monastic’ communities so visible in the preceding century and a half – faced lay and episcopal lordship and appropriation of their resources, and many disappear from the record.²³⁵ Their fate varied region by region, with eastern areas faring worst, but even in areas that remained under West-Saxon control much ecclesiastical land fell into secular hands or was subject to heavier burdens from West-Saxon kingship.²³⁶ Bishops, meanwhile, faced similar pressures. In the first part of the century, the well-organised Southumbrian episcopate met at regularly at synods, presided over by Archbishops of Canterbury who had turbulent relationships with the dominant Mercian kings.²³⁷ Following the eclipse of Mercian power in the South, the ascendant West-Saxons came to an accord with Archbishop Ceolnoth (833-70) at the council of Kingston in 838, and thereafter regular

²³⁴ ‘Council of Clofesho’, 13; ed. HS, III, 367; and see É. Ó Carragáin, *The City of Rome and the World of Bede* (Jarrow Lecture, 1994), pp. 1-37, on early liturgical connections between Rome and England.

²³⁵ J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 121-34, 291-5.

²³⁶ For a regional survey of disruption to minsters, see Blair, *The Church*, pp. 295-323; and see R. Fleming, ‘Monastic lands and England’s defence in the Viking Age’, *EHR* 100 (1985), 247-65; and D. Dumville, ‘Ecclesiastical lands and the defence of Wessex in the first Viking-Age’, in his *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 29-54, on the secularisation of monastic lands.

²³⁷ *EHCC*, pp. 129-49, 175-203; C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils, c. 650-850* (Leicester, 1995), pp. 49-59, 205-34.

synodal activity is no longer attested.²³⁸ As with minsters, the viking impact was severe but regional. Episcopal lists suggest that dioceses east of Watling Street were badly affected, with Hexham and both East Anglian sees disappearing entirely, Lindsey apparently vacant for at least fifty years, and Lindisfarne and Leicester relocating.²³⁹ Following Alfred's decisive defeat of the vikings in 878, bishops whose sees were in 'greater Wessex' seem to have played an important part in the revival of learning and education.²⁴⁰ Indeed, Pratt has argued that under Alfred bishops acted as royal agents so that they were effectively indistinguishable from thegns, something which perhaps had negative consequences for pastoral provision.²⁴¹

The various pressures on bishops and minsters appear to have had an adverse affect on the literate ecclesiastical culture which was so distinctive in the preceding century. In the early 890s, King Alfred's claimed that by his accession in 871 'learning had declined so thoroughly' that there was not a single man south of the Thames able to read Latin, and that this collapse occurred earlier in the ninth century 'before everything was ransacked and burned'.²⁴² Many studies confirm the accuracy of this statement; while there is evidence for the composition and copying of Latin texts until c.840, this dies out soon after and does not begin again until the latter stages of Alfred's reign.²⁴³ Manuscripts did

²³⁸ S 1438.

²³⁹ M. O'Donovan, 'An interim revision of episcopal dates for the province of Canterbury, 850-950: part I', *ASE* 1 (1972), 23-44; eadem, 'An interim revision of episcopal dates for the province of Canterbury, 850-950: part II', *ASE* 2 (1973), 91-113; and see J. Barrow, 'Survival and mutation: Ecclesiastical institutions in the Danelaw in the ninth and tenth centuries', in *Cultures in Contact*, ed. D. Hadley and J. Richards (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 156-61, who argues the West-Saxon kings prevented these vacancies being filled.

²⁴⁰ See *OEPc*, pp. 7-8; p. 126; and see D. Dumville, 'King Alfred and the tenth-century reform of the English Church', in his *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 191-8.

²⁴¹ D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 52-4, 209-13.

²⁴² *OEPc*, p. 3; p. 126.

²⁴³ Only J. Morrish, 'King Alfred's letter as a source on learning in England in the ninth century', in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, ed. P. Szarmach (Albany, NY, 1986), pp. 87-107, argues Alfred exaggerated, whereas H. Gneuss, 'Anglo-Saxon libraries from the conversion to the Benedictine reform', *Settimane* 32 (1986), 672-80; idem, 'King Alfred and the history of Anglo-Saxon libraries' in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English literature*, eds. P. Brown, G. Crampton, and F. Robinson (Toronto, 1986), pp. 29-49; and M. Lapidge, 'Latin learning in ninth-century England' in his *Anglo-Latin Literature 600-899*

survive the upheaval of the 860s and 870s, but it appears that few could read them; analysis of Kentish charters surviving in their original form points to a gradual collapse in Latinity from the first quarter of the century, which reached its nadir in the 870s.²⁴⁴ We might take the appearance of a range of bilingual and vernacular documents – wills, leases, charter boundary clauses – in the first half of the century as further evidence of an inability to work in Latin, although the use of the vernacular may be more to do with the lay context in which these documents often functioned.²⁴⁵ Also, ecclesiastical centres in Western Mercia such as Worcester preserved some of their literate culture, and Keynes has argued for the continuity of ‘pragmatic literacy’ among the scribes who composed West-Saxon charters.²⁴⁶ Yet, if anything, these few and meagre examples confirm the broader truth of Alfred’s claims. Ecclesiastical culture – not just the liturgy, but the wider urge to read, copy, and compose Christian texts in Latin – survived the opening part of the century, but the central fifty years are characterised by a wide-scale loss of that culture and the basic means to sustain it.

The history of Christianity in ninth-century England is thus one of disruption and transformation. It is against this backdrop that this chapter analyses the impact of Rome on the ninth-century church and religious life, asking whether, in a century characterised by significant change, the city continued to play the central role in English Christianity that it had in the previous two centuries. A first section examines the role the papacy played in the affairs of the Anglo-Saxon Church, focussing on the formal hierarchy of the

(London, 1996), pp. 409-39, argue his claims were accurate. For a list of ninth-century manuscripts, see J. Morrish, ‘Dated and datable manuscripts copied in England during the ninth century: a preliminary list’, *Mediaeval Studies* 50 (1998), 512-38, at 537-8.

²⁴⁴ On the charters, see *EHCC*, pp. 164-74; and Lapidge, ‘Latin learning’, pp. 432-6, and pp. 410-32 on manuscript survival; see also R. Gameson, ‘Alfred the Great and the destruction and production of Christian books’, *Scriptorium* 49 (1995), 180-210.

²⁴⁵ See S. Kelly, ‘Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word’, in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 49-57.

²⁴⁶ S. Keynes, ‘The power of the written word: Alfredian England 871-99’, in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 184-9.

episcopate. The second section explores religious culture through its surviving material remnants, to ascertain whether Rome affected the devotional fabric of religious life. A final section investigates the cults of Roman saints in ninth-century England, and whether early devotion to these saints had been submerged by the burgeoning range of native cults. In this way, the chapter moves from the most formal to more local and individual aspects, to gain the fullest appreciation of Roman influences on the Anglo-Saxon religious.

Rome and the Anglo-Saxon church

I want to begin by looking at what Levison called ‘routine intercourse’, namely interaction between the Roman and Anglo-Saxon churches based on the ‘church organisation and custom’ that had developed since the conversion and establishment of the church in England.²⁴⁷ Levison’s notion of routine intercourse included appeals to Rome and the granting of monastic privileges, but these appear far from routine, the former normally occurring when conflict rendered the normal structures of ecclesiastical governance impotent, with the latter designed to exempt religious institutions from such governance.²⁴⁸ While I examine both of these phenomena elsewhere, this section concentrates on the two main types of routine intercourse – supervision and bestowal of the *pallium* – apparent in the seventh and eighth centuries, asking whether they continued into the ninth.

²⁴⁷ *ECEC*, p. 13-22.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18, 22-33.

From the earliest days of the Roman mission to Kent, the papacy maintained a supervisory relationship with the Anglo-Saxon church. Initially, this involved discourse between the missionaries and the pope about practical matters arising from the novel circumstances, typified by Gregory I's answers to Augustine's questions in the *libellus responsionum*.²⁴⁹ Bede recorded other letters in which the popes encouraged and advised Anglo-Saxon archbishops, but thereafter surviving papal letters to England are rare.²⁵⁰ It is worth noting that lost papal letters played an important part in the reforming council at Clofesho in 747, where at the start of proceedings two papal letters in which 'the famous pontiff Zachary admonished...the inhabitants of this isle of Britain' were read aloud and then explained in the vernacular.²⁵¹ Another letter, from Boniface (672/5-754), the West-Saxon missionary and Archbishop of Mainz to Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury (740-60), did much to bring this council about. In this letter, Boniface told Cuthbert of his reforms of the Frankish church, which now professed obedience and 'subjection to the Roman church', and had decreed that difficult matters which could not be solved by the synod should be referred by the metropolitan 'to the apostolic see and the Vicar of St Peter for settlement.'²⁵² It is difficult to tell whether Boniface's ideas are responsible for the authoritative status accorded to Roman practices in the canons of the subsequent council, or whether they were due to attitudes already current; it was in England that Boniface formed his burning sense of papal primacy.²⁵³ Yet, his letter – and to a lesser

²⁴⁹ *HE*, i.27.

²⁵⁰ See the letters of Pope Boniface V to Archbishop Justus, and Pope Honorius to Archbishop Honorius *HE*, ii.8, ii.18.

²⁵¹ 'Council of Clofesho', pref.; ed. HS, III, 362-3.

²⁵² Boniface, *Epistolae*, ed. M. Tangl, in *Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, MGH Epp. Sel. I (Berlin, 1916), no. 78; trans. E. Emerton, in *The Letters of Saint Boniface* (New York, 1940), no. 62; on Boniface see, T. Reuter, 'Saint Boniface and Europe', in *The Greatest Englishman: Essays on St Boniface and the Church at Crediton*, ed. T. Reuter (Exeter, 1980), pp. 69-94.

²⁵³ 'Council of Clofesho', 13, 15-16, 18, and 25; ed. HS, III, 367-71, and see Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 102-10.

extent the canons – represent a clear articulation of Rome’s place not just at the centre but at the head of the western church, in a period when this was by no means assured.²⁵⁴

At other times, papal legates were sent to England, as when John the Archcantor of St Peter’s was sent by Pope Agatho in 679 to check for monothelitism in the Anglo-Saxon church.²⁵⁵ Over a century later in 786, Pope Hadrian sent two legates to England where, at a Northumbrian council, they promulgated a set of decrees which attempted to regulate belief and practice of churchmen and the laity; these were then ratified by another such assembly in South.²⁵⁶ While Alcuin’s influence upon these decrees have received much attention, it must be noted that papal letters ‘containing most salutary statutes’ played an important part in the mission which, according to the legate Bishop George of Ostia, had been conceived of and organised by Pope Hadrian.²⁵⁷

By legate and by letter, then, seventh- and eighth-century popes supervised the doctrine and practice of the Anglo-Saxon church, although the fragmentary nature of the evidence leads to uncertainty about the consistency of such supervision. We know of two papal officials visiting England in the ninth-century, yet the visits by the papal messenger Aldulf in 808-9 were primarily connected with Northumbrian politics, and the appearance of the papal ‘herald’ Nothelm in a witness list from 824 suggests he was visiting the Mercian king.²⁵⁸ It is instead in the rich seam of surviving ninth-century papal letters that we find evidence of continued papal supervision of the Anglo-Saxon church. As well as

²⁵⁴ On this uncertainty, see T. Noble, ‘The papacy in the eighth and ninth centuries’, in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume II, c. 700-900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 577-586; but see also P. Delogu, ‘The papacy, Rome and the wider world in the seventh and eighth centuries’, in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 197-220.

²⁵⁵ *HE*, iv.17-8.

²⁵⁶ ‘Legates’ report to Pope Hadrian’, ed. E. Dümmler, *MGH Epp. IV (II)* (Berlin, 1895), 3; part. trans. *EHD*, 191.

²⁵⁷ ‘Legates’ report’, ed. Dümmler, 3; trans. *EHD*, 19; and see P. Wormald, ‘In search of King Offa’s law-code’, in *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500-1600*, eds. I. Wood and N. Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 33. See also Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 153-90; and *CC*, pp. 55-92, esp. 61-4, for discussion of Alcuin’s influence.

²⁵⁸ Appendix 1:7-10, 13; and see chapter one, p. 27 on Nothelm.

dealing with extra-ordinary matters, the lost correspondence between Leo III and Æthelheard from the turn of the century may well have contained papal guidance on the duty of the bishops and regulation of Christian society, and in his letter to Coenwulf of 802, Leo related how he had told the archbishop to excommunicate those who transgressed ‘the commandment of God’.²⁵⁹

In the correspondence of the second half of the century popes can be glimpsed advising and admonishing Anglo-Saxon churchmen in matters of religious practice. In the obscure letter-fragment of Leo IV to Archbishop Ceolnoth and Berhtwulf of Mercia (840-c.852) dated to 851, for example, the pope urged his recipients not to exceed that which ‘our fathers set down, whether in the blessed canons or in worldly laws’ and to keep such decrees untouched.²⁶⁰ The three surviving papal letters of 873-896 to churchmen all possess a supervisory element; John VIII’s letter to the two archbishops in 873-5 advised the adoption of Roman vestments, a later letter urged Archbishop Æthelred of Canterbury to protect the clergy and enforce the rules of marriage, while Formosus admonished the English bishops for allowing paganism to appear and exhorted them to ensure the swift consecration of replacement bishops and priests.²⁶¹ Moreover, as I argued in chapter one, these letters point to a wider epistolary discourse, suggesting that papal supervision was more regular than we might think. This is also apparent in John VIII’s statement to Æthelred, that ‘in accordance with the custom of your predecessors, you seek...to refer the necessary concerns of your Church to our episcopate as to its teacher’.²⁶²

Reminiscent of the ideas Boniface expressed to Cuthbert in 747, this statement shows an awareness of a customary relationship between archbishop and pope, one which could depended on requests from England as well as papal initiative. More widely, the

²⁵⁹ Appendix 2:1, 3, 7.

²⁶⁰ Appendix 2:14.

²⁶¹ Appendix 2:17, 20, 24.

²⁶² Appendix 2:20.

maintenance of this supervisory relationship between England and Rome across the ninth century points to one aspect of ecclesiastical continuity in this turbulent period.

The other type of routine intercourse visible in the seventh and eighth centuries was the effective certification of Anglo-Saxon archbishops via the gift of the *pallium*. In the fifth and sixth centuries, the *pallium* – a thin band of white wool decorated with crosses and worn on the shoulders during the mass – was a papal vestment bestowed upon favoured bishops. It was, Levison argued, in Gregory's plan for the English church that this vestment became explicitly associated with the office of a metropolitan bishop, who required this 'token of his rank to qualify him for the exercise of his functions as head of the province.'²⁶³ In addition, from the pontificate of Theodore (669-90) onwards the title of archbishop, previously reserved for patriarchs and papal vicars, became synonymous with a metropolitan who had received the *pallium*.²⁶⁴ Boniface and his fellow missionaries exported this model of ecclesiastical organisation to the continent where an older system prevailed, and where it was gradually instituted across the eighth and ninth centuries.²⁶⁵ It was certainly fully developed in England by the start of the ninth century when the archbishopric of Lichfield was demoted. Indeed, at this point conferment of the *pallium* was so synonymous with archiepiscopal elevation that, in the Anglo-papal correspondence, the sending of 'the dignity of the *pallium* to the bishop of the Mercians' stood for the elevation of that see.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ *ECEC*, pp. 18-21; and *HE*, i.29, ii.8, 18; see also; A. King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church* (London, 1957), pp. 152-5; *EHCC*, pp. 66-7.

²⁶⁴ See N. Brooks, 'Canterbury and Rome: the limits and myth of *Romanitas*', *Settimane* 49 (2002), 814-5.

²⁶⁵ *ECEC*, pp. 78-93; and see Boniface, *Epistolae*, ed. Tangl, no. 78; trans. Emerton, no. 62; on later continental developments, see P. Grierson, 'Rognastus of Arles and the Pallium', *EHR* 49 (1934), 74-83; and F. Kempf, H-G. Beck, E. Ewig, and J. Jungmann, *The Church in the Age of Feudalism*, trans. A. Biggs (London, 1980), pp. 72-3, 166-9, 286-90.

²⁶⁶ Appendix 2:2, 4, and S 1431a.

Possession of the *pallium* gave an archbishop his dominant position within the ecclesiastical province, something made clear in Leo III's decree demoting Lichfield and reinstituting Gregory I's plan that the bishops were to be 'subject for ever to blessed Archbishop Augustine, his chaplain, by the sacred use of the *pallium*.'²⁶⁷ It also conferred on the metropolitan the right to consecrate suffragan bishops.²⁶⁸ The *pallium* thus bound the ninth-century Anglo-Saxon church to the papacy; archbishops had to send to the pope – including a written profession of faith – before they could effectively exercise the powers of their office.²⁶⁹ In turn, the popes conceded part of their ecclesiastical authority, constructed around the primacy of St Peter and the apostolic succession, to metropolitans; the pallium was itself a contact relic imbued with Peter's *praesentia*.²⁷⁰

Until the tenth century, it was normal practice for *pallia* to be sent by popes to England, unless there was some doubt over the election of the archbishop in question, and this routine intercourse can be glimpsed in the seventh and eighth century annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which sometimes record receipt of the pallium by archbishops.²⁷¹ On one occasion, the northern recension of the *Chronicle* reports that Ælfwold of Northumbria (779-88) petitioned the pope for Eanbald of York's (779/80-96) *pallium*, with the *Historia regum* noting that, once it had been received, Eanbald was 'solemnly confirmed in his bishopric'.²⁷² In the ninth century, Popes continued to send *pallia* to newly elected Anglo-Saxon archbishops although, of the seven archiepiscopal elections,

²⁶⁷ Appendix 2:8.

²⁶⁸ See *HE*, i.29; and Alcuin, *Ep.*, 128; trans. *EHD*, 203.

²⁶⁹ On these professions, none of which survive from Anglo-Saxon archbishops of Canterbury or York, see *ECEC*, pp. 233-40.

²⁷⁰ See J. Toynbee and J. Ward-Perkins, *The Shrine of St Peter and the Vatican Excavations* (London, 1956), pp. 220-4, on the niche above Peter's tomb where *pallia* are placed before dispatch to archbishops.

²⁷¹ *ASC*, 736 ABC, 766, 627 DE, 735, 797; *EHCC*, p. 216.

²⁷² *ASC*, 780 DE; *Historia regum*, 50, ed. T. Arnold, *Symeonis Monachis Opera Omnia*, Rolls Series 75, (2 vols., London, 1885), II, 47.

the receipt of the *pallium* is recorded only three times.²⁷³ Nevertheless, annalists never recorded all such instances and, with the *pallium* fulfilling an important function, we should – as I argued in chapter one – only assume *pallia* were not received if there is evidence to that effect. With this in mind, we can be reasonable sure that Æthelred would have petitioned for and received his *pallium* following his election in 870, again suggesting that routine intercourse was maintained at the time of the most severe viking incursions and religious breakdown. In the ninth century, then, forms of routine intercourse between the Anglo-Saxon and Roman churches that had developed in the preceding two centuries continued, even in the times of greatest turmoil. This intercourse saw Rome exercising tangible power in and over the Anglo-Saxon church, in the significant, but relatively narrow, functions of licensing the archiepiscopate and supervising the church and its practices. Yet this was not the only role Rome played in the ninth-century Anglo-Saxon church.

Archbishops, Kings, and Popes

The church always depended to some extent upon the support of elite patronage and protection, in turn protecting the souls of their benefactors in the afterlife and offering access to the technology of writing and Christian culture. In the eighth century the scale and stakes of this cooperation had increased, with the relationships between the dominant Mercian kings and archbishops of Canterbury becoming a crucial factor in the success and ambitions of both parties, a situation which continued into the ninth.²⁷⁴ For as long as we can follow it, the situation appears to have been similar in Northumbria, with the

²⁷³ See chapter one, pp. 31-3.

²⁷⁴ J. Campbell, 'Placing King Alfred', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 6-11.

bond between king and archbishop of York a crucial one until it drops out of sight around 810.²⁷⁵ These relationships could break down into bitter, long-lasting disputes over property and the rights and roles of one in relation to the other, and the papal role in these conflicts remains underexplored, something I hope to rectify here, in doing to illuminate the greater role that popes could play in the Anglo-Saxon church.

The immediate background to the ninth century saw one of the most spectacular breakdowns of what I will call the Southumbrian church-king axis, resulting in the elevation of the Mercian see of Lichfield to an archbishopric between 787 and 803. Offa of Mercia's (757-96) domination of Kent and suppression of its native kings led to his falling out with Archbishop Jænberht (765-792), who himself had strong ties to the Kentish king Ecgberht II (*fl.* 765-79).²⁷⁶ It appears that when, in an attempt to secure his dynasty, Offa sought to have his son Ecgfrith anointed king, Jænberht resisted and Offa sought the elevation of Lichfield to provide himself with a pliant archbishop who would anoint his son. While the somewhat-partisan documents which report these events were written after the fact and sought to undo the elevation, we should not doubt their attribution of primary responsibility for the matter to Offa.²⁷⁷ Papal approval was required for such a drastic move, not least because it required a new *pallium*, and this took the form of a charter (*carta*) from Pope Hadrian 'about the *pallium* and the archiepiscopal see in the church of Lichfield'.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ See CC, pp. 49-50, 148, 202; on the difficulties with Northumbrian history in this period, see D. Dumville, 'Textual archaeology and Northumbrian history subsequent to Bede', in *Coinage in Ninth-Century Northumbria*, ed. D. Metcalf (1987), pp. 43-55.

²⁷⁶ EHCC, pp. 111-27, remains the best account of Lichfield's elevation, superseding C. Godfrey, 'The Archbishopric of Lichfield', in *Studies in Church History*, vol. 1, eds. C. Dugmore and C. Duggan (London, 1964), pp. 145-53; see also D. Kirby *The Earliest English Kings* (rev. edn, London and New York, 2000), pp.140-6; and CC, pp. 178-80, on the Carolingian dimension.

²⁷⁷ Appendix 2:2, 4; and S1431a; trans. EHD 210, are most explicit, while Alcuin's letters refer obliquely to the matter, for example Alcuin, *Ep.*, 128, 255; trans. 49, 53; see also ASC, 787.

²⁷⁸ S 1431a; trans. EHD 210.

What is perhaps most surprising about this affair is the manner in which Offa sidestepped Jænberht, to conduct his business directly with the pope to the detriment of the archbishop. It is possible that Hadrian believed Jænberht responsible for starting the rumour that Offa and Charlemagne were plotting to replace him – a rumour Offa had been keen to quash – and consequently did not trust the archbishop.²⁷⁹ Indeed, such a loss of trust may account for the prominence of the Mercian king relative to the Kentish archbishop in the report of the papal legate Bishop George in 786, as well as for Jænberht's marginalisation in the Lichfield affair.²⁸⁰ Even if this was not the case, Lichfield's elevation shows that papal power to ratify profound alterations in the episcopal structure could be invoked by a determined king over the head of an archbishop.

As with its elevation, papal permission was required to unmake the archbishopric of Lichfield, a process which began soon after the deaths of Offa and Ecgrith in 796 and took until 803 to complete. Despite the cooperation of the new Mercian king Coenwulf (796-21) and Archbishop Æthelheard (793-805), Leo III was reluctant to undo his predecessor's work, initially refusing the request despite the sending of several envoys and gifts to Rome.²⁸¹ Following further letters, gifts, and a visit by Æthelheard himself in 802, Leo acquiesced to the combined demands of king and archbishop, and issued a decree reinstituting Canterbury's rights 'just as they were from former times'.²⁸² Finally, at the synod of Clofesho held in October 803, the archbishopric of Lichfield was abolished and, 'with the consent and permission (*cum consensu et licentia*) of the lord apostolic, Pope Leo', Hadrian's charter was invalidated on the grounds that it had been

²⁷⁹ *Codex Carolinus*, ed. F. W. Gundlach, MGH Epp. III (I) (Berlin, 1892), 92; trans. H. Loyn and J. Percival, *The Reign of Charlemagne: Documents on Carolingian Government and Administration* (London, 1975), no. 39; see *EHCC*, p.117, 350; and *CC*, pp. 197-9.

²⁸⁰ 'Legates' report', ed. Dümmler, 3; part. trans. *EHD*, 19.

²⁸¹ Appendix 2:1-4; and see chapter one, pp. 41-3; in appendix 2:2 Coenwulf specifies he had sent an unsuccessful envoy in 797, as well as those in 798. See also *EHCC*, pp. 120-7; and *CC*, pp. 199-201.

²⁸² Appendix 2:5-8; and see chapter one, pp. 49-50.

obtained ‘by deception and misleading suggestion.’²⁸³ The ninth century thus began with the Southumbrian church-king axis working in unity with the pope to undo a situation caused by the breakdown of a previous axis, something made most clear in the Clofesho document which emphasised this unity at the start of each of its three major decrees.²⁸⁴ For his part, Æthelheard used papal power to reconstruct his ecclesiastical province and, in the process, reconstructed his own authority on the basis of immutable papal command, securing it against future challenge. It is also worth noting that from around the time that the demotion process began, there survives a series of episcopal professions of faith made to the Archbishop of Canterbury by bishops-elect.²⁸⁵ An obvious inspiration for this new and vigorous form of episcopal profession, designed to bolster Canterbury’s position and ensure loyalty from suffragans, were the archiepiscopal professions of faith required before the *pallium* could be sent. While more work is required on the possible continental models of these professions, it is tempting to take them as evidence of Æthelheard reconstructing the authority of his see using methods garnered from papal practice.

We might expect papal involvement in the unmaking of an archbishopric, but not in the next major rupturing of the Southumbrian church-king axis which took place when Æthelheard’s successor Wulfred (805-32) fought Coenwulf for control over certain Kentish minsters. This conflict – which reached its height between 817 and 821 – was part of a wider discourse over the lay involvement with minsters dating back at least to the time of Bede.²⁸⁶ Always a contentious issue, this conflagration appears to have begun in 803 when, at the same synod which demoted Lichfield, Æthelheard put forward a

²⁸³ S 1431a; trans. *EHD* 210.

²⁸⁴ S 1431a; trans. *EHD* 210.

²⁸⁵ *Canterbury Professions*, ed. M. Richter (Torquay, 1973); and also *EHCC*, pp. 164-7.

²⁸⁶ See Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, ed. C. Plummer, *Beda opera historica* (2 vols., Oxford, 1896), I, 405-23; trans. *EHD*, 170; and Blair, *The Church*, pp. 79-121; cf. *EHCC*, pp. 175-206; and Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 223-34.

decree forbidding minsters ‘to elect for themselves laymen and seculars over the inheritance of the Lord.’²⁸⁷ In a manner similar to the decrees demoting Lichfield, the archbishop emphasised that he acted both with the consent of the synod and the minsters themselves, as well as with papal approval, frequently citing a mandate ‘from the apostolic lord pope Leo’.²⁸⁸ This mandate was undoubtedly a separate decree gained from Leo while he was in Rome; indeed, other texts make it clear that his visit concerned ecclesiastical matters beyond the positions of Canterbury and Lichfield.²⁸⁹ Æthelheard thus used the opportunity presented by his visit to Rome to assault lay lordship over minsters, although the impact of these decrees in the remaining two years of his episcopate is uncertain, and he remained on good terms with Coenwulf. Nevertheless, the archbishop’s actions represent an attempt to use papal authority in a contested sphere where ecclesiastical and secular interests clashed over control of these propertied monastic communities.

Following his election to the archiepiscopate in 805, Wulfred – who had been appointed archdeacon to support the elderly Æthelheard – continued his predecessor’s attack on lay lordship.²⁹⁰ Leo III was aware that Wulfred had already fallen out with Coenwulf in 808 but was inexplicit about the cause, which may have concerned Northumbrian politics.²⁹¹ Later, in 814, Wulfred travelled to Rome and according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* returned the following year ‘with pope Leo’s blessing (*bledsunge*)...to his own bishopric’, a statement which suggests that Wulfred had secured papal support for the assault on lay lordship he initiated the following year at the 816 council of Chelsea.²⁹² Indeed, Coenwulf already had a papal privilege supporting his possession of minsters and others

²⁸⁷ S 1431b.

²⁸⁸ S 1431b; the remarkable witness list provides some proof of this claim.

²⁸⁹ Appendix 2:9; and see the proem to S 1431a; trans. *EHD* 210; and also appendix 2:7.

²⁹⁰ *EHCC*, p. 132.

²⁹¹ *Leonis III papae epistolae X*, ed. K. Hampe, MGH Epp. V (III) (Berlin, 1899), 2.

²⁹² *ASC*, 814-5.

may also have possessed such documents, so Wulfred would naturally have sought more recent papal approval before assailing lay lordship and, by extension, these papal privileges.²⁹³ At the council of Chelsea in 816 Wulfred not only decreed that monastic communities should not be ‘made the dominion nor the residence of seculars’, but also declared that ecclesiastical property – both episcopal and monastic – could not be alienated outside the church for more than one lifetime, and that bishops had the power to appoint the heads of minsters in their own dioceses.²⁹⁴ Cubitt has described these canons as a vigorous assertion of episcopal and synodal power, arguing that they collapsed the distinction between monastic and episcopal property, a move which had the potential to greatly increase the resources of the episcopate.²⁹⁵

Wulfred’s consequent attempts to enforce the decrees of Chelsea seem to have resulted in his extended conflict with Coenwulf over the Kentish houses of Minster-in-Thamet and Reculver.²⁹⁶ Our main evidence for this conflict, which began in 817 and involved the suspension of Wulfred until Coenwulf’s death in 821, is a document recording the final resolution of the matter a decade later around 827.²⁹⁷ A highly partisan account produced at Canterbury in rather imperfect Latin, it reveals that Coenwulf had taken action against Wulfred both in England and ‘beyond the sea at the apostolic see’, although we cannot be certain whether this action itself led to the archbishop’s temporary loss of his see.²⁹⁸

The text also describes how Coenwulf had threatened Wulfred with forfeiture and permanent exile which could not be overturned by ‘the word of the lord pope or emperor’, revealing an expectation that Wulfred would attempt to enlist papal or

Carolingian support against him. Later, Coenwulf promised to clear Wulfred’s now

²⁹³ Appendix 2:12, and 12a on the possibility of other privileges.

²⁹⁴ ‘Council of Chelsea’, 4, 7, 8; ed. HS, III, 580-3.

²⁹⁵ Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 191-203.

²⁹⁶ The best account remains that of *EHCC*, pp. 180-197.

²⁹⁷ S 1436; on the complexities of this document, see S. Keynes, *The Councils of Clofesho* (Brixworth Lecture 11, 1994), n. 56.

²⁹⁸ S 1436; cf. *EHCC*, pp. 180-1.

besmirched name in Rome or, if he could not do this, return the money Wulfred had paid him as part of the settlement.²⁹⁹ In this conflict, blow and counterblow were struck with papal backing, and the weight accorded to such support in a matter as much about property and ownership as anything distinctly ecclesiastical is remarkable. For, although minsters were religious institutions over which bishops exercised some rights of supervision, they could also be inherited, owned, and occupied by laymen.³⁰⁰ The papally-supported decrees of Clofesho in 803 and Chelsea in 816 did lay down ecclesiastical principle, but the resultant struggle over the Kentish minsters in which the papacy became embroiled was about ownership. Moreover, in this struggle, the Anglo-Saxon episcopate could not count on the support of its superior, as Coenwulf – like Offa before – was able to enlist the pope against his archbishop and use him to control and diminish Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical power.

It is clear that in the first quarter of the ninth-century the papacy became increasingly involved in the Anglo-Saxon church's relations and conflicts with secular powers, particularly those between southern archbishops and Mercian kings. Not only is the degree of papal involvement and its influence outside strictly ecclesiastical spheres surprising, but also the fact that it was as likely to hinder a church which it licensed and supervised through routine intercourse as help it. Archbishops could only be certain of papal backing when they worked in alliance with the dominant Mercian kings. Of course, appeals to Rome and attempts to gain papal support were not unheard of before this time. In the late seventh century, Wilfrid made numerous appeals to Rome over his recurrent expulsion from his see and concomitant loss of property, while in the 750s an abbot Forthred had successfully enlisted papal support in his attempts to regain minsters from

²⁹⁹ S 1436.

³⁰⁰ See the discussion of S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c.600-900* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 120-34.

which he had been dispossessed by the Northumbrian king and archbishop.³⁰¹ Yet the scale of these ninth-century examples and the intensity of the contacts involved were certainly novel in an insular context, if not in a continental one.

After 825, the growing Roman involvement in Southumbrian ecclesiastical politics appears to have ceased, with the papacy reverting to a role limited to ‘routine intercourse’. This development ultimately stemmed from major shifts in the geopolitical balance among the Southern kingdoms and consequent renegotiation of the church-king axis. In 825, the West-Saxon king Ecgberht defeated Beornwulf of Mercia at *Ellendun* and within four years had achieved the submission of all Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.³⁰² Ecgberht prised away Mercian dependant territories in the South and East, including Kent, creating a new dominant power in Southumbria.³⁰³ Mercia, meanwhile, was ruled by a succession of ill-fated kings until it experienced a slight resurgence in its fortunes in the second reign of Wiglaf in the 830s. While poorly documented, the years following *Ellendun* must have seen some contacts between Canterbury and the newly dominant West-Saxon kings.³⁰⁴ For, in 838 at royal council held at Kingston-on-Thames, Archbishop Ceolnoth, Ecgberht, and his son Æthelwulf made an accommodation – later ratified by another West-Saxon council after Æthelwulf’s accession to the kinship, and by a Southumbrian synod – which clarified the respective positions of each party.³⁰⁵ In return for some confiscated estates, Ceolnoth offered the West-Saxons perpetual

³⁰¹ Wilfrid’s appeals are related in *VW*, chs. 29-34, 51-4; cf. *HE*, v.19; Forthred’s appeal is known from a letter of Pope Paul I written 757-8, ed. HS, III, 394-6; trans. *EHD*, 184.

³⁰² *ASC*, 825-30. On these developments see Kirby, *Earliest English Kings*, pp. 155-62; S. Keynes, ‘The control of Kent in the ninth century’, *Early Medieval Europe* 2.2 (1993), 111-24; and idem, ‘Mercia and Wessex in the ninth century’, in *Mercia: an Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, eds. M. Brown and C. Farr (London, 2001), pp. 310-28.

³⁰³ *ASC*, 825.

³⁰⁴ Little is known about Ecgberht’s relationship with the church, see B. Yorke, ‘The Bishops of Winchester, the Kings of Wessex, and the development of Winchester in the ninth and early tenth centuries’, in *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings*, ed. D. Pelteret (London and New York, 2000), pp. 107-11.

³⁰⁵ S 1438; on the drafting of this agreement, see S. Keynes, ‘The West Saxon Charters of King Æthelwulf and his sons’, *EHR* 109 (1994), 1112-4; on the accommodation, see Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 45-8.

friendship and a settlement of potential lay-lordship questions which imposed the West-Saxon king as secular lord and bishops as spiritual lords of minsters.³⁰⁶ While this move was designed to protect free communities and ensure the maintenance of monastic life, it gave the kings of Wessex potential access to considerable economic resources.

In making this agreement, Ceolnoth abandoned Wulfred's attempts to strengthen and unify the episcopate, allowing the limitation of ecclesiastical power. Security must have been a prime incentive in this move, with increasing threats to ecclesiastical property from viking raiders, potential depredations by unappeased West-Saxons, and also the 'many quarrels and innumerable disputes' which had erupted after the death of Coenwulf and resulted in the widespread despoliation of churches.³⁰⁷ By offering perpetual friendship to Ecgberht's dynasty and clarifying the relative positions of church and king in relation to minsters, the archbishop removed the motivation to involve the pope in the Anglo-Saxon church beyond that entailed in routine intercourse. In theory at least, the perpetual alliance secured in 838-9 would override the cycles of conflict and cooperation that stimulated papal involvement from 787 onwards, as well as breaking the links with Mercia through which such cycles had occurred.

For most of the remainder of the century, it appears that the new church-king axis forged at Kingston held together. A letter of Pope John VIII to Archbishop Æthelred of Canterbury does, however, suggest that the relationship broke down quite severely in the mid 870s. Probably written in the summer of 878, this letter was a reply to the archbishop with whose adversities and hardships John empathised, exhorting Æthelred to remain a 'wall for the house of the lord' and 'to resist strenuously not only the king, but

³⁰⁶ S 1438; *EHCC*, pp. 197-203.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-3; and S 1435 on the post-Coenwulf disputes.

all who wish to do any wrong against it.’³⁰⁸ John then stated that he had ‘been at pains to admonish and exhort your king’ via letter, telling Alfred that he was to obey his archbishop and support the church if he wished to retain his kingdom and reach heaven.³⁰⁹ Brooks and Pratt have suggested that this represents a reopening of the Kentish royal minster question, but it may actually signal wider ecclesiastical resistance to the demands Alfred placed upon both minsters and the episcopate.³¹⁰ Whatever the case, this letter reveals a breakdown in the church-king axis, in which the southern archbishop enlisted papal support against a West-Saxon king who was apparently a threat to churches and their clergy.

There is another, often-overlooked dimension to this letter which has a profound bearing on this conflict. In one passage, John told Æthelred that he wished to preserve ‘unimpaired and beyond doubt the privilege of your see’ as was established by Augustine under Gregory, commanding that it ‘be observed forever by all orders, whether ecclesiastical or lay’. He then reassured the archbishop that without investigation, he would not believe ‘whatever adverse thing may be related to us concerning you’ and that he had ‘admonished your king to show due honour to you...and be anxious to preserve all the rights of your privilege in everlasting security and keep them undiminished’.³¹¹ John’s letter thus reveals that Alfred had been sending envoys to the pope making allegations against his archbishop, a move reminiscent of Coenwulf’s actions to secure papal support against Wulfred, and those of Offa against Jænberht. Moreover, Canterbury’s ‘privilege (*privilegium*)’ was under threat from persons including the king and, if this was the same privilege referred to by Leo III in 802 as is suggested by the

³⁰⁸ Appendix 2:20; and see chapter one, pp. 45-6.

³⁰⁹ Appendix 2:20.

³¹⁰ *EHCC*, p. 150; and Pratt, *Political Thought*, p. 100; on Alfred’s use of minsters, see Blair, *The Church*, pp. 323-9.

³¹¹ Appendix 2:18.

common allusions to Augustine and Gregory's statutes, this meant its archiepiscopal status and jurisdiction over twelve suffragan bishops with the right to consecrate them.³¹² Here we have direct evidence that in the mid 870s Alfred was acting against Canterbury's metropolitan rights, evidence which, by virtue of its survival in John VIII's register, cannot be dismissed as an interpolation or forgery.³¹³ Infuriatingly, we lack further information about this matter. Still, it must be noted that this conflict exhibits striking similarities to those earlier in the century, when the collapse of a church-king axis was followed by appeals to the pope by both sides, and infringements of the archbishop of Canterbury's ability to govern his province. Unlike earlier instances, however, the pope sided with the archbishop against the king with whom he was in conflict, something doubtless influenced by John VIII's less positive experience of secular rulers.³¹⁴ In contrast, a strong alliance with Frankish rulers lay at the base of both Hadrian and Leo III's papacies and may have influenced their attitudes to Anglo-Saxon affairs. Ultimately, this reversion to a prior pattern of conflict highlights the vulnerabilities in the Canterbury-Wessex axis and its similarities with the earlier Canterbury-Mercian axis, suggesting that while the Kingston agreement had removed the need for papal involvement when relations were good, such intervention remained a potentially decisive factor in major conflicts. Rome retained the capacity to affect the Anglo-Saxon church's relations with secular power; it was circumstances in England that determined whether this power would be brought into play.

³¹² See appendix 2:17; Nelson has suggested that Alfred sought papal approval to move the metropolitan see to London in the early 880s, but there is no evidence for this; J. Nelson, 'The political ideas of Alfred of Wessex', in *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe*, ed. A. Duggan (London, 1993), pp. 155-7.

³¹³ The survival of certain documents (appendix 2:8, 24) among later forgeries has led to a suspicion that all mentions of Canterbury's rights have been tampered with, though I am not so sure; see H. Boehmer, *Die Fälschungen Erzbischof Lanfranks von Canterbury* (Leipzig, 1902); pp. 96-102, 155-6; and R. Southern, 'The Canterbury forgeries', *EHR* 73 (1958), 193-226.

³¹⁴ On John VIII, see P. Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (London, 1970), pp. 279-85.

Even so, ecclesiastical relations with the West-Saxons appear rather more stable those between Mercia and Canterbury, the relationship between church and king only rupturing once at the height of military turbulence in the south. One reason for this was the differing ways in which church and kings met under each axis. Across the period of Mercian supremacy, church and king interacted at supra-regional synods, which Cubitt has described as ‘the place where the tensions resulting from royal and episcopal ambitions were played out.’³¹⁵ The elevation and demotion of Lichfield and principal events of the Wulfred-Coenwulf conflict occurred at synods, and the consequent Anglo-papal contact was not only conducted at such gatherings, but also through them: Coenwulf’s letter to Leo in 798 was sent by the king ‘with the bishops, ealdormen and every degree of dignity under our authority’, also referring to ‘the letter which Archbishop Æthelheard wrote to you in the presence of all our provincial bishops’.³¹⁶ Leo addressed his reply to the king, bishops, and ealdormen; a communal element also apparent in his letter of 802 to Coenwulf, where he spoke of ‘your royal Excellency and all the magnates of your realm’ as well as the demands made on him by ‘your excellent bishops’.³¹⁷ Synods were the forum at which and through which papal involvement in Anglo-Saxon affairs was invoked and deployed.

After the establishment of West-Saxon dominance in the south, synodal activity decreased markedly and appears to have ceased altogether shortly after the accommodation of Kingston in 838.³¹⁸ This development may well have been actively encouraged by Ecgbert and Æthelwulf, who ruled their dependant territories in a different fashion to their Mercian predecessors and preferred, it seems, to interact with

³¹⁵ Cubitt, *Church Councils*, p. 230, and pp. 205-34 on the nature of synods in this period; see also Keynes, *Councils of Clofesho*, pp. 1-22.

³¹⁶ Appendix 2:2; both may have been drafted at the 798 council of *Clofesho*, on which see also S 1258; trans. *EHD* 79.

³¹⁷ Appendix 2:4, 7.

³¹⁸ Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 235-40.

churchmen in the more personal forum of the royal household where bishops were exposed to the king's presence by themselves or in small groups.³¹⁹ In the second half of the ninth century increased West-Saxon control over the southern episcopate was coupled with the apparent end of synods. However, it seems nobody informed Rome about the new arrangements. Of the three Anglo-papal letters from the period of West-Saxon dominance which retain their greeting clauses, two were apparently addressed to synodal audiences. John VIII's letter of 873-5 was written to both archbishops 'and all the bishops, priests and deacons and all the clergy', whilst the letter of Formosus written in the early 890s was addressed to 'all the bishops of England'.³²⁰ Similar to those from earlier letters, these greeting clauses suggest the popes were addressing their wider hortatory letters to synods. In so doing, John and Formosus were probably working from an outdated formulary or exemplar which originated at the time when Anglo-papal correspondence originated at these assemblies. This anachronism highlights the vast changes which had occurred across the ninth century and, as much as the accommodation between Wessex and Canterbury removed the root causes of papal involvement in the Anglo-Saxon church beyond routine intercourse, so the disappearance of the forum through which such involvement was carried out must have played an important part in the reduced papal role in the final two thirds of the century.

³¹⁹ See S. Keynes, 'Mercia and Wessex', pp. 310-328; idem, 'Control of Kent', pp. 111-31; and Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 44-8, 52-8; see also Campbell, 'Placing', pp. 10-11.

³²⁰ Appendix 2:15, 22.

Rome and Christian culture

As noted in the introduction, the distinctive literary culture of the previous century, along with Latin literacy, had dried up by the middle part of the century at the latest, and few distinctly religious texts were composed and copied across the century as a whole. Consequently, we cannot approach an understanding of Roman influence through an examination of the literary culture of Christianity, as one could for the previous century. Instead, I will explore two other areas for which there is slightly more extensive evidence: the material remnants of ninth-century religious practice, and the cult of saints. Both these areas of religious life were influenced by Roman practices and forms before the ninth century, and I will ask whether, and in what ways, such influences continued, changed, or ceased altogether.

The material culture of religious devotion

In the *Historia abbatum*, Bede famously recorded how the Benedict Biscop, ‘crossed the sea to France to look for masons to build him a stone church in the Roman style he had always loved so much.’³²¹ This oft-quoted passage illustrates the ideas which might be attached to the fabricated structures. Bede was certainly concerned to emphasise the ‘Roman’ nature of the material and liturgical aspects of his monastery, which were sourced directly from Rome or, as in the case of the masons who built Wearmouth ‘*iuxta*

³²¹ Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 5, ed. Plummer, I, 368; trans. Farmer, pp. 191.

morem romanorum’, from Francia.³²² Stephanus’s *Vita Wilfridi* similarly highlights the Roman elements in the churches constructed by Wilfrid at Ripon and Hexham, the former supported by ‘various columns and porticoes’ with an altar draped in purple and gold cloth, and the latter described as the grandest ‘this side of the alps’.³²³ In a context which had recently seen conflict between ‘Roman’ and ‘Irish’ church forms, such buildings were statements of affinity with ‘the touchstone of orthodoxy’, namely Rome.³²⁴ Even so, modern commentators studying the remains of these structures have questioned such contemporary attributions of Roman style. Although Cramp has noted ‘Roman’ elements in the layout and ornamentation of Wearmouth and Jarrow, Gem has pointed out that ‘the form of the buildings as known today has little to do with seventh-century church architecture in Rome’.³²⁵ All that remains of Wilfrid’s original churches at Ripon and Hexham are the crypts which, while modelled on the Roman catacombs, are more in the way of loose imitation designed to create the atmosphere of a catacomb.³²⁶ Furthermore, Higgit has noted that while the portrayal of Peter on St Cuthbert’s wooden coffin represents what was thought of as Roman, it differed from how Peter was actually portrayed in Rome, a case of ‘the Roman party being more Roman than the Romans.’³²⁷

³²² Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 5-6, ed. Plummer, I. 368-70; trans. Farmer, pp. 191-3.

³²³ VW, chs. 17, 22.

³²⁴ J. O’Reilly, ‘The art of authority’, in *After Rome: c.400-c.800*, ed. T. Charles-Edwards (Oxford, 2003), p. 144.

³²⁵ R. Cramp, ‘Monkwearmouth and Jarrow: the archaeological evidence’, in *Famulus Christi*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp. 11, 15-16; eadem, ‘Anglo-Saxon and Italian sculpture’, in her *Studies in Anglo-Saxon Sculpture* (London, 1992), pp. 304-5. R. Gem, ‘Towards an iconography of Anglo-Saxon architecture’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 46 (1983), 2.

³²⁶ Gem, ‘Towards and iconography’, 3; and J. Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c. 300-1200* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 91-3. R. Bailey, ‘St Wilfrid, Ripon and Hexham’, in *Studies in Insular Art and Archaeology*, eds. C. Karkov and R. Farrell (Oxford, OH, 1991), pp. 17-22; and idem, ‘Seventh-century work at Ripon and Hexham’, in *The Archaeology of Cathedrals*, eds. T. Tatton-Brown and J. Munby (Oxford, 1996), pp. 14-17, suggests the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem may also have been a model.

³²⁷ J. Higgit, ‘The iconography of St Peter in Anglo-Saxon England, and St Cuthbert’s coffin’, in *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, eds. G. Bonner, D. Rollason, and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), p. 275.

Through their iconography, structure, ornament, style, and location, artefacts and archaeological remains can betray the influence of Rome upon the devotional fabric of Anglo-Saxon religious practice. However, as the above examples show, interpreting this evidence is not unproblematic. The divergence between the eighth-century descriptions of these buildings and objects and their interpretation in light of modern scholarship demonstrates that what was thought of as Roman then may not actually look Roman to us. When textual references accompany the material evidence this is not such an issue, but when no texts exist to shed light on contemporary interpretations – as is the case throughout the ninth century – it presents more of a problem for, while we can identify the influence of Roman style, it is harder to know what contemporaries made of them. Issues such as dating further complicate discussion, particularly when objects lack the secure contexts and fixed *terminus* points provided by texts; dating by stylistic comparison is never completely secure.³²⁸ Still, by attempting to contextualise instances where Roman styles, forms, techniques, and images – whether classical or contemporary – are employed in England, we can attempt not only to understand the impact of Rome on ninth-century devotional fabric, but recover a little of what this fabric may have meant.

I want to begin by looking at the decoration and illumination of manuscripts. Although the middle part of the century is marked by a virtual cessation in book production, many members of the ‘Tiberius Group’ of illuminated manuscripts are thought to date from the first half of the ninth century.³²⁹ Produced between 800 and 850 in what Brown has termed the Mercian ‘*schriftprovinz*’, these often lavishly-decorated manuscripts differ

³²⁸ See the pessimistic assessments of D. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Art from the Seventh Century to the Norman Conquest* (London, 1984), pp. 61, 71-2, 84-5, on sculpture; and Blair, *The Church*, pp.126-9 on the period after the 820s.

³²⁹ J. Morrish, ‘Dated and datable manuscripts’, 512-38; and L. Webster and J. Backhouse, eds., *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900* (London, 1991), pp. 195-220; M. Brown, *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage and Power in Ninth-Century England* (London, 1996), esp. pp. 262-78; eadem, ‘Mercian Manuscripts? The ‘Tiberius’ Group and its historical context’, in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, eds. M. Brown and C. Farr (London, 2001), pp. 279-90.

from those produced as part of the Alfredian revival, which are utilitarian and without much decoration.³³⁰ The background to ninth-century Tiberius Group Manuscripts lies in the early-eighth-century Vespasian Psalter (British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian A.i), which forged a new Southumbrian decorative style from diverse influences, and which can be broadly described as ‘romanising’.³³¹ Two other eighth-century Kentish manuscripts, the Stockholm Codex Aureus (Stockholm, Royal Library, MS A.135; c.750) and the Codex Bigotianus (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 281; s.viii²), express classicising tendencies with greater force, employing purple pages, gold and silver lettering, naturalistic figure depiction, the architectural treatment of portrait settings, uncial and rustic capital display scripts, and even dolphins.³³²

Despite the existence of these luxuriously decorated works, most manuscripts of the later Tiberius Group eschewed such features in favour of mixed or insular models for their decoration.³³³ This is perhaps because many of them are highly individualised prayer-books made for patrons with specific tastes, or are practical texts with relatively little ornamentation. The principal exception to these trends is the ‘Royal Bible’ (British Library, Royal MS I E.vi), a grand but fragmented gospel book produced at Canterbury (probably at St Augustine’s) in the second quarter of the ninth century. In its naturalistic figural depictions, and in its use of purple vellum and gold and silver lettering the manuscript (see fig. 1), this highly classicising manuscript may well have used the now-lost ‘*Biblia Gregoriana*’ as an exemplar, as well as the sixth-century Italian gospel book

³³⁰ For the Mercian ‘script-province’, see Brown, *Book of Cerne*, pp. 164-8; see Morrish, ‘Dated and datable manuscripts’, 533-5, on the relation of Alfredian MSS to earlier insular ones.

³³¹ J. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts: 6th to 9th Century* (London, 1978), no. 29; Webster and Backhouse, eds., *Making of England*, no. 153.

³³² Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, nos. 30, 34; Webster and Backhouse, eds., *Making of England*, nos. 154-5; Brown, *Book of Cerne*, pp. 80-2.

³³³ On the later Tiberius Group see Brown, *Book of Cerne*, pp. 168-78; eadem, ‘Mercian manuscripts?’, 279-90.

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Fig. 1: The 'Royal Bible': decorated opening to Luke's Gospel (f.43)³³⁴

known as St Augustine's Gospels (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 286).³³⁵

Furthermore, the architectural surround on its surviving gospel incipit page (fol. 43r) is

³³⁴ From: Webster and Backhouse, eds., *Making of England*, p. 218.

³³⁵ See M. Budny, 'The *Biblia Gregoriana*', in *St Augustine and the Conversion of England*, ed. R. Gameson (Stroud, 1999), pp. 237-84, esp. 237-48, and; Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, no. 32; and Webster and Backhouse, eds., *Making of England*, no. 171.

reminiscent of the architectural frames depicted in the Codex Aureus, and its display script has been described as ‘impeccably classical’.³³⁶

It is clear that the Royal Bible employs styles and scripts associated with an earlier Roman aesthetic; what should we make of this? Brown has located the manuscript in the pontificate of Archbishop Wulfred, and other Romanising tendencies can be noted in this period.³³⁷ Wulfred minted fine coins modelled on papal issues of Hadrian and Leo III, as well as exhibiting a preference for papal diplomatic in his synodal proceedings.³³⁸ The production of this grand book may therefore be seen as a result of Wulfred’s preference for Rome-orientated display, which – again continuing the work of Æthelheard – he may have used to bolster Canterbury’s position in a post-Lichfield context. While this provides a possible context, we cannot be sure whether this St Augustine’s manuscript was linked to Wulfred and the Christ Church community. Alternatively, the fact that two classicising eighth-century Southumbrian texts – the Codex Aureus and Codex Bigotianus – were also both Kentish productions points to a tradition of decorating high-status biblical texts in this manner within Canterbury and its cultural ambit. Such grand ‘Roman’ display might evoke the historic closeness of St Augustine’s and Canterbury to the Roman centre, while also expressing a particular devotion to the mother church borne out of that role.

Surviving in much larger numbers than the manuscripts, ninth-century stone sculpture also had a wider, more diverse audience as it appeared in more prominent and public positions than manuscripts. Much of this sculpture betrays the influence of a ‘Roman’ aesthetic, although it is again difficult to know what this meant to those who patronised

³³⁶ Brown, *Book of Cerne*, pp. 93-5; Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, p. 94.

³³⁷ Webster and Backhouse, eds., *Making of England*, p. 217; Brown, *Book of Cerne*, pp. 93-5.

³³⁸ See P. Grierson and M. Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage I: The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 288-9; and Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 77-80.

and crafted these monuments. A foundational equation of stone forms of display with Roman monumentality may, in the early period at least, have existed: erecting stone sculpture was a way of associating oneself with the Roman Church.³³⁹ Another potential means of conjuring such associations was to position standing crosses on or near imperial Roman remains, something Hawkes sees as representing a deliberate reclamation of ‘that which was Rome in order to establish it as part of the new Rome of Christ’.³⁴⁰ Much of the evidence for this phenomenon is late eighth or ninth century in date, principally the three cross-shafts from Ilkley (W. Yorks) erected within the Roman fort of Olicana, the Otley crosses nearby, and the Aldborough-Cundall (N. Yorks) shaft which originally stood in a Roman cantonal capital.³⁴¹ Although we know little about the uses of standing crosses, this evidence suggests that in early-ninth-century Deira certain religious were putting a Christian stamp on imperial remains, perhaps to make a statement about their own position within a universal church, centred on Rome, and within a Christian historical continuum of which the imperial past was a significant part. In sculptural style and technique a distinct classicising trend is visible in the first half of the ninth century. In West and North Yorkshire, Lang identified a group of sculptures which he described as ‘assertively classical’, and saw as emanating from the continentally-connected centre of York.³⁴² He argued that the naturalistic figural portrayals, plant scrolls, and deep-cut relief carving of the cross-shafts at Dewsbury, Easby, Ilkley, Masham, and Collingham, and particularly those at Otley, drew directly on late Roman exemplars from Italy, as well as Carolingian revivals of such forms. The cross-shaft Otley 1 (see fig. 2) typifies this classicism, its half-profile deep-cut busts

³³⁹ J. Hawkes, ‘*Iuxta morem romanorum*: stone and sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, eds. C. Karkov and G. Brown (Albany, NY, 2003), pp. 76-7.

³⁴⁰ Hawkes, ‘*Iuxta morem Romanorum*’, pp. 81-3.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-3.

³⁴² J. Lang, *The Anglian Sculpture of Deira: the Classical Tradition* (Jarrow Lecture, 1990), 2-20; and *idem*, ‘Monuments from Yorkshire in the age of Alcuin’, in *Early Deira*, eds. H. Geake and J. Kenny (Oxford, 2000), pp. 109-119. See also Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp. 77-9.

draped in a tunic and clasping their architectural frames were possibly sourced directly from classical funerary sculpture of Northern Italy.³⁴³ In Mercia, a group of largely

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Fig. 2: Otley cross-shaft 1a³⁴⁴

³⁴³ J. Lang, 'Survival and revival in insular art: Northumbrian sculpture of the 8th to 10th centuries', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, eds. R. Spearman and J. Higgitt (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 262-5; idem, *Anglian Sculpture*, pp. 13-15; E. Coatsworth, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, vol. VIII: *Western Yorkshire* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 69, 215-8.

³⁴⁴ From: Coatsworth, *Corpus VIII*, illustration no. 564.

architectural sculptures from Breedon-on-the-Hill, Castor, Fletton, and Peterborough appear to represent a separate classicising trend. Dating between the late-eighth and mid-ninth centuries, the ornament and figural style, techniques of carving, and sources and influences of these monuments mimic those of the Roman world of Antiquity, as well as contemporaneous Italian revivals of certain forms.³⁴⁵ Furthermore, this classicism ‘is coeval with – but rarely dependent on – the Carolingian Renaissance’, to the extent that travelling Italian craftsmen have been suggested.³⁴⁶ The creation of this stonework is probably to be associated with the powerful minster of *Medeshamstede* (Peterborough) and its dependent houses, of which Breedon was one.³⁴⁷ In addition, Bailey has dated the angel situated in the apse at Deerhurst (Gloucs.) and carved in high relief to 820-40, and associated it with the classicism current in the Midlands in this period.³⁴⁸

Further south, similar classicising trends are visible in the early ninth century. The plant scroll adorning the jambs (see fig. 3) in the arched entry to the north porticus at Britford (Wilts.), dating to c.800, features classical acanthus foliage, derived from classical-acanthus scroll and probably sourced from contemporary Italian work in Rome itself, or Brescia and Pavia on the route to Rome.³⁴⁹ Cramp has associated this work with the continental contacts of Ecgberht of Wessex, and suggested that it may have been produced under his patronage.³⁵⁰ At Codford St Peters (Wilts.), a well preserved shaft (see fig. 4) with a posed figure – possibly King David – appears to be linked to Britford by its ornament and, in the realism of the limbs and style of drapery and hair, may be

³⁴⁵ R. Jewell, ‘Classicism of Southumbrian sculpture’, in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, eds. M. Brown and C. Farr (London, 2001), pp. 246-62.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 262; and R. Gem, ‘Architecture of the Anglo-Saxon Church, 735 to 870: from Archbishop Ecgberht to Archbishop Ceolnoth’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 146 (1993), 48.

³⁴⁷ On Medeshamstede and its ‘monastic empire’, see Keynes, *Councils of Clofesho*, pp. 32-46.

³⁴⁸ R. Bailey, *Anglo-Saxon Sculpture at Deerhurst* (Deerhurst Lecture, 2005), pp. 11-12.

³⁴⁹ R. Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, vol. VII: *South-West England* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 206-8; eadem, ‘The Anglo-Saxon church of Britford and the Italian connection’, in *Arte d’Occidente: Temi et Methodi*, ed. A. Cadei (Rome, 1999), pp. 35-40; and Gem, ‘Architecture’, p. 47.

³⁵⁰ Cramp, *Corpus VII*, p. 208.

compared to Late Roman and Eastern figural depictions.³⁵¹ Moving east, Canterbury may have been the centre of a sculptural school notable for classicising tendencies drawn from Carolingian art, and most evident in fragments of a round shaft from Reculver which, based on its parallels with the Royal Bible, Tweddle dated to the early ninth century.³⁵²

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Fig. 3: The Britford scrollwork (left). Fig. 4: The Codford St Peters shaft (right)³⁵³

Alongside these stylistic trends, the form of certain free-standing sculptures points to a conscious imitation of Roman material culture. It has been suggested that certain seventh- and eighth-century crosses were inspired by the obelisks and triumphal columns particularly visible in Rome.³⁵⁴ While such an inspiration for these tapering, square-shafted crosses is feasible, the series of rare, round-shafted crosses or columns that appear in the ninth century are more plausible candidates for direct inspiration from such

³⁵¹ Ibid., 209-11.

³⁵² D. Tweddle, 'Anglo-Saxon sculpture in South-East England before c. 950', in *Studies in Medieval Sculpture*, ed. F. Thompson (London, 1983), pp. 30-7; D. Tweddle, M. Biddle, and B. Kjølbbe-Biddle, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, vol. IV: *South-East England* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 151-61; and see Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp. 71-2.

³⁵³ From: Cramp, *Corpus VII*, illustration nos. 419-20, 425-6.

³⁵⁴ F. Orton, 'Northumbrian sculpture (the Ruthwell and Bewcastle monuments): questions of difference', in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), p. 222.

monuments. Decorated with a series of pictorial scenes running horizontally around its girth, the column at Masham in North Yorkshire (see fig 5) clearly echoes the triumphal columns such as Trajan's column in Rome.³⁵⁵ Classicising fragments at Dewsbury in Yorkshire and Reculver in Kent were also once part of similar columnar structures, and a late-ninth-century Winchester group features a number of fragments of round shafts.³⁵⁶

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Fig. 5: The Masham column (© jmc4 – Church Explorer)

³⁵⁵ Hawkes, '*Iuxta morem Romanorum*', pp. 77-9.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 78-9; Tweddle, 'Anglo-Saxon sculpture', pp. 21-8.

In addition, the font at Deerhurst in Gloucestershire, the ornament of which Bailey has dated to the early ninth century, may have originally been part of a round cross shaft.³⁵⁷

The most likely inspirations for these unusual cylindrical sculptures, which are often clothed in classicising ornament, are the triumphal columns of imperial Rome, which Anglo-Saxons journeying abroad could have seen and studied.

It is clear that Rome had a significant impact on the religious monuments and devotional fabric of ninth-century England. By this, I do not mean the city exerted any direct control or influence on Anglo-Saxon sculpture; indeed, it is hard to establish direct parallels between Anglo-Saxon sculpture and the built environment of contemporary Rome. Yet, in the use of acanthus and vine ornaments, of naturalistic figures carved in high relief, and of decorated round shafts, Anglo-Saxon sculptors clothed their devotional fabric in a classicising aesthetic of ultimately Roman origin.

Explaining how and why this occurred is rather difficult. Existing studies all propose continental influence, some detecting Carolingian exemplars in, for example, the Kentish group, while others see a direct dependence on Italian sources, as in the Breedon group and Otley crosses.³⁵⁸ Precision is hampered by the difficult nature of stylistic comparison and its often inconsistent terminologies and, while desirable, a detailed study of the continental sources of ninth-century English sculpture is beyond the remit of this thesis. It does seem, though, that these styles were ‘imported’, and not from a single continental source or through a single channel. It is possible, as Blair has suggested, that this ‘remarkable flowering of Continental-inspired classicism’ was principally conducted via

³⁵⁷ Bailey, *Deerhurst*, pp. 16-21; cf. Blair, *The Church*, pp. 459-61. The font fragments from Wilne (Derbyshire) and Melbury Bubb (Dorset) may also derive from circular shafts; such shafts require sustained treatment as a sculptural group.

³⁵⁸ On Kent, see Tweddle, ‘Anglo-Saxon sculpture’, pp. 30-7; on the Breedon group, see Jewell, ‘Classicism’, pp. 246-62.

centres in contact with the ‘European intellectual circle’.³⁵⁹ While we can link each classicising group to such a centre, the places where sculpture survives often seem relatively marginal, and it is possible that they represent the spread of styles from regional centres into local churches and monuments. This may well be the case in Deira, where the patron or carver of Otley 1 imported a classicising aesthetic which subsequently influenced many of the monuments in the area.³⁶⁰

Given the absence of relevant textual material, we cannot fully understand the reasons behind this fashion for employing classicising elements in a devotional context, or whether those who patronised and viewed such sculpture viewed it as ‘Roman’ or, perhaps, simply the continental fashion. It may actually be misleading to seek a singular meaning, looking instead at these uses of a classical aesthetic on a case-by-case basis. The employment of such styles may have been designed to reflect consciously the contacts with Rome and Francia which, as we saw in chapter one, were particularly strong in the first third of the century. Others, such as the round cross shafts, may represent a religious use of imperial forms to make sophisticated statements about the Romano-Christian past. While ultimately irrecoverable, one suspects that this sculpture often expressed a continued affinity with Rome as an ecclesiastical centre and force in Anglo-Saxon religious life.

The construction of a church gave those responsible for its erection an opportunity to make highly-visible statements about their religious affinities and ambitions. As we saw above, in early Northumbrian churches such statements were perceived to demonstrate affinity with Rome. Other early churches were erected on or near Roman structures, something Bell has interpreted as a ‘purposeful’ appropriation of the image of Roman

³⁵⁹ Blair, *The Church*, pp. 126-7.

³⁶⁰ Coatsworth, *Corpus VIII*, pp. 38-9, 69-71.

authority, and many important Anglo-Saxon churches of the seventh and eighth centuries were built from Roman *spolia*, often brought a great distance at some cost, a further symbolic action designed to establish the new religion.³⁶¹ At Canterbury, the ecclesiastical topography established by the Augustinian mission imitated that of Rome, with an intramural cathedral dedicated to the Saviour and extramural monastery dedicated to SS Peter and Paul (later St Augustine's), and with rare dedications such as that to the *Quattro Coronati*, the missionaries recreated what they knew from Rome in Kent.³⁶² Prior to the ninth century, then, churches demonstrated their Roman affiliations or appropriated authority associated with that city and its past in a variety of ways.

The ninth century has often been seen as a time of ecclesiastical decay, but it is now thought that several churches were built or rebuilt or refurbished. Perhaps of most interest here are the large 'basilican' churches, in which Blair has seen 'a concern to recreate Roman monumentality' reflecting Carolingian influence.³⁶³ While the late-eighth-to-early-ninth-century church at Brixworth (Northants.) is the most famous of this group, the now lost churches at Wareham (Dorset) and Cirencester (Gloucs.) probably date to the early ninth century.³⁶⁴ To these we should now add the major rebuilding of Canterbury Cathedral which probably occurred in the early ninth century, most likely in the archiepiscopate of Wulfred.³⁶⁵ With aisles or sets of porticoes flanking the nave, columns or piers supporting arches, and relatively complex apsidal structures, these large stone buildings do reflect a 'Roman monumentality' and may have drawn educated minds towards the analogous structures which could be seen in Rome.

³⁶¹ T. Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures in Early Medieval England* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 152-3, and 69-127 on this reuse; T. Eaton, *Plundering the Past: Roman Stonework in Medieval Britain* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 111-32.

³⁶² See Blair, *The Church*, p. 66; and Hawkes, 'Iuxta morem Romanorum', pp. 72-3

³⁶³ Blair, *The Church*, p. 126.

³⁶⁴ Gem, 'Architecture', pp. 34, 39-44; D. Wilkinson and A. McWhirr, *Cirencester Anglo-Saxon Church and Medieval Abbey* (Cirencester, 1998), pp. 23-39.

³⁶⁵ K. Blockley, M. Sparks, and T. Tatton-Brown, *Canterbury Cathedral Nave: Archaeology. History and Architecture* (Canterbury, 1997), pp. 100-11.

Most basilican churches also apparently possessed ring-crypts: semi-circular sub-apsidal passages entered from openings flanking the apse and usually featuring a western passage leading to the *confessio*. In early-seventh-century Rome, a ring-crypt was constructed at St Peter's to improve access to the relics of the saint, but the form remained relatively rare until the late eighth and ninth centuries when a number were built both in Rome and North of the Alps in a Franco-papal revival of older Roman forms.³⁶⁶ While the Anglo-Saxon evidence is not straightforward – the Brixworth crypt lay outside the apse, the evidence for Cirencester is patchy due to limited excavations, and our knowledge of the Canterbury crypt is based solely on the eleventh-century descriptions of Eadmer – it appears that some subterranean features approximating ring-crypts were constructed during this period.³⁶⁷

As with sculpture, these churches feature forms associated with Rome, but does this equate to a conscious demonstration of Roman affinities and affiliations as in the earlier period, or simply the employment of current fashion in centres with continental connections? The above-ground aspects of these basilican churches are most easily paralleled in contemporary Carolingian architecture, such as the church at Werden (Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany), yet a Frankish conduit for the transmission of these styles does not mean they were not seen as broadly Roman.³⁶⁸ Anglo-Saxons who had travelled to Italy may have more readily linked these churches to those they saw in Rome, although we cannot be sure. As for the crypts, I would argue that, even if the direct inspiration was drawn from Francia, they were likely to be associated with Rome. Not only would ring-crypts have been used by pilgrims visiting new churches in Rome, such as Paschal I's churches of S. Caecilia and S. Prassede, but those venerating the relics of

³⁶⁶ Crook, *Architectural Setting*, pp. 80-95.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 103-6; and Gem, 'Towards an iconography', pp. 5-6; and Wilkinson and McWhirr, *Cirencester*, pp. 34-7.

³⁶⁸ Gem, 'Architecture', 41-4.

St Peter at the Vatican Basilica, the principal holy site in the West, would have used a similar structure.³⁶⁹ While these churches reflect the further impact of Roman styles on Anglo-Saxon material culture in the early ninth century – albeit in a manner different to the bold statements of the earlier period – the ring-crypts at least reflect a conscious desire to worship in surroundings which imitated the customs of that city and its church.

Finally, let us turn to the crypt of one of the smaller churches of the period, Repton in Derbyshire. Beginning life as a free-standing royal mausoleum for Æthelbald of Mercia (d.757), a church was later constructed and extended eastward over the still-surviving square hall-crypt.³⁷⁰ Vaulting supported by four central spiral columns was added to the crypt at some point in the ninth century (see fig. 6), and two corridors were subsequently built descending into the corners of the crypt. The four spiral columns are of most interest here, as they are based on the twisted marble columns which carried the canopy over St Peter's tomb in the Constantinian Basilica, and were moved to form a screen in front of the *fenestella* and altar in the late-sixth or early-seventh century rebuilding.³⁷¹

These developments to the Repton crypt probably occurred around the time that Wiglaf of Mercia was buried there c. 840; his murdered grandson Wigstan joined him soon after in 849.³⁷² Wigstan was subsequently promoted as a saint and it tempting to associate this remarkable instance of *imitatio Romae* with the promotion of his cult, although Taylor

³⁶⁹ See C. Goodson, 'The relic translations of Pachal I (817-24): transforming city and cult', in *Roman Bodies*, eds. A. Hopkins and M. Wyke (London, 2005), pp. 123-41.

³⁷⁰ M. Biddle, 'Archaeology, architecture, and the cult of saints in Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Anglo-Saxon Church*, eds. L. Butler and R. Morris (London, 1986), pp. 16-22; and H. Taylor, 'St Wystan's church, Repton, Derbyshire: a reconstruction essay' *The Archaeological Journal* 144 (1987), pp. 205-45; and Crook, *Architectural Setting*, pp. 128-30.

³⁷¹ Gem, 'Towards an iconography', pp. 6-7; and Crook, *Architectural Setting*, pp. 130, identify St Peter's as the influence; and see J. Ward-Perkins, 'The shrine of St Peter and its twelve spiral columns', *Journal of Roman Studies* 42 (1952), 21-33.

³⁷² The list known as 'Secgan', ed. F. Liebermann, *Die Heiligen Englands* (Hannover, 1889), p. 9-20; records Wigstan's burial at Repton; and see D. Rollason, 'The cults of murdered royal saints in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 11 (1982), 5-9; and A. Thacker, 'Kings, saints, and monasteries in pre-viking Mercia', *Midland History* 10 (1985), 12-14.

and Biddle link the addition of the vaulting and columns with the apparently earlier

renovation of the crypt for Wiglaf.³⁷³ Whether the columns were erected to demonstrate

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Fig. 6: The spiral columns in the Repton crypt (Photo by Chris Tweed)

³⁷³ Biddle, 'Archaeology, architecture', p. 22; Taylor, 'St Wystan's church', pp. 228-34, 243-4.

the sanctity of the body they surrounded or not, they provide the clearest example of a conscious *imitatio Romae* in this period.

We began this section by looking at seventh- and eighth-century remains, which were thought of as Roman but do not look particularly so in light of modern scholarship. The ninth-century picture is somewhat different, with a number of features of ninth-century material culture clearly reflecting styles and aesthetics associated with Rome. Indeed, when we place the classicism apparent in various sculptural groups and in the decoration of the Royal Bible alongside the churches displaying features associated with both contemporary Rome and its architectural heritage, we can conclude that the city had a significant, if indirect, impact upon the devotional fabric of England in the first half of the ninth century. It is harder to know what these developments meant, especially given the difficulty of tracing the channels of continental influence with any precision. Such influence may have been channelled via major royal and ecclesiastical centres and then disseminated locally, a theory which accords with impression that the majority of attested contacts were conducted through such centres in these years, although, as chapter one argues, there does appear to have been a current of less visible travellers. While I am tempted to see these Romanising tendencies as a continued expression of Anglo-Saxon devotion to the city from whence it was converted, they should ultimately be viewed on a case-by-case basis. Some of the developments in church architecture and sculptural naturalism and ornament might simply reflect continental fashions, while at Canterbury the Royal Bible, cathedral adjustments, and surrounding sculpture should probably be seen as a continuation of the *Romanitas* Brooks has detected from the conversion onwards.³⁷⁴ It was at Repton, where we have a clear instance of imitation of Rome in sepulchral and possibly cultic context, and in the decorated, cylindrical cross-shafts (and

³⁷⁴ N. Brooks, 'Canterbury, Rome, and the construction of English identity', in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 224-9.

location of crosses in Roman remains) that conscious statements were made using the vocabulary of Roman stonework.

The Cult of Saints

Saints were integral to early-medieval Christianity, acting as spiritual patrons who could intercede on behalf of individuals or groups on earth, and providing models of exemplary Christian life whilst symbolising a past touched by the divine.³⁷⁵ The concentration of a saints' intercessory power around their corporeal remains meant that sanctity was closely linked to the places where those remains lay, and Rome was the centre of sanctity in the West, possessing the remains of innumerable martyrs and the bodies of the most important apostles.³⁷⁶ While many Roman saints were only venerated locally, others were the subject of universal veneration, something supported by the proliferation of relics 'supernaturally charged with...[the saint's]...corporeal presence' through proximity to the body, and by the ecclesiastical calendar which ensured the annual commemoration of the lives and deaths of holy individuals.³⁷⁷ The Roman missionaries brought the cults and relics of their native saints with them to England, helping forge the distinctly Roman character of devotion to saints evident in early church dedications, literary evidence, and also (as far as it can be reconstructed) the church calendar.³⁷⁸ From the late seventh

³⁷⁵ P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, IL, 1981).

³⁷⁶ A. Thacker, 'Loca Sanctorum: the significance of place in the study of saints', in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, eds. A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (Oxford, 2002), pp. 1-31; idem, 'Rome of the martyrs: saints, cults and relics, fourth to seventh centuries', in *Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, eds. É. Ó Carragáin and C. Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 13-49.

³⁷⁷ Thacker, 'Loca Sanctorum', p. 43; see also C. Cubitt, 'Universal and local saints in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, eds. A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (Oxford, 2002), pp. 423-53.

³⁷⁸ *ECEC*, pp. 33-6, on dedications; D. Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 23-7 on relics, 60-5 on calendars and hagiography; A. Thacker, 'In search of saints: the English

century, Anglo-Saxons began creating their own holy men and women. In what became a veritable ‘age of saints’, missionary bishops, monastic founders, and ascetics came to be venerated to such an extent that every minster may have had its own saint.³⁷⁹ By the ninth century, there existed a rich tradition of devotion to the cult of saints – local and universal – in England, with certain Roman figures particularly prominent, yet the extent to which such devotion continued across the course of the century is uncertain.

One indicator of the veneration of the Roman saints in England comes from church dedications, Levison long ago pointed to the ‘overwhelmingly Roman character’ of seventh- and eighth-century church dedications, and, more recently, Clayton has confirmed this assessment. Their lists of dedications show that the majority of ecclesiastical institutions built in the first two centuries of Christianity were dedicated to saints whose bodies rested in Rome, with Peter receiving by far the largest number of dedications, sometimes jointly with Paul, and Andrew – linked to Rome through his brother Peter – also featuring prominently. Other churches were dedicated to other important Roman martyrs such as Lawrence.³⁸⁰ A privilege formula from the *Liber Diurnus* suggests that, in the late eighth-century, Offa had been busy building and acquiring monastic property and dedicating it to St Peter, to which we might add the Petrine dedication of Winchcombe.³⁸¹ In the ninth century, there is – as we saw above – some evidence of church building, yet it is generally impossible to know when these churches received their dedications, evidence of which is usually much later.³⁸² We are

church and the cult of Roman apostles and martyrs in the seventh and eighth centuries’, in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 247-77, on cults and relics.

³⁷⁹ J. Blair, ‘A saint for every minster? Local cults in Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, eds. A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (Oxford, 2002), pp. 455-96; and idem, *The Church*, pp. 141-9.

³⁸⁰ *ECEC*, pp. 33-6, pp. 259-65; Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin*, pp. 122-41, neither list is without omission; and see the criticisms of Cubitt, ‘Universal and Local’, pp. 444-6.

³⁸¹ *Liber diurnus Romanorum pontificum*, ed. Hans Foerster (Bern, 1958), no. 93; *ECEC*, pp. 29-30, 249-59, on Winchcombe.

³⁸² Gem, ‘Architecture’, pp. 35-55.

on more secure ground with the new church erected at the minster of Kempsey in 868 by Bishop Ealhhun of Worcester (843/5-69/72) and dedicated to St Andrew, and the monastery at Athelney (SS Peter and Paul) and nunnery at Shaftesbury (St Mary) founded by Alfred sometime between 880 and 893.³⁸³ While further work on dedications is required, based on these few examples I would tentatively suggest that the practice of dedicating newly built churches to universally venerated saints continued across the ninth century. Peter, Paul and Andrew continued to be the most effective and appropriate patrons – pointing to continued veneration of major Roman saints – until Mary came to dominate dedications and re-dedications in the tenth-century Benedictine reform.³⁸⁴

Alongside dedications, the Anglo-Saxons treatment of saintly relics might adhere to the practices employed in Rome. This was the case with the relics of Roman saints such as Peter, Paul, and Lawrence imported into early-Christian England and enshrined in the altars of churches as part of the dedicatory process.³⁸⁵ When dead Anglo-Saxons came to be venerated, the treatment of their corporeal remains also reflects Roman teaching. For example, the preservation of bodies intact might indicate adherence to Roman practice, particularly the oft-quoted strictures of Gregory the Great against the fragmentation and of corporeal remains.³⁸⁶ Indeed Canterbury, with its particular fondness for Roman forms, stuck to conservative papal practice, avoiding veneration of its early archbishops who were buried in a manner similar to the contemporary popes.³⁸⁷ The concern for whole bodies exhibited by the late-ninth-century section of the saints' resting place list

³⁸³ Kempsey is mentioned in *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, 868, ed. and trans. R. Darlington, P. McGurk, and J. Bray (2 vols., Oxford, 1995), p. 284-5; and see P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 171-2; Asser, chs. 92-8.

³⁸⁴ Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin*, pp. 131-7.

³⁸⁵ See *HE*, i.29-30, iii.29; and Thacker, 'In search of saints', pp. 259-64.

³⁸⁶ Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, pp. 34-52; on Gregory's attitude to relics in its papal context, see J. McCulloh, 'From antiquity to the middle ages: continuity and change in papal relic policy from the 6th to the 8th century', in *Pietas*, ed. E. Dassman and K. Frank (Münster, 1980), pp. 313-24.

³⁸⁷ Thacker, 'In search of saints', pp. 256-50; idem, 'In Gregory's shadow? The pre-Conquest cult of St Augustine', in *St Augustine and the Conversion of England*, ed. R. Gameson (Stroud, 1999), pp. 374-80.

known as *Secgan* might, as Rollason argued, betray Gregorian influence; it is certainly possible that Gregory's ideas on saints remained influential in the ninth century and continued to influence those he had helped convert.³⁸⁸

Yet the matter is not so simple, for attitudes to relics and tombs in Rome had changed in the years since Gregory's death. From the pontificate of Paul I (757-67) relics began to be translated from the extramural catacombs into the city, a development accelerated under Paschal I, who placed the remains of important saints in ring-crypts in newly-constructed churches.³⁸⁹ In this respect, the aforementioned construction of ring-crypts at the basilican churches of Brixworth and Cirencester in this period, and possibly at Canterbury, points to the impact of changed Roman practice. Another shift in papal policy saw the bodies of Roman saints flow northwards to Frankish churches, a consequence of the alliances with Carolingians which spread papal prestige north.³⁹⁰ Perhaps the crypts at Cirencester and Brixworth were similarly filled with newly-acquired Roman corporeal relics. Also, of native ninth-century saints, mostly murdered royals, we have seen how Wigstan was placed in the Repton crypt with its 'Petrine' columns; this example of subterranean enshrinement provides further evidence of Roman influence. Such influence was, however, confined to the first half of the century. The translation of Roman saints from the catacombs had been brought about by the need to secure the holy dead inside the city walls and, while similar threats existed in England, the wholesale translations of relics into fortified burhs was a tenth-century development.³⁹¹ While we can detect some Roman influence on Anglo-Saxon cultic practices as well as the

³⁸⁸ D. Rollason, 'Lists of saints' resting-places in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 7 (1978), 80-2;

³⁸⁹ See J. Osborne, 'The Roman Catacombs in the middle ages' *Papers of the British School at Rome* 53 (1985), 285-96; and C. Goodson, 'Building for bodies: the architecture of saint veneration in Early Medieval Rome', in *Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, eds. É. Ó Carragáin and C. Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 51-79.

³⁹⁰ J. Smith, 'Old saints, new cults: Roman relics in Carolingian Francia', in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 317-39.

³⁹¹ Osborne, 'Roman Catacombs', 288-92; and D. Rollason, 'Relic cults as an instrument of royal policy c.900-c.1050', *ASE* 15 (1986), 95-6.

continued influence of universal saints in church dedications, questions about the wider role of Roman cults remain.

St Peter was Rome's most prestigious saint, an apostle and (apparently) first bishop of Rome, he was martyred there on 29 June with St Paul, with whom he is often paired. A figure of preeminent saintly power – Jesus' gift of the keys to heaven and the powers to bind and loose (Matthew 16:18-9) made him gatekeeper of heaven and 'prince of the apostles (*princeps apostolorum*)' – Peter made Rome and the Vatican the foremost pilgrim destination, and lay at the base of papal claims to ecclesiastical primacy. As the dedicatory evidence suggests, his cult spread quickly in Anglo-Saxon England, and from the seventh century literary texts reflect especial reverence for Peter's spiritual power. For example, Aldhelm (d.709/10) repeatedly evoked his power as the 'Ethereal key-bearer (*Claviger aetherius*)' and he looms large in the narratives of Bede and Stephanus, underpinning the authority and orthodoxy of the Roman church.³⁹² Later, in Alcuin's poem on York written c.782-93, a hermit named Balthere declared himself 'a hundred times less worthy than that prince of the apostles', hinting at the order of magnitude between lesser local saints and the universally-venerated apostle.³⁹³

Ninth-century religious texts continued to evoke Peter's spiritual potency. In the poem *De abbatibus* – written c.800-25 by the otherwise unknown Æthelwulf – Peter 'watches all the scales which the chaste in heart load with heavenly deeds', a unconventional image focussing on the apostle's witnessing of good deeds rather than his remission of

³⁹² Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica*, I, IV.i, ed. R. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH Auct. ant. XV (Berlin, 1919), 11, 19; trans. M. Lapidge and J. Rosier, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works* (Woodbridge, 1985), p. 46, 50; *HE*, iii.25; *VW*, ch. 11; and see L. Lazzari, 'Il primate di Pietro nella Vita Wilfridi', in *La Figura di San Pietro nelle Fonti del Medioevo*, eds. L. Lazzari and A. Valente Bacci (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2001), pp. 81-111.

³⁹³ Alcuin, *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis Ecclesiae*, ed. and trans. P. Godman, *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York* (Oxford, 1982), ll.1339-62

sin.³⁹⁴ He is also an influential figure in the *Old English Martyrology*, a problematic text which was probably composed in the first half of the ninth century and which will be discussed in more detail below. He had, with Paul, enacted ‘more divine miracles...than any mortal man can tell’, a true sign of spiritual power in a text which placed great importance on the miraculous, also appearing in a number of other obits as a figure of authority, particularly when passing on his God-given powers to his successor Pope Clement.³⁹⁵ It is in the Anglo-papal correspondence that Peter is most visible across the ninth century. The popes lost no chance to invoke the ‘prince of the apostles’ and the apostolicity of the papal office and its pronouncement, pouring a constant stream of ideas about Peter’s authority and its role as the basis of papal power into the highest Anglo-Saxon circles.³⁹⁶ We should not doubt that Peter’s *potentia*, marshalled by the bishops of Rome, was both real and apparent to Anglo-Saxon elites and gave papal utterances and decrees much of their force.³⁹⁷ Alfred, a regular papal correspondent, legislated on the observance of SS Peter and Paul’s feast day, and dedicated his foundation at Athelney to them, yet in this limited veneration we see less novelty than in other aspects of his busy reign.

In the ninth century, then, Peter continued to be thought of in the same way as in the eighth: a saint of great power who governed entrance to heaven. While these texts constitute some small evidence for veneration of Peter in literate ecclesiastical circles and possibly among elites in contact with the pope, they tell us little about the extent of his cult and whether it had a wider audience. We might assume that he received special veneration at the many churches dedicated to him, for as long as they remained

³⁹⁴ Æthelwulf, *De abbatibus*, ed. and trans. A. Campbell (Oxford, 1967), ll. 75-7.

³⁹⁵ *OEM*, II, nos. 70, 94, 114, 116, 228, 233; trans., p. 63-5, 89, 109, 111, 209-11, 215-7; on the sources for Peter’s entry, see J. Cross, ‘The apostles in the *Old English Martyrology*’, *Mediaevalia* 5 (1979), 38-9.

³⁹⁶ See Appendix 2:2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 18, 22; and S 1431a; trans. *EHD* 210.

³⁹⁷ See, for example, Alcuin on the papal ability to bind and loose; Alcuin, *Ep.* 27, 94; trans. 98-9.

functioning places of Christian worship, something rarely clear in this century of neglect and turmoil. Interesting in this respect is the ‘Book of Cerne’ one of four remarkable private prayer-books compiled c.800-840 in Southumbria (probably Mercia) from a range of insular and continental materials.³⁹⁸ Centred around the *communio sanctorum*, the ‘Book of Cerne’ contains a series of three prayers to Peter (and one stated to be by him) which appeal to the saint in all his guises, pleading for intercession and protection.³⁹⁹ Peter stands out as a figure of intercessory *potentia*, and it is worth noting that no other apostle or saint receives this number of prayers, indeed, other than Andrew, there are no other prayers to individual apostles.⁴⁰⁰ This suggests the owner had a special affection for the saint, demonstrating that Peter could be venerated in a personal devotional context.

To return, then, to questions of the audience of Peter’s cult, Cubitt has suggested such universal cults seemed ‘removed and remote’ to Anglo-Saxons, while Thacker has argued, with reference to Gregory, that saints without corporeal remains could only be the subject of elite and clerical, rather than popular, cults.⁴⁰¹ Peter’s often bombastic appearances in relatively elite contexts, especially papal discourse, might lead one to agree with such assessments, but the personal context of the ‘Cerne’ prayers, which evoke his more practical and pastoral side, point to a more accessible saint. He could certainly be a personal patron to Æthelric, who ‘sought St Peter and St Paul’ for his soul

³⁹⁸ On the prayer-books, see Morrish, ‘Dated and datable manuscripts’, 518-21, 526; Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 273-327; Brown, *Book of Cerne*, pp. 151-5; and M. Brown, ‘Female book-ownership and production in Anglo-Saxon England: the evidence of the ninth-century prayerbooks’, in *Lexis and Texts in Early English*, ed. C. Kay and L. Sylvester (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA, 2001), pp. 51-60. See also T. Bestul, ‘Continental sources of Anglo-Saxon devotional writing’, in *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. P. Szarmach (Kalamazoo, MI, 1986), pp. 103-14, on the prayer-books’ varied influences.

³⁹⁹ ‘Book of Cerne’, ed. A. Kuypers, *The Prayer Book of Aedelwald the Bishop, commonly called the Book of Cerne* (Cambridge, 1902), nos. 62-5; it was compiled c.820-40.

⁴⁰⁰ There are three prayers to the apostolic group: ‘Book of Cerne’, ed. Kuypers, nos. 30, 68-9.

⁴⁰¹ Cubitt, ‘Universal and Local’, pp. 448-9; A. Thacker, ‘*Peculiaris patronus noster*: the saint as patron of the state in the early middle ages’, in *The Medieval State*, eds. J. Maddicott and D. Palliser (London, 2000), p. 19. C. Cubitt, ‘Images of St Peter: the clergy and the religious life in Anglo-Saxon England’, in *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. P. Cavill (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 41-54, associates Peter with clerics as opposed to monks.

at the start of the century, and to Abba, who requested that, on death, his wergild should be carried to the saint, not to mention the numerous kings who made the journey.⁴⁰²

While such examples indicate a lay audience for his cult, it was still a relatively elite one, but could Peter's cult have a 'popular' audience? If corporeal remains were indeed a prerequisite for such veneration, then the extent of pilgrimage '*ad limina apostolorum*' becomes something of an index of popular devotion to Peter. As discussed in chapter one, such evidence is not plentiful, but a combination of English and Roman texts point to a constant stream of pilgrims and merchants travelling to Rome in the ninth century. This would suggest that Peter was the subject of popular, as well as elite, veneration across the ninth century.

Pope Gregory I (590-604) was the instrumental force behind the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Roman Christianity and, while there was initially little enthusiasm for Gregory's cult in his home city, he was venerated from an early date in England, and his cult was promoted by Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury 669-90.⁴⁰³ The author of the earliest *vita* of Gregory written at Whitby c. 700 expressed such veneration, terming the pope 'our apostolic Gregory', and asserting that when each apostle and 'each individual teacher brings his own race to present them to the Lord on the Day of Judgment, he [Gregory] will bring us – that is, the English people (*gens Anglorum*)'.⁴⁰⁴ Bede arrived at the same conclusion, arguing that 'we can and should by rights call him our apostle'.⁴⁰⁵ This possessive attitude toward Gregory is equally evident in the ninth century; a synodal document of 803 terms him 'the apostle and teacher of our race', in the *Old English Martyrology* he was 'our foster-father in Christ, and we are his foster-

⁴⁰² S 1187; S 1482.

⁴⁰³ A. Thacker, 'Memorializing Gregory the Great: the origin and transmission of a papal cult in the seventh and eighth centuries', *Early Medieval Europe* 7.1 (1998), 71-82 and idem, 'In Gregory's shadow', pp. 380-4.

⁴⁰⁴ *Vita Gregorii*, ed. and trans. B Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 1968), chs. 6, 30; see also chs. 4, 5, 28.

⁴⁰⁵ *HE*, ii.1.

children in baptism', and later, in a letter to King Alfred, Fulk of Rheims described him as 'your apostle'.⁴⁰⁶ Whether teacher, father, or apostle, across the ninth century there was a sense among Anglo-Saxons that despite his entombment in Rome Gregory was 'theirs', encapsulating their continuing emotional link with this Roman saint.

As with Peter, it is difficult to assess the audience and extent of Gregory's cult. The Council of Clofesho in 747 ordered the commemoration of his feast-day 'by all', and this liturgical veneration presumably continued across the ninth century.⁴⁰⁷ A prayer thought to be composed by the pope appears in two of the four private prayer-books, and may once have existed in a third.⁴⁰⁸ In all, the frequency with which Gregory appears in the ninth-century texts and his particular prominence in Alfred's reign, where his *Cura Pastoralis* and *Dialogi* were translated into the vernacular, points to constant veneration.⁴⁰⁹ There is no evidence of 'popular' devotion, but the theoretical basis for such veneration existed in Gregory's status as 'our apostle', most powerfully expressed in the Whitby writer's image of him leading the Anglo-Saxons to judgement.

One area where Gregory was repeatedly invoked was the realm of ecclesiastical structure and discipline. The pope had laid down a plan for the nascent Anglo-Saxon church and various religious precepts to guide his missionaries, all recorded by Bede in his *Historia ecclesiastica*.⁴¹⁰ The authority still attached to Gregory's ideas is apparent in a remarkable credo emanating from the council of Clofesho in 798, when the assembled lay and ecclesiastical notables decreed 'that exactly as it was set down in the beginning by

⁴⁰⁶ S 1431a.; *OEM*, II, no. 42; trans., p. 39, and see no. 11; trans., p. 13-15; Fulk's letter is edited by D. Whitelock, M. Brett, and C. Brooke, *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church. I, A.D. 871-1204* (Oxford, 1981), no. 4; trans. *EHD* 223.

⁴⁰⁷ 'Council of Clofesho', 17; ed. HS, III, 368.

⁴⁰⁸ 'Book of Cerne', ed. Kuypers, no. 15; 'Book of Nunnaminster', ed. W. Birch, *An Ancient Manuscript of the Eighth or Ninth Century* (London, 1889), pp. 58-60; Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 281, suggests it may once have featured in the 'Royal prayer-book'.

⁴⁰⁹ See Thacker, 'Peculiaris patronus noster', p. 20-2, for an excellent summary of the Alfredian evidence.

⁴¹⁰ *HE*, i.

the holy Roman and apostolic see, by the direction of the most blessed Pope Gregory, thus we believe'.⁴¹¹ In the subsequent wrangling over Lichfield, Gregory's plan for the Anglo-Saxon church was repeatedly invoked and Coenwulf even referred Leo III to his predecessor's letter to Augustine on the subject, a letter which 'is read throughout our churches'.⁴¹² In the later ninth century, John VIII again invoked Gregory when Canterbury's status was threatened by Alfred, and a letter of Formosus contains similar ideas although these may reflect later tampering.⁴¹³ At other times, popes alluded to the precepts concerning marriage and fornication which Gregory had laid out; for example, John VIII chastised Burgred of Mercia for allowing his subjects to ignore 'the statute of St Gregory', which he scathingly pointed out was 'decreed for the newly converted people'.⁴¹⁴ Underpinned by his saintly and apostolic power, Gregory's precepts had achieved a canonical status and were deployed in an ecclesiastical context to preserve a certain structure of the English church or encourage observation of marital customs.

The majority of less-well-known Roman saints were most likely to be commemorated in liturgical calendars, or in hagiographical collections and martyrologies.⁴¹⁵ Late-antique martyrs, many associated with Rome, formed the basis of the Christian calendar and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 63 fols. 40r-45v (867/92), the only arguably Anglo-Saxon calendar to survive from the ninth century, lists the feast days of a good number of these, but exhibits a more prominent concern for Northumbrian and Flemish saints.⁴¹⁶ It thus does provide some evidence of the liturgical commemoration of lesser Roman saints

⁴¹¹ S 1258, trans. *EHD*, 79.

⁴¹² Appendix 2:2, and also 4, 7, 8 and S 1431a; the letter of Gregory to Augustine at *HE*, i.29 may have circulated independently.

⁴¹³ Appendix 2:18, 22.

⁴¹⁴ Appendix 2:14, and 18.

⁴¹⁵ See Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, pp. 60-2, on the Roman calendar in England.

⁴¹⁶ The manuscript is edited in F. Wormald, *English Kalendars before A.D. 1100* (London, 1934), no. 1; on the question of Northumbrian or Flemish origin, see Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p. 73; and D. Dumville, 'Motes and beams: two insular computistical manuscripts', *Peritia* 2 (1983), 248-56; and D. Ó Cróinín, 'Sticks and stones – a reply', *Peritia* 2 (1983), 257-60.

in viking Northumbria – Pope Clement I and Lawrence are among those marked out by marginal crosses – yet they are secondary to other, local concerns. Another manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 10861, s.ix^{1/4}, contains nineteen *passiones* of mostly Italian (Roman and Milanese) and Spanish late-antique martyrs.⁴¹⁷ Produced by the scriptorium at Christ Church, Canterbury under Wulfred, the non-calendrical organisation points to a devotional use, indicating some extra-liturgical veneration of lesser Roman saints in early-ninth-century Southumbria.

Most interesting in this respect is the *Old English Martyrology*, a historical or narrative martyrology containing 238 *passiones* and *vitae*, despite the loss of most of the February and many December entries.⁴¹⁸ Forming a hagiographical compendium organised around the Christian year, with some computistical, liturgical, and etymological asides, the *Martyrology* was apparently intended for use as a reference text or for private study.⁴¹⁹ Its well-read compiler accessed a large stock of Latin source material (between 20 and 200 works), to which he adhered closely using a method described as cumulative and highly derivative.⁴²⁰ He made no attempt to summarise the entire lives of his subjects, preferring to give some basic details and an account of their miracles and deaths.

Uncertainties about the date of the text and context of the production of the *Martyrology* present the historian with several problems. Written in an Anglian dialect, the earliest manuscript dates from the late ninth century and Alfred's court with its Mercian scholars and vernacular translations provides a plausible context, yet there is no specific evidence

⁴¹⁷ M. Brown, 'Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 10861 and the scriptorium of Christ Church, Canterbury', *ASE* 15 (1987), 119-37.

⁴¹⁸ On the MSS, see *OEM*, I, 43-171.

⁴¹⁹ C. Rauer, 'The sources of the *Old English Martyrology*', *ASE* 32 (2003), pp. 96-7; and *OEM*, I, 233-43.

⁴²⁰ Rauer, 'The sources', 89-109, updates J. Cross, 'On the library of the Old English Martyrologist', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, eds. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), 227-49.

linking the *Martyrology* to Alfred nor, indeed, to any time or place.⁴²¹ Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, completed around 731, is the latest securely datable source used in the text, although Cross argued that a ninth-century sermon was used in the entry on All Saints, the feast for which apparently entered the calendar c.800, leading him to propose a mid-ninth-century date.⁴²² Lapidge has recently proposed that the *Martyrology* was a ninth-century translation of an already-extant if otherwise unattested martyrology, proposing that the erstwhile bishop of Hexham, Acca, composed this Latin *Vorlage* in the years 731-40.⁴²³ His argument is largely based upon the absence of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries Willibrord (d.739) and Boniface, both saints we might expect to find in the *Martyrology*, and on the fact that Acca, who according to Bede owned a 'very large and noble library' of *passiones* and who had been forced from his bishopric, had both the means and the time to undertake such a considerable project.⁴²⁴ Yet considering that Acca spent much of his life with Wilfrid, it seems unlikely that he provided the short account of his former mentor based entirely on Stephanus' *vita* that appears in the *Martyrology*.⁴²⁵ Moreover, it might be inadvisable to hold the martyrologist to account on the basis of non-inclusion. He relied almost exclusively on Bede's *Historia* for his account of native saints, from which Boniface was absent and in which Willibrord was clearly still alive. Indeed, the complete reliance on written sources gives the text a fossilised atmosphere. The compiler treated saints from his island exactly as he treated those who died half a millennium earlier in the eastern Mediterranean; all saints were

⁴²¹ See *OEM*, I, 323-405.

⁴²² J. Cross, 'Legimus in ecclesiasticis historiis': a sermon for All Saints and its use in Old English prose', *Traditio* 33 (1977), 127-8, 131-4; Rauer, 'The sources', 90-102, proposes a mid- or late-ninth-century date; whereas Kotzor remained undecided, *OEM*, I, 449-54.

⁴²³ M. Lapidge, 'Acca of Hexham and the origin of the *Old English Martyrology*', *Analecta Bollandiana* 123 (2005), 29-78; and see *OEM*, I, 244-51, on Kotzor's earlier assessment of this possibility.

⁴²⁴ *HE*, v. 20; Lapidge, 'Acca of Hexham', 40-3, 65-9.

⁴²⁵ *OEM*, II, no. 68; trans., pp. 61-3; on Acca, see *HE*, v. 20; and *VW*, pref., chs. 22, 56.

equally remote. It is this egalitarian sense of distance that leads me to believe the *Martyrology* was written nearer 900 than 700.

Although the *Old English Martyrology* largely consists of excerpts from other texts, the compiler made a series of decisions about which saints to include and which aspects of their cult to represent. It is clear that he decided to include a strikingly high proportion of Roman saints. As illustrated in fig. 7, the surviving portions of the text incorporate sixty-nine saints connected to Rome, including many less-well-known figures, to which we should add the five other liturgical feasts directly linked to Rome contained in the *Martyrology*.⁴²⁶ Seventy four of 238 entries (just under a third) relate to Roman saints and feasts. No other city reaches double figures.

Not all these sixty-nine saints lived, died and were buried in Rome, and the final column of fig. 7 details the nature of their involvement as specified by the martyrologist. Entries for the most thoroughly Roman saints, such as Agnes (14) and Hermes (56), are saturated in topographic detail giving Rome ‘a greater sense of definition than is found for any other place in the *Old English Martyrology*’.⁴²⁷ Other saints such as Eleutherius and Antia (19) were brought to Rome for martyrdom by imperial command or, like Marius and his family (13) came voluntarily. Particularly interesting is the *passio* of the Roman virgin Lucia (34) who was carried off by the foreign king Auceia. She spent the next two decades avoiding defilement and protecting her kidnapper, until a vision told her to return to Rome where she was promptly martyred, Auceia following her to Rome and decollation. Entries such as these serve to emphasise Rome’s past role as the centre of martyrial witnessing; it is as if the city exercised a centripetal pull on would-be martyrs.

⁴²⁶ These are: the Consecration of St Peter’s, Rome (18 Jan; *OEM*, II, no. 25; trans., p.25); Rogation day (25 Apr; 69, 63); the Octave of Peter and Paul (6 Jul; 119, 113); the Consecration of St Michael’s Church [on the Via Salaria] (29 Sept; 199; 183); and All Saints (1 Nov; 218, 199).

⁴²⁷ J. Roberts, ‘*Fela martyra* ‘many martyrs’: a different view of Orosius’s City’, in *Alfred the Wise*, eds. J. Roberts, J. Nelson, and M. Godden (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 158-61.

While the compiler included saints from a wide geographical area and chronological period, his text conspicuously eschews local particularisms, centring upon the city of Rome from Decius to Diocletian. Furthermore, it demonstrates that a range of lesser Roman saints were known in ninth-century England, and presumably venerated in some small way.

Fig. 7 – Saints connected with Rome in the *Old English Martyrology*

No	Name of Saint(s) ⁴²⁸	Date of Feast	Kotzor No ⁴²⁹	Connection to Rome
1	Anastasia	25 December	2	R
2	Eugenia	25	3	M(a), R(i)
3	Pope Silvester I	31	7	M, R
4	Pope Anteros	3 January	10	M, R(i)
5	Emiliana	5	11	NS
6	Pope Telesphorus	6	14	M, R(i)
7	Benedict Biscop	12	17	J
8	Felix	14	19	L
9	Pope Marcellus	16	20	R(i)
10	Prisca	18	24	Re
11	Sebastian	20	27	M, R(i)
12	Pope Fabian	20	28	M, R(i)
13	Marius, Martha, Audifax, Abacuc	20	29	M(acv)
14	Agnes	21	30	M, R(i)
15	Anastasius	22	32	R(i)
16	Emerentiana [15]	23	33	M, R(i)
17	Pope Gregory I	12 March	42	NS
18	Valerian, Tiburtius, Maximus	14 April	64	M
19	Eleutherius, Antia	18	65	M(b)
20	Pope Alexander I, Eventius, Theodolus	3 May	76	M, R(i)
21	Gordianus	10	84	R
22	Calepodius	10	85	NS
23	Pancras	12	86	M(acv), R(i)
24	Pope John I	18	89	M(o)
25	Basilla	20	90	M
26	Pope Urban I	25	91	Re(i)
27	Augustine of Canterbury	26	92	S

⁴²⁸ Square brackets indicate a connection with another saint in the *Martyrology*.
⁴²⁹ The numbering used in Kotzor's edition, *OEM*, II.

28	Petronilla	31	94	R
29	Nicomedes ⁴³⁰	1 June	96	NS
30	Marcellinus, Peter	2	98	M(o)
31	Artemius, Candida, Paulina	2	99	NS
32	Blastus	17	105	M
33	Mark, Marcellian [11]	18	106	NS
34	Lucia, Auceia	25	112	M(acv)
35	John, Paul	26	113	R
36	Peter, Paul	29	114	M
37	Martial	30	116	S
38	Processus, Martinianus	2 July	117	C
39	Zoe [11]	4	118	C
40	Tranquillinus [11]	6	120	L
41	The Seven Brothers [69]	10	123	M
42	Anatolia	10	124	E
43	Rufina, Secunda	10	125	M, R
44	Arsenius	19	131	NS (born in Rome)
45	Abdon, Sennen	30	139	M(b), R
46	Pope Stephen I	2 August	143	M, R(i)
47	Pope Sixtus II	6	147	M, R(i)
48	Romanus	9	150	R(i)
49	Lawrence	10	151	M, R(i)
50	Tiburtius [11]	11	152	M
51	Hippolytus [49]	13	154	L
52	Agapitus	18	158	C
53	Timothy	22	161	M(a), R(i)
54	Genesius	25	163	NS
55	Irenaeus, Abundius	26	164	M
56	Hermes [20]	28	166	M, R(i)
57	Sabina	29	169	C
58	Protus, Hyacinth [2]	11 September	182	M
59	Pope Cornelius	14	183	M
60	Ceolfrith	25	196	J (not completed)
61	Pope Mark	7 October	202	R(i)
62	Pope Calixtus I	14	205	M, R(i)
63	Tryphonia [?]	18	208	NS
64	Cyrilla [?]	28	216	NS
65	Quentin	31	217	S
66	Quattuor Coronati	8 November	222	M
67	Cecilia	22	227	M
68	Pope Clement I	23	228	L, M(o)
69	Felicity	23	229	NS

⁴³⁰

On the identification of Nicomedes, whose feast is usually 15 Sept, see *OEM*, II, p. 316.

Key to Final Column

C	Commemoration in Rome noted
E	Exiled from Rome
J	Journeyed to Rome
L	Lived in Rome
M	Martyred in Rome
M(a)	Martyred, after coming voluntarily to Rome
M(b)	Martyred, having been involuntarily brought to Rome
M(o)	Martyred outside of Rome, having lived there previously
NS	Not specified by the text
R	Body rests in Rome
R(i)	As above, with resting-place specified
S	Set out from Rome to evangelise

Conclusions

In the ninth century, we can see how Rome influenced the Anglo-Saxon Church and religious life in a variety of ways. Papal supervision of the church continued from the eighth century into and across the ninth, even intensifying in the latter period, and popes continued to effectively licence the episcopate by use of the archiepiscopal *pallium*. Popes also became increasingly involved in the fractious world of Southumbrian politics, brought in as ultimate adjudicators by archbishops and kings whose relationships often broke down. Kings could obtain papal support against their archbishops in matters relating not just to the church but also to property and possession, and, while archbishops could gain papal support, popes were as likely to weaken the ecclesiastical position as strengthen it. The emergence of West-Saxon hegemony shifted the balance and structure of the church-king relationship in favour of royal dominance, and for the final two thirds

of the century papal involvement lessened. Still, the relationship did break down again in the 870s, following a remarkably similar template to previous conflicts, yet this time John VIII backed the embattled archbishop. Papal involvement was not constant and whether it was invoked depended on factors in England, yet the pope was able to play a role limiting ecclesiastical power or protecting the church and his ability to decide these matters was never questioned or challenged.

Roman influence on religious culture in England was pronounced, if rarely as bold and direct as papal involvement. Sculpture and church buildings in the first half of the ninth century were greatly influenced by a classicising aesthetic, although understanding the channels of transmission and meaning of these developments is difficult. While certain instances may have reflected the prevailing fashion, the placing of crosses on Roman remains and the appearance of round, decorated cross-shafts appear to be more meaningful statements. Manuscript production continued in this period and the 'Royal Bible', part of the Tiberius group of manuscripts, may represent continuing *Romanitas* in Canterbury, also visible in sculpture and in Wulfred's papally-inspired coins. The most conscious instances of *imitatio Romae* occur in the ring-crypts of basilican churches and particularly the spiral columns in the crypt at Repton, and these also reflect Roman influence on cultic practices in southern England. In this respect churches continued to be dedicated to universal saints, and there is some evidence for the continued veneration of Peter, Gregory, and a range of lesser Roman saints. Peter in particular drew Anglo-Saxons '*ad limina apostolorum*', while 'our apostle' Gregory linked them to that city in an eternal debt of gratitude, and the *Old English Martyrology* eschewed local particularism to paint a picture of Rome as the centre of Christian sanctity.

Although it may seem that Rome's involvement with the church and with devotional culture are two different stories, in part a reflection of the sources, there are connections.

For example, it can hardly be a coincidence that the flourishing of sculptural and architectural classicism is coeval with the period of greatest papal, and Frankish, involvement in Anglo-Saxon affairs, and it is tempting to see the *Old English Martyrology* emerging in this context. While papal interaction with the church continued in the later ninth century, it was now with a church more firmly under West-Saxon control than it had been when the united southern episcopate and other ecclesiastical dignitaries had regularly met with the Mercian king at synods. Even so, Peter and Gregory played a continuous role in ecclesiastical affairs across the century, regularly invoked by popes and archbishops. Indeed, to say that Peter underpinned papal decision and Gregory ensured Anglo-Saxon obedience to it may not be an overstatement; the remarkable degree of influence a distant bishop could have over the Anglo-Saxon church may have been partly down to the spiritual power of these holy individuals. In a century characterised by disruption and transformation, Rome continued to exert a hold over the minds of the Anglo-Saxon religious, influencing their ecclesiastical affairs and devotional culture.

Chapter 3

Royal Power and Authority

To ask how Rome influenced the exercise of power and construction of authority by kings in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England may, at first sight, seem an unusual question. Shorn of its political power and military might many centuries before, Rome had long been subject to a succession of outside rulers; while eighth-century popes increasingly achieved an independent position within central Italy, this always depended to some extent on Frankish protection.⁴³¹ Yet it is clear that this relatively weak polity did exert considerable influence on the political affairs of the distant island of Britain. Indeed, as chapter one showed, most of the journeys between Anglo-Saxon England and Rome in the ninth century were made by high-status individuals (or those acting on their behalf) and were connected with key events. Chapter two, in which we saw popes involved in Anglo-Saxon political conflicts stretching beyond purely ecclesiastical matters, threw these questions of Roman involvement in politics into starker relief. The papacy certainly possessed considerable spiritual authority and this authority, backed by a tradition of Roman involvement in the Anglo-Saxon Church and by the saintly power of Peter and Gregory, was particularly effective in an ecclesiastical context in ninth-century England. Kings, for their part, became more closely involved with the church at a supra-regional level, a consequence of which was greater contact with Rome and its bishops. Yet in itself, this does not explain why those bishops were so involved, or were allowed

⁴³¹ T. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State 680-825* (Philadelphia, PN, 1984), pp. 1-183; and idem, 'The papacy in the eighth and ninth centuries', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume II, c. 700-900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 765-74, and references therein.

to be so involved, in matters of politics and kingship. Nor does it explain the motivations for the other instances of royal contact noted in the first chapter, the journeys of kings to the eternal city and their sending of alms thither.

In examining royal contacts with Rome and their consequences for power and authority, it is important to consider Frankish developments. The Carolingians were able to tap papal authority in constructing their own right to rule; later portrayals of the Roman role in the events of 751, along with the papal anointing of Frankish rulers from 754, gave their power a spiritual and ideological footing.⁴³² Charlemagne's imperial coronation of 800 also brought access to a stock of imperial symbols with which to represent power and authority, something exploited in the later reigns of Louis the Pious (814-43) and Charles the Bald (843-77).⁴³³ While we might expect Carolingian practice to influence England, it must be remembered that Anglo-papal relationships were profoundly different in terms of their scale and intensity to Franco-papal alliances. Unlike the Frankish kings, Anglo-Saxons rulers could not offer meaningful military protection for Rome and political protection to the popes: distance conditioned what was possible.⁴³⁴ With this in mind, the chapter explores Roman – and specifically papal – influence on royal power and authority in England in the ninth century. It does so in three parts, the first focuses on Mercian relations with the papacy in the first-quarter of the ninth-century, and the second examines the journeys kings made to Rome, their motivations and consequences. The final part analyses the evidence for royal payments to St Peter across the ninth-century.

⁴³² R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 133-55.

⁴³³ I. Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c.751-877)* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 286-305; and J. Nelson, 'Translating images of authority: The Christian Roman emperors in the Carolingian world', in her *The Frankish World 750-900* (London, 1996), pp. 89-98; and eadem, 'Kingship and empire in the Carolingian world', in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 54-73. See also R. McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN, 2006), pp. 41-2, 106-7, for a brief summary of Roman influence on the Carolingians.

⁴³⁴ On Frankish involvement in Rome and Italy, see Noble, *The Republic*, pp. 277-324; and N. Christie, 'Charlemagne and the renewal of Rome', in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. J. Story (Manchester, 2005), pp. 167-82.

Kings, popes, archbishops

In the eighth century, new pressures, circumstances, and influences came to affect the exercise of royal power and construction of royal authority in England. Increases in the territory dominated by one man and the intensity with which it could be dominated amplified the scale of kingship.⁴³⁵ Also, as we saw in the previous chapter, closer relationships between dominant kings and the episcopate – by which the former aimed to secure control of the economically important South East and support of a powerful institution, with the latter gaining security and potential grants of lands and exemptions – were increasingly bringing kings into closer contact with Rome and its bishops.

Carolingian Francia, a powerful and expanding polity under Charlemagne (768-814), had a growing influence on Anglo-Saxon affairs, operating through channels established by the Anglo-Saxon church and still mediated by English ecclesiastics.⁴³⁶ The Carolingians pioneered new means of legitimising and strengthening royal power which involved Rome and the popes, and the impact of their example is apparent in Offa's attempts to have his son Ecgrith consecrated (literally hallowed, *gehalgod*) within his own lifetime, which Wallace-Hadrill described as only making sense 'against the background of

⁴³⁵ D. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (rev. edn, London and New York, 2000), pp. 105-50; S. Keynes, 'England, 700-900', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume II, c.700-c.900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), 18-42; and idem, 'The kingdom of the Mercians in the eighth century', in *Æthelbald and Offa: Two Eighth-Century Kings of Mercia*, eds. D. Hill and M. Worthington (Oxford, 2005), pp. 7-14.

⁴³⁶ These contacts have been well explored by *ECEC*, pp. 108-31; J. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Charlemagne and England', in his *Early Medieval History* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 155-80; and idem, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 98-123; and more recently by J. Nelson, 'Carolingian contacts', in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, eds. M. Brown and C. Farr (London, 2001), pp. 126-143; *CC*, pp. 169-99; and J. Story, 'Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxons', in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. J. Story (Manchester, 2005), pp. 195-210.

contemporary Carolingian practice'.⁴³⁷ In Northumbria too, the impact of Charlemagne was keenly felt, and Carolingian king-making practices may have influenced the consecration of Eardwulf (796-806, 808-?) at St Peter's York in 796.⁴³⁸ Forming the backdrop to the ninth-century, these continentally-inspired experiments in king-making seem designed to deal with the enhanced pressures of expanded kingship, as well as the basic need for kings to secure aristocratic loyalties in order to ensure their survival and the effective rule of their territories.

At the start of the ninth century, Coenwulf of Mercia had begun to re-establish Mercian hegemony in the South which had crumbled on the death of Offa and his heir Ecgrith. He was also, as we saw in chapter two, working with Archbishop Æthelheard to persuade the pope to undo the elevation of Lichfield. In the rather neglected opening passages of his letter to Leo III in 798, Coenwulf requested papal intercession for himself and his people 'whom your apostolic authority has imbued with the rudiments of faith' to assist the defence and expansion of his kingdom. Following this, he begged to be received 'as your son by adoption (*adoptionis...tibi filium*)', stating that 'this benediction, all who before me were advanced to the sceptre of the Mercians deserved to receive from your predecessors (*hanc benedictionem omnes, qui ante me sceptre præfuere Merciorum, meruerunt ab antecessoribus tuis adipisci*)'.⁴³⁹ In his ill-tempered reply, Leo urged Coenwulf to 'honour and maintain' his dedication to the Roman orthodoxy of 'the most Christian kings your predecessors' but otherwise skirted the issue of adoption.⁴⁴⁰ By 802, however, Leo's attitude had changed and in another letter he called the Mercian king 'my most dear and beloved and distinguished son, excellent king (*fili dulcissime et*

⁴³⁷ ASC, 787; Wallace-Hadrill, 'Charlemagne and England', p. 159; and see chapter two, pp. 78-9.

⁴³⁸ ASC, 796 D; *Historia regum*, 58, ed. T. Arnold, *Symeonis Monachis Opera Omnia* (2 vols., London, 1885), II, 57-8; see CC, pp. 156-67, and also pp. 93-115.

⁴³⁹ Appendix 2:2.

⁴⁴⁰ Appendix 2:4.

amantissime atque prestantissime, rex bone)', showing that he had granted the latter's wish.⁴⁴¹ This exchange has gone unnoticed in modern scholarship, but is testament to the circulation of sophisticated ideas about Christian kingship and the Anglo-papal relationship in Mercian court circles. While it may seem remarkable that Coenwulf, in a letter laced with the language of filial love, requested adoption as a son, the statement that his predecessors received this 'benediction' is even more surprising. No evidence to support such a claim survives, but Offa's frequent dealings and friendly relations with Hadrian provide a plausible context for the forging of a bond of spiritual kinship, and Offa would doubtless have seen that Ecgfrith received the same.

As with the anointing of Ecgfrith, these remote kinship ties should be viewed against a background of contemporary Franco-papal practice. When Pippin and his family were anointed by Pope Stephen II at St Denis in July 754, they entered into spiritual kinship with the pope; Pippin's sons became the spiritual sons of Stephen, who in turn became Pippin's co-father – equivalent to the tie between parents and godparents.⁴⁴² The greeting clauses contained in the *Codex Carolinus* – a collection of papal letters to Carolingian kings up to 791 – reflect the further developments of these relationships. For example, the pope addressed Charlemagne as 'most excellent lord and son (*dominus excellentissimus filius*)' until, when Charlemagne's sons had been papally anointed, he – like Pippin – also became 'our spiritual co-father (*noster spiritalis compater*)'.⁴⁴³ This spiritual paternity and compaternity was an important aspect of the religious and political alliance between Frankish kings and the papacy.⁴⁴⁴ Moreover, these bonds, and the

⁴⁴¹ Appendix 2:7; on the possible motivations for this change of heart, see chapter one, pp. 42-3.

⁴⁴² See A. Angenendt, 'Das geistliche Bündnis der Päpste mit dem Karolingern (754-796)' *Historisches Jahrbuch* 100 (1980), 1-94, at 40-57; on compaternity, see J. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), pp. 192-218.

⁴⁴³ *Codex Carolinus*, ed. F. W. Gundlach, MGH Epp. III (I) (Berlin, 1892), nos. 26 and 44 name Charlemagne and Carloman as sons; nos. 49-65 term Charlemagne son but not co-father, the latter phrase being added from no. 66 onwards following the anointing of Pippin and Louis at Rome in 781.

⁴⁴⁴ See Angenendt, 'Das geistliche Bündnis', 92-4; and Noble, *The Republic*, pp. 262-76.

anointing that brought them about, did much to establish and maintain the legitimacy of what was a usurping dynasty, and provide an important ideological foundation of kings marked out by God and bonded to St Peter.⁴⁴⁵ Coenwulf's spiritual kinship with Leo bears a marked similarity to this Franco-papal practice, by which it was almost certainly inspired, albeit in the reign of Offa. Still, there were important differences, principally the fact that Coenwulf became Leo's spiritual son by remote adoption rather than direct unction.⁴⁴⁶ It is hard to know how this bond was received in England, where royal legitimacy ultimately stemmed from descent from a legendary dynastic founder rather than kinship with the pope and Peter. Coenwulf himself appears to have sought adoption not for legitimacy or authority, but for his own salvation and to secure divine support via papal intercession 'against the attacks of foreigners' and in the extension 'of the kingdom which God himself gave us'.⁴⁴⁷ This spiritual kinship with the pope reveals a previously overlooked dimension to Coenwulf's (and Offa's) kingship and, however he used it in Southumbria, this bond appears to have brought other benefits.

Relations between Coenwulf and Archbishop Wulfred, Æthelheard's successor, were notably turbulent, suffering a spectacular breakdown in 816 when Wulfred, with papal support, attacked the lay lordship of minsters and then Coenwulf's control of the wealthy Kentish royal houses of minster-in-Thamet and Reculver.⁴⁴⁸ Throughout this conflict, Coenwulf received papal support against his archbishop, and his status as spiritual son of the popes goes some way to explaining this surprising fact. Indeed, a palpable consequence of Coenwulf's support in Rome can be seen in his ability to acquire papal privileges protecting his monastic possessions, the first obtained from Leo III sometime

⁴⁴⁵ See J. Nelson, 'The Lord's anointed and the people's choice: Carolingian royal ritual', in her *The Frankish World* (London, 1996), pp. 108-15; and McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 151-55.

⁴⁴⁶ A possible parallel for such remote adoption is Stephen II addressing the Frankish elite in 756 as his adopted sons in *Codex Carolinus*, ed. Gundlach, no. 10.

⁴⁴⁷ Appendix 2:2; on descent from legendary founders, see. D. Dumville, 'The ætheling: a study in Anglo-Saxon constitutional history', *ASE* 9 (1979), 15-18.

⁴⁴⁸ See chapter two, pp. 82-3.

before 815 (c. 811) and the second sent by Paschal I (817-24) in December 817 to his ‘*excellentissimus filius*’ soon after the conflict over the Kentish minsters began.⁴⁴⁹ This was not unprecedented; in 798 Coenwulf apparently secured a privilege supporting his son Cynehelm’s ownership of Glastonbury, while his predecessor Offa – also a spiritual son – had, with his wife Cynethryth, secured a privilege from Hadrian confirming all their monastic possessions.⁴⁵⁰ Acquiring such privileges from the highest ecclesiastical power would have helped kings secure their control and possession of minsters which, by virtue of their religious character, were always vulnerable to the claims of churchmen. Indeed, Coenwulf’s first privilege was probably an attempt to secure his monastic property after Æthelheard assaulted lay lordship in 803, while the second – which added nothing to the first – appears to be a direct and swift reaction to the decrees of the 816 Council of Chelsea and Wulfred’s attempts to use them to wrest minsters from secular hands.

A look at the privileges themselves confirms the impression that they were designed to secure royal monastic property against ecclesiastical intervention. The previous ‘generation’ of papal privileges acquired in the seventh and early-eighth centuries were designed to exempt minsters from a degree of diocesan authority, the extent varying from case to case.⁴⁵¹ Leo III’s privilege placed Winchcombe and all the monasteries located ‘in the island of *Saxonia* (*in insula Saxonia*)’ which Coenwulf had ‘justly’ acquired or inherited ‘justly and reasonably’, and the property pertaining to them, under the Mercian king’s jurisdiction (‘*sub iure dictionis tue*’) to dispose of as he saw fit. Winchcombe,

⁴⁴⁹ Appendix 2:12-13; and see chapter one, pp. 50-1.

⁴⁵⁰ The problematic Glastonbury privilege is ed. W. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum: a Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History*, (3 vols., London, 1885-93), I, no. 284; and see L. Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 336-7; Offa’s privilege is *Liber diurnus Romanorum pontificum*, ed. Hans Foerster (Bern, 1958), no. 93.

⁴⁵¹ See H. Anton, *Studien zu den Klosterprivilegien der Päpste im Frühen Mittelalter. Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Privilegierung von St. Maurice D’Agaune* (Berlin and New York, 1975), pp. 62-83, 170-1; B. Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1999), 106-10; and S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c.600-900* (Cambridge, 2006), pp.133-4.

‘where your body will be buried (*ubi corpus tuum sepultum fuerit*)’, stands out from the other monastic property as the principal familial establishment, which should remain ‘free from each yoke and worldly servitude’ so that its inhabitants ‘never cease to offer attentive praises to God continually for your sins’. The ‘authority of blessed Peter, prince of the apostles’ was then evoked to ensure no future king would contravene ‘this, our precept of privilege and confirmation.’⁴⁵² Paschal’s privilege added nothing ostensibly new to this, confirming that the monasteries and their estates, possessions, and the many dependant workers (*‘famulorum multitudinem’*) remained under the authority of Coenwulf and his heirs in perpetuity.⁴⁵³ These documents secured for Coenwulf and his heirs an extensive network of monastic property which, led by Winchcombe, would benefit the king in this world and the next. Most striking is the absence of clauses limiting episcopal intervention in the lives of the monastic communities, which were the main concern of the earlier privileges. Of course, neither document is complete in its received form, leading Cubitt to suggest that Leo’s bull would have included a complete exemption from episcopal authority.⁴⁵⁴ This is certainly possible, but perhaps the role of the diocesan was not at issue here, what mattered was control over minsters and their properties, not over their religious practices. By employing the authority of St Peter and his heirs, Coenwulf effectively sidestepped and nullified episcopal claims on his monastic property. In effect, he employed papal authority as a tool of power against the Southumbrian church. For their part, Leo and Paschal secured the royal possession of religious communities and their lands which, given the fundamental importance of landholding to kingship, meant they effectively bolstered Coenwulf’s power.

⁴⁵² Appendix 2:12; on Winchcombe see *ECEC*, pp. 29-30, 249-59; and A. Thacker, ‘Kings, saints, and monasteries in pre-viking Mercia’, *Midland History* 10 (1985), 8-14.

⁴⁵³ Appendix 2:13.

⁴⁵⁴ C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils, c. 650-850* (Leicester, 1995), p. 199.

Between 785 and 825, Offa and Coenwulf thus enlisted papal authority to bolster their own power and authority, the former using it to manipulate episcopal structures in an attempt to secure his heir, the latter using it to secure his control of minsters and, by extension, limit expanding episcopal power. What is more, it seems bonds of spiritual kinship with the popes and St Peter lay at the base of both kings' ability to consistently gain papal support against the church. After 825, the waning of Mercian power and its replacement by West-Saxon hegemony led to a fundamental reconfiguration of the relationship between the Southumbrian episcopate and dominant kings which, as we saw in chapter two, meant that the cycles of conflict and cooperation which brought about papal involvement ceased. Popes continued to urge Mercian kings to take an active role in the maintenance of Christian discipline in society, but it seems that the bonds of spiritual kinship died out along with the more extensive papal role in Southumbrian politics.⁴⁵⁵ As we shall see, the West-Saxon kings did maintain relationships with the papacy, but they generally chose not to seek papal support in the way Coenwulf had done. There were, indeed, other ways in which Rome might affect kingship.

Royal journeys to Rome

Some of the most fascinating instances of Anglo-Roman contact are the journeys to Rome made by kings, queens, and æthelings in the ninth century.⁴⁵⁶ They were not the first to make such trips; the second half of the seventh and early eighth centuries had seen

⁴⁵⁵ Appendix 2:12, 14.

⁴⁵⁶ These journeys are listed with references to the relevant primary material in appendix 1, to which I refer in throughout this section.

a number of kings ‘opting out’ and journeying to Rome.⁴⁵⁷ Occurring at a time of new-found religiosity, these journeys coupled royal piety and the salvific concern with the Anglo-Saxon devotion to Rome and St Peter particularly evident in that period. Also, these instances of *peregrinatio pro Christi* were permanent, with the protagonists dying in Rome. Although such royal pilgrimages were rare, enshrined in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, these earlier journeys could act as precedents for ninth-century kings seeking salutary examples in the pages of Bede.⁴⁵⁸ Even so, the nature of the ninth-century royal journeys varied significantly from these earlier instances, and it is these divergences which suggest that royal motives may have gone beyond the purely personal concerns of salvation, into the wider realms of power and authority.

The first ninth-century royal journey occurred in a Northumbrian context, when the deposed king Eardwulf journeyed to Rome in 808.⁴⁵⁹ It is difficult to say much about ninth-century Northumbria, which Stenton described as ‘almost outside recorded history’.⁴⁶⁰ While this may be an overstatement, after 810 a reliable regnal and episcopal chronology is virtually unobtainable from textual sources until the final quarter of the century when a highly complex situation emerges from late, obscure, and sometimes contradictory source-material.⁴⁶¹ Fortunately the first decade of the century is illuminated by continental and annalistic material and Eardwulf’s journeys are relatively well documented, although their chronology presents some problems. According to the

⁴⁵⁷ C. Stancliffe, ‘Kings who opted out’, in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, eds. P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford, 1983), pp. 154-176; see also M. Riddiford, ‘Social exclusion from early medieval Wessex’ (University of Sheffield, unpublished PhD. Thesis, 2007), pp. 64-70.

⁴⁵⁸ Bede recorded the journeys of Caedwalla of Wessex in 689, *HE*, v.7; Coenred of Mercia and Offa of Essex in 709, *HE*, v. 19; and Ine of Wessex in 726, *HE*, v.7. MS F of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reports that the obscure East Saxon king Sigeric went to Rome in 798; *ASC*, 798 F.

⁴⁵⁹ Appendix 1:9.

⁴⁶⁰ F. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edn, Oxford, 1971), p. 243.

⁴⁶¹ D. Kirby, ‘Northumbria in the ninth century’, in *Coinage in Ninth-Century Northumbria*, ed. D. Metcalf (1987), pp. 11-25; and D. Dumville, ‘Textual archaeology and Northumbrian history subsequent to Bede’, in *Coinage in Ninth-Century Northumbria*, ed. D. Metcalf (1987), pp. 43-55.

‘northern recension’ of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Eardwulf ‘was driven from his kingdom’ in 806, the correct dating of a lunar eclipse to this year adding credence to this statement.⁴⁶² Yet his subsequent trip to Rome, only known from continental sources, is dated to 808 in the *Annales regni Francorum* which report him visiting Charlemagne at Nijmegen (in March or early April) and informing the emperor of his purpose before going on to Rome.⁴⁶³ A range of post-conquest sources drawing on earlier material further complicate matters, but Story’s suggestion that Eardwulf was expelled in 806 and then set off in 808 after spending two years gathering support in Britain provides the most plausible sequence of events.⁴⁶⁴ The remarkable thing about Eardwulf is that, rather than dying in Rome, he was subsequently returned to Northumbria, via Francia, ‘by the envoys of the Roman pontiff and the Lord Emperor’, the former being the deacon Aldulf ‘a Saxon from Britain’, and the latter two Frankish abbots named Hruotfrid and Nantharius. Aldulf was captured by pirates on his return in 809 and had to be ransomed by Coenwulf.⁴⁶⁵ It is usually assumed that Eardwulf was restored to the Northumbrian kingship, something not necessarily explicit in the language of the annals (808: *in regnum suum reducitur*), but Story has noted that, restored or not, Eardwulf’s return necessarily meant the toppling of the faction which had expelled him.⁴⁶⁶ That Leo III and Charlemagne could, acting together, effect ‘regime change’ in the faction-ridden Northumbrian polity suggests that they wielded considerable power and authority within Northumbria in these years.

⁴⁶² ASC, 806 D.

⁴⁶³ *Annales regni Francorum*, 808, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. VI (Hanover, 1895); trans. B. W. Scholtz, in *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard’s Histories* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1970), p. 89.

⁴⁶⁴ CC, pp. 145-56.

⁴⁶⁵ *Annales regni Francorum*, 808-9, ed. Kurze, 126-8; trans. Scholtz, pp. 89-90; on Hruotfrid and Nantharius, see CC, p. 147.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 150, 155.

Two letters from Leo III to Charlemagne written in 808 allow us a closer glimpse of the events that brought about Eardwulf's return to Northumbria, revealing a world of intense and regular contact between England and the continent.⁴⁶⁷ Written after April 808, the first letter reveals Charlemagne and Leo united in support of Eardwulf whom Charlemagne had 'brought...alive' to his court. Leo informed the emperor that he had read the 'deceitful' letters of Archbishop Eanbald II of York, Coenwulf, and the exiled Northumbrian ealdorman Wado which Charlemagne had forwarded to him, and stated that he had fulfilled the latter's request and summoned Eanbald to Rome to explain himself.⁴⁶⁸ Eardwulf's expulsion was clearly agreeable to, and perhaps facilitated by, the Archbishop of York and the Mercian king, although the two were not necessarily in alliance. Coenwulf, for one, had long been agitating against Eardwulf; his harbouring of Wado – who had fled Northumbria after defeat by Eardwulf in 798 – prompted Eardwulf to attack Mercia in 801, and his promotion of the cult of Eahlmund, a Northumbrian ætheling murdered by Eardwulf in 800, was a visibly hostile statement.⁴⁶⁹ The second letter from December 808 reveals that in returning from Northumbria, Eanbald's messenger and the papal *missus* Aldulf had deliberately avoided Charlemagne in an attempt to reach Rome before Eardwulf, presumably to enlist the pope's support against the king.⁴⁷⁰ Charlemagne suspected a 'deceitful embassy' and Leo was at pains to assure him this was not the case, pleading ignorance on the part of his messenger and sending to him the letters 'which were sent to us from the Saxon region' for his scrutiny.⁴⁷¹ This last statement suggests multiple letters were involved, perhaps from Coenwulf and Wado as well as Eanbald, in what was a calculated attempt to prise apart Franco-papal unity, albeit one that failed.

⁴⁶⁷ See chapter one, pp. 43-4; and appendix 1:7-10, and appendix 2:10-11.

⁴⁶⁸ *Leonis III papae epistolae* X, ed. K. Hampe, MGH Epp. V (III) (Berlin, 1899), 2; appendix 1, 7.

⁴⁶⁹ *Historia regum*, 59-63, ed. Arnold, II, 59-66; on Eahlmund, see Thacker, 'Kings, saints', pp. 15-6.

⁴⁷⁰ Appendix 1:7-8.

⁴⁷¹ *Leonis epistolae*, ed. Hampe, 2.

In these letters, Charlemagne appears most concerned about restoring Eardwulf, but he saw Leo's assistance as crucial, asking the pope to deal with ecclesiastical opposition to Eardwulf while he dealt with the secular opponents. Eanbald, and quite possibly Coenwulf and Wado, realised that Leo was more persuadable – perhaps through interrogation of the shady figure of Aldulf – and made every effort to secure his support. By splitting the pope from Charlemagne they sought to diminish the chances of Eardwulf returning, while Eardwulf, having visited Charlemagne, insisted on going on to Rome to secure Leo's support. United, Charlemagne and Leo were able to ensure Eardwulf's return to Northumbria, but papal support appears as a necessary condition of this return, perhaps because it was needed to influence powerful ecclesiastical factions, perhaps because Roman authority carried more weight generally. Whatever the case, Leo was not just influencing power here, but exercising it.

Like Eardwulf, Burgred of Mercia was driven from his kingdom and went to Rome in 874, but the circumstances of his journey highlight the radically different conditions prevailing in the 870s.⁴⁷² The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* annal for 874 reports that, having overwintered in Repton, the viking 'army (*here*)...drove King Burgred across the sea' and that he settled in Rome and was buried in St Mary's in 'the English quarter (*Angelcynnes scole*).'⁴⁷³ His name appears along with a number of other Anglo-Saxons in the *Liber vitae* of the convent of San Salvatore in Brescia and was presumably entered there when the Mercian king visited either the monastery itself or one of its Pavian dependants, Sta Maria 'regina' or the *xenodochium* of Sta Maria 'Britonum'.⁴⁷⁴ At least forty and

⁴⁷² Appendix 1:21-30.

⁴⁷³ ASC, 874; cf. Asser, ch. 46; on the 'English quarter', see chapter one, pp. 60-6.

⁴⁷⁴ *Der Memorial und Liturgiecodex von San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia*, eds. D. Geuenich and U. Ludwig, MGH Libri mem. N. S. IV (Hannover, 2000), p. 171, and fol. 31v of the facsimile, and see S. Keynes, 'Anglo-Saxon entries in the *Liber Vitae* of Brescia', in *Alfred the Wise*, ed. J. Roberts, J. Nelson, and M. Godden (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 99-119; on San Salvatore, see S. Wemple, 'S. Salvatore/S. Giulia: a case study in the endowment and patronage of a major female monastery in northern Italy', in *Women of the Medieval World*, eds. J. Kirshner and S. Wemple (Oxford, 1985), pp. 85-102.

possibly an old man, Burgred operated in a context where fragmented Carolingian power and a weakened papal position made a repetition of Eardwulf's return unlikely, something he probably realised. Indeed, his presence at the *Schola Saxonum* may indicate that he was occupying himself with prayer at Peter's shrine, rather than Lateran-based diplomacy. Burgred's best chance of restoration had lain with his long-time West-Saxon allies, who had previously afforded him military support and a wife; their apparent cooperation with his replacement, Ceolwulf II, may have been an important factor in his departure for Rome.⁴⁷⁵ It was the irreversible eclipse of Burgred's royal power that led him to Rome, making his – like those who had 'opted out' 150 years earlier – a personal and spiritual journey, and perhaps indicating that Rome was now more a refuge for those deprived of royal power than the source of its rejuvenation.

In this context, it is worth briefly considering the fate of Æthelswith, daughter of Æthelwulf of Wessex and Burgred's queen, since it bears on the nature of Burgred's journey and also on queenly power and expectations.⁴⁷⁶ Æthelswith's name (*Adelsuith regina*) appears next to that of her husband in the *Liber vitae* of Brescia, and versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* descended from the Alfredian 'common stock' report that she died in 888 and was buried in Pavia, although later recensions imply that she was on her way to Rome when this happened.⁴⁷⁷ We cannot therefore be sure whether Æthelswith accompanied her husband in 874 and remained in Italy thereafter, or stayed in England until 888, or perhaps even went in 874, returned to England after Burgred's death, and then went back toward Rome in 888. The evidence of the *Liber vitae* would seem to

⁴⁷⁵ ASC, 853 ABC, 868; S. Keynes, 'King Alfred and the Mercians', in *Kings, Currency, and Alliances: History and Coinage in Southern England in the Ninth Century*, eds. M. Blackburn, D. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 7-19.

⁴⁷⁶ Appendix 1:22; on Mercian queens, see P. Stafford, 'Political women in Mercia, eighth to early tenth centuries', in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, eds. M. Brown and C. Farr (London, 2001), pp. 35-49, although this is not concerned with her fate after 874.

⁴⁷⁷ *Memorial und Liturgiecodex*, eds. Geuenich and Ludwig, p. 171, and fol. 31v, and see p.92; ASC, 888 ABC, DE.

suggest the first option, but such entries could represent remote commemoration. Even discounting the *Liber vitae*, the 874 option does seem the most likely; Alfred's apparent cooperation with Ceolwulf II may have made her presence at the West-Saxon court untenable. Furthermore, if we prefer the earliest *Chronicle* witness, then Æthelswith need not have been travelling to Rome when she died. She may have remained in the *Schola Saxonum* or entered the monastic life elsewhere in Italy, perhaps at a convent in Pavia such as Sta Maria Teodata or Sta Maria 'regina'.⁴⁷⁸ As far as we can trace it, then, Æthelswith's fate suggests that her power and influence as queen and member of the West-Saxon dynasty ended with that of her husband, whom she probably accompanied on a one-way devotional journey.

In contrast to Eardwulf's and Burgred's journeys, the two trips made in the 850s by members of the West-Saxon dynasty were the idea of a ruling king – Æthelwulf – who sent his son Alfred to Rome in 853 and followed himself in 855. Through their proximity to other events, these journeys appear to be connected to the crucial issues of mid-ninth-century West-Saxon politics. They have also taken on greater, retrospective significance thanks to their role in triumphal narratives written under Alfred in the 890s. All this makes the interpretation of these journeys somewhat complex and convoluted, and it is tempting to subsume their significance into that of the issues surrounding them. Nevertheless, the journeys themselves were important aspects of kingship, a fact somewhat surprisingly overlooked in Pratt's recent maximalist assessment of ninth-century West-Saxon power.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁸ On Sta Maria Teodata, see K. Drew, 'The Italian monasteries of Nonatola, San Salvatore, and Santa Maria Teodata in the eighth and ninth centuries', *Manuscripta* 9 (1965), pp. 138-40; and see D. Bullough, 'Urban change in early medieval Italy: the example of Pavia', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 34 (1966), 124-5.

⁴⁷⁹ D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), they receive a brief mention on p. 64.

Alfred's journey to Rome as an infant of four in 853 is known from three pieces of evidence, one contemporary continental source and two narrative texts from the 890s, all of which have been subject to some degree of doubt.⁴⁸⁰ Following an important article by Keynes, it has also been thought that the *Liber vitae* of Brescia recorded Alfred's journey. He argued that the Anglo-Saxon names entered across two main columns on fol.27v (see fig. 8) were entered on separate occasions, so the names of the æthelings Alfred and his elder brother Æthelred in the first column represent the 853 journey, and those in the second column represent Æthelwulf's trip in 855-6.⁴⁸¹ Keynes' view is generally accepted in Anglophone historiography, yet it is an awkward interpretation of what appears to be a single group of names entered together.⁴⁸² Indeed, the most recent editors of the *Liber vitae* concluded these entries were a single group.⁴⁸³ By tying the group of Anglo-Saxon names on fol. 27v to Æthelwulf's trip to Rome, we must return to the assumption that no other æthelings accompanied Alfred in 853, but that Æthelred was included in the later trip.

The other piece of contemporary evidence is the letter-fragment of Leo IV to Æthelwulf from 853, which is now thought to be genuine.⁴⁸⁴ In the fragment, Leo informed Æthelwulf that he had 'graciously received your son Alfred, whom you were anxious to send at this time to the thresholds of the apostles' and that he had 'decorated him, as a spiritual son, with the dignity of the [sword-]belt and the vestments of the consulate (*consulatus cinguli honore vestimentisque*), as is customary with Roman consuls, because

⁴⁸⁰ Appendix 1:15.

⁴⁸¹ Keynes, 'Anglo-Saxon entries', pp. 107-9, 112.

⁴⁸² For example, CC, p. 234-5 follows Keynes; whereas H. Becher, 'Das königliche Frauenkloster San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia im Spiegel seiner Memorialüberlieferung', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 17 (1983), pp. 337-82 argued that they all pertain to the 855-6 visit.

⁴⁸³ *Memorial und Liturgiecodex*, eds. Geuenich and Ludwig, p. 167 and fol. 27v; and Ludwig's introduction, p. 92.

⁴⁸⁴ J. Nelson, 'The problem of King Alfred's royal anointing', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 18 (1967), 145-63, argued for eleventh-century forgery, but retracted these arguments in eadem, 'The Franks and the English in the ninth-century reconsidered', in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, eds. P. Szarmach and J. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI, 1999), p. 154, n. 30.

The material originally presented here is not currently available in ORA

Fig. 8: Fol. 27v of the *liber vitae* of San Salvatore, Brescia⁴⁸⁵ (the Anglo-Saxon names begin eight lines down)

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From: *Memorial und Liturgiecodex*, eds. Geuenich and Ludwig, fol. 27v.

he gave himself into our hands.’⁴⁸⁶ Story rightly described the precedents for this ceremony as ‘undeniably Carolingian’; papal anointing of Frankish princes had occurred since 754, with the closest recent parallel occurring in 844, when Sergius II anointed Lothar’s son Louis II in Rome ‘and invested him with a sword[-belt] (*cingulum*)’.⁴⁸⁷ Quite what Leo was doing decorating a four-year old as a consul is uncertain, but this appears to have been a largely symbolic action.⁴⁸⁸ It seems possible that, faced with the infant son of a distant king, Leo improvised, drawing on recent Franco-papal practice, to convey the secular and quasi-imperial honour of consul on Alfred through solemn ritual and symbolic gifts. Indeed, the explanatory character of the fragment points to papal innovation rather than West-Saxon request.

In any case, Leo’s motives are less important here than those which made Æthelwulf ‘anxious’ to send his infant son to Rome in the first place. In an insular context Alfred’s journey was a novelty, which perhaps accounts for the wide range of explanations offered for the motives which lay behind it.⁴⁸⁹ The two most likely motives for Æthelwulf’s actions were that first, he was preparing the way for his own journey which, as we will see, was a planned event of some size, and second, he was establishing bonds with the pope.⁴⁹⁰ What type of Anglo-papal bond was forged by this trip is unclear. Later evidence states that Leo sponsored Alfred at his confirmation, which would have

⁴⁸⁶ Appendix 2:13.

⁴⁸⁷ CC, p. 235-6; AB, 844.

⁴⁸⁸ The consulate proper ended in the west in 534; see R. Bagnall, A. Cameron, S. Schwartz, and K. Worp, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta, GA, 1987), pp. 7-12. Consuls are neither numerous nor prominent in this period, for example, I have been unable to find any in the ninth-century *Liber Pontificalis* entries.

⁴⁸⁹ The most bizarre of which are M. Enright, ‘Disease, royal unction and propaganda: an interpretation of Alfred’s journeys to Rome, 853 and 855 AD’, *Continuity* 3 (1982), 1-6, who argues Æthelwulf sought a cure for Alfred’s illnesses, and A. Smyth, *King Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1995), p. 12-7, who becomes tangled in his attempts to contradict everyone and everything.

⁴⁹⁰ R. Abels, *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Harlow, 1998), pp. 62-7; and CC, pp. 234-8.

instituted a bond of compaternity between Æthelwulf and the pope.⁴⁹¹ Leo does not mention confirmation, though only a short fragment of his letter survives. The letter-fragment does state that the pope ‘decorated him [Alfred], as a spiritual son (*et quasi spiritalem filium...decoravimus*)’ and providing we take *quasi* to mean as, it would seem Leo’s investment of Alfred as a consul created some sort spiritual kinship.⁴⁹² Of course, potential Carolingian precedents for this unusual action existed but, as with Coenwulf’s earlier remote adoption, it differs from them, not least in the absence of unction.⁴⁹³ Here, though, Alfred had become a spiritual son (*spiritalis filius*) suggesting that, confirmation or not, a bond of compaternity had been established. By creating such a bond, Æthelwulf became the spiritual kin of the pope and St Peter which, alongside its connotations for personal salvation, would have allowed the king to portray his rule as supported by apostolic authority, potentially setting both Wessex and the house of Ecgberht above rival kingdoms and kin-groups. Moreover, the sending of a son to Rome where he was received and honoured by the pope was a symbolic act; Æthelwulf was demonstrating his power and renown.

There is also a third element which I believe motivated this journey. It seems likely that, as Nelson has argued, Alfred’s journey and investiture marked him out in some primarily secular way.⁴⁹⁴ That he was being ‘kept in the running’ for kingship seems much less probable, as however much stress one lays on the instability and uncertainty caused by the vikings, Alfred’s chance of succeeding all of his three living brothers (and their heirs) was minimal. Rather, this marking out was more likely designed to protect a favoured youngest son from the attentions of his ambitious older brothers after their father’s death,

⁴⁹¹ ASC, 853; Abels, *Alfred*, p. 67; on compaternity and sponsorship, see J. Lynch, *Christianizing Kinship: Ritual Sponsorship in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), pp. 135-50, 205-15.

⁴⁹² Appendix 2:13.

⁴⁹³ On precedents, see CC, pp. 236-7; cf. Nelson, ‘The Franks and the English’, pp. 144-5.

⁴⁹⁴ Nelson, ‘The Franks and the English’, pp. 144-6; and eadem, ‘Power and authority at the court of Alfred’, *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, eds. J. Roberts and J. Nelson (London, 2000), p. 320

when Alfred's position in the potentially unstable period of succession was distinctly weak. Thus the aura of papal ritual surrounding Alfred may have helped protect him and, if not keep him line for the throne, at least ensure him a more secure future in the reign of his brothers.

Precisely what Alfred's family made of this infant consul enrobed in his vestments and sword-belt is uncertain – the later audiences of the *Old English Orosius* and *Old English Boethius* had to be told what a consul was, explained as a 'general (*heretoha*)' and 'leader (*ladteow*)' respectively.⁴⁹⁵ Given this uncertainty, and the conspicuous absence of imperial representations of secular power in ninth-century England, it seems unlikely that we should view this as evidence of *imitatio imperii*.⁴⁹⁶ The only surviving evidence of how the ceremony was received and interpreted comes from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Asser's *Vita Alfredi*, both written in the 890s. This chronological gap is significant in that these texts were both written at some remove from the event described and in the markedly different context of the Alfredian court, toward which their narratives gravitated. For 853 the *Chronicle* reported that, among other things, Æthelwulf sent Alfred to Rome where Pope Leo 'hallowed (*gehalgode*) him king and stood sponsor to him at confirmation.'⁴⁹⁷ Asser translated and expanded this passage to say that many people accompanied Alfred, and that Leo 'anointed the child Alfred as king (*infantem Alfredum...unxit in regem*), received him as an adoptive son and confirmed him.'⁴⁹⁸ It is at once obvious that these passages differ from the explanation of events in Leo's letter

⁴⁹⁵ OEOr, ii.2, p. 40; OEBo, 1, I, 243, II, 4; and see P. Barnwell, '“*Epistula Hieronimi de gradus Romanorum*”: an English school book', *Historical Research* 64 (1991), 77-86, on contemporary Latin ideas about the consulate.

⁴⁹⁶ As Nelson, 'The Franks and the English', p. 146, has done.

⁴⁹⁷ ASC, 853 ABC.

⁴⁹⁸ Asser, ch. 8; large sections of Asser's *Vita* – the authenticity of which is now established beyond reasonable doubt – consist of translations of an early version of the *Chronicle*; see M. Schütt, 'The literary form of Asser's 'Vita Alfredi'', *EHR* 72 (1957); 209-20; and J. Campbell, 'Asser's *Life of Alfred*', in *The Inheritance of Historiography, 350-900*, eds. C. Holdsworth and T. Wiseman (Exeter, 1986), pp. 115-135.

fragment. Confirmation may realistically have occurred, but we can, I think, be fairly certain that royal anointing did not.

The disjuncture between the contemporary and later evidence has caused much consternation about Alfred's honesty, and how he may have misinterpreted the ceremony or even reshaped it in his memory.⁴⁹⁹ However this later representation of Alfred's journey came about, it is significant that consular investiture had transmuted into unction at the hands of the pope. Keynes and Lapidge explained the later representation as the chronicler intending 'merely to convey that Alfred had been marked out for kingship when still a young boy', but this was a most particular type of marking out.⁵⁰⁰ It has been argued that Alfred identified with the Old Testament king David, and that 'Alfredian discourse' possessed a strong Davidic element.⁵⁰¹ David was anointed with oil by Samuel, who chose the youngest son over the seven older brothers, a process symbolising that David was divinely chosen to rule.⁵⁰² Retrospective parallels between Alfred and David may well have shaped courtly interpretation of Alfred's journey, casting the king in a Davidic mould. The involvement of the pope adds another level to this refashioning, for Alfred was marked out not by Samuel, but by the ruler of the church and successor of St Peter and Gregory, whom ninth-century Anglo-Saxons revered. The chronicler and Asser were constructing an ideology of divinely-ordained kingship around Alfred, enhancing his royal authority among educated audiences. At this time West-Saxon kingship had been restricted to the line of Ecgerht, but there remained sub-lines provided by surviving sons of Alfred's deceased elder brother Æthelred which might

⁴⁹⁹ See R. Davis, 'Alfred the Great: propaganda and truth', *History* 56 (1971), 175-6; for misinterpretation and reshaping, see Nelson, 'Royal anointing', p. 146; Abels, *Alfred*, pp. 61-2.

⁵⁰⁰ S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other Contemporary Sources* (London and New York, 1983), p. 232, n. 19. On inauguration rites in this period, see J. Nelson, 'Inauguration rituals', in her *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), pp. 283-307; and Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 72-8.

⁵⁰¹ Abels, *Alfred*, pp. 61-2; and especially Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 177-8, 242-63.

⁵⁰² I Samuel, 16:1-14.

threaten Alfred or his heirs.⁵⁰³ By depicting Alfred's power as sanctioned by the foremost ecclesiastical authority and most powerful saint, these texts elevated Alfred and, by implication, his heirs above the other sons of Æthelwulf.

As with Alfred's journey, the evidence for Æthelwulf's expedition to Rome in 855 is two-tiered, consisting of contemporary continental sources and Anglo-Saxon materials from the last decade of the ninth century. Æthelwulf's outward journey was recorded by Prudentius in the *Annals of St Bertin*, who wrote that Charles the Bald 'gave an honourable reception to King Æthelwulf of the Anglo-Saxons', resupplied him, and courteously escorted him to the boundary of the realm.⁵⁰⁴ As we saw above, his passage through either Brescia or Pavia was recorded on fol.27v of the *Liber vitae* of San Salvatore in Brescia, where he was styled '*rex anglorum*', along with the names of his two youngest sons Æthelred (*Ederath*) and Alfred (*Elfreth*) who made the journey with him.⁵⁰⁵ Alfred's status as a living link between king and pope also provides a likely reason for his inclusion, but they may also have accompanied their father to remove them from the attentions of ambitious elder brothers. Also included in this group was Marcward, probably to be identified as the retired abbot of Prüm, who may have acted as a guide to the royal party, an arrangement possibly facilitated by Lupus of Ferrières who had corresponded with Æthelwulf that year and presided over the monastery where Marcward retired.⁵⁰⁶ Æthelwulf's presence in Rome is recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*,

⁵⁰³ See Alfred's will, S 1507; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, pp. 174-5; on which see P. Wormald, 'On þa wæpnedhealfe: kinship and royal property from Æthelwulf to Edward the Elder', in *Edward the Elder 899-924*, eds. N. Higham and D. Hill (London, 2001), pp. 268-74, and ASC, 900, on Æthelwold's rebellion; and see Nelson, 'Power and authority', pp. 316-26 on the problems facing Alfred.

⁵⁰⁴ AB, 855.

⁵⁰⁵ *Memorial und Liturgiecodex*, eds. Geuenich and Ludwig, p. 167 and fol. 27v, and also pp. 92-3; Keynes, 'Anglo-Saxon entries', p. 112-4. Asser, ch. 11, notes that Alfred accompanied his father.

⁵⁰⁶ Keynes, 'Anglo-Saxon entries', p. 114 argues that they travelled through the middle kingdom via Prüm where they met Marcward; cf. Becher, 'Das königliche Frauenkloster', pp. 379, who argues Marcward had retired to Ferrières where the royal party met up with him. Lupus's correspondence is ed. E. Dümmler, *Lupi Abbatis Ferrariensis Epistolae*, MGH Epp. VI (IV) (Berlin, 1925), 13-14; trans. EHD, 217-8; see CC, pp. 230-4.

where he was said to have come ‘for the sake of prayer’ and ‘with a multitude of people’, and where he dispensed considerable largesse of gold, silver, and silk to St Peter, also distributing gold and silver to the clergy and aristocracy, and some silver to the people.⁵⁰⁷ This account’s position in Benedict III’s *vita* is unusual, and its assertions that Æthelwulf had been deposed and died immediately after returning home appear to represent a garbled version of subsequent events; we can be confident from Prudentius’ annals that Æthelwulf retained his kingly status.⁵⁰⁸ That the *vita* is most detailed when recording Æthelwulf’s donations to St Peter hints at what really mattered to its author. Having spent a year in Rome, the West-Saxon king’s return journey again features in the *Annals of St Bertin*, where Prudentius recorded that Æthelwulf was betrothed to Charles the Bald’s daughter Judith in July. Having married her in October, he sailed back to Britain after religious ceremonies and royal gift-exchange.⁵⁰⁹ While I examine this unlikely union below, for now it is worth pointing out that in this poorly-documented part of a patchily-documented century, Æthelwulf’s expedition is extraordinarily visible.

As with his sending to Alfred to Rome, Æthelwulf’s journey to Rome and back as a reigning – rather than deposed or retired – king is novel in an insular context. Also the appearance and description of the expedition in contemporary continental sources suggest it was something different. The *Annals of St Bertin* highlight Charles the Bald’s treatment of Æthelwulf’s as befitting his royal status, while the *Liber Pontificalis* notes the size of the expedition and the fine gifts dispensed to St Peter and to the various sections of Roman society. This was a large, visible expedition which seems to have expressed Æthelwulf’s royal power to continental Europe. An impression similarly conveyed by the descriptions of the event written in the 890s in the *Anglo-Saxon*

⁵⁰⁷ *LP*, 106:34 (Benedict III).

⁵⁰⁸ See *LP*, 106:34 (Benedict III), n. 84 where Davis suggests the entry was written on Æthelwulf’s death.

⁵⁰⁹ *AB*, 856.

Chronicle and by Asser, the former recording that Æthelwulf ‘went to Rome the same year with great state (*mid micelre weorpnese*)’.⁵¹⁰ While the compiler of the *Liber Pontificalis* emphasised that Æthelwulf’s motive for the journey was prayer, personal devotion seems an inadequate explanation not for the journey itself, but for its size and prominence.⁵¹¹ To work toward an understanding of Æthelwulf’s actions, we need first to look at what may have influenced the West-Saxon king.

One factor may have been the influence of his father Ecgberht. In 839, the *Annals of St Bertin* noted that ‘the king of the English (*rex Anglorum*) sent envoys’ asking Louis the Pious for permission to travel through his lands on the way ‘to Rome on pilgrimage’.⁵¹² This statement almost certainly referred to Ecgberht who, having organised his son’s succession at Kingston, wished to retire to Rome, although he died before departing.⁵¹³ It is also possible that Æthelwulf was influenced by older Anglo-Saxon precedents. In the final book of his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede recorded the royal pilgrimages of the West-Saxon kings Caedwalla (685-9) and his successor Ine (689-726) who both ‘opted out’ of kingship to go to Rome. Bede approved of these journeys, noting how Caedwalla forged special links with the ‘Prince of the apostles’ and then ‘joined the company of the blessed in heaven’, something Ine similarly sought on his pilgrimage.⁵¹⁴ Æthelwulf’s decision to visit Rome may have been influenced by the memory of his ancestors and their personal piety, and in particular Ine, through whose brother Ingild Ecgberht and his descendants linked themselves to Cerdic, the legendary founder of the West-Saxon royal house.⁵¹⁵ Also, such historic parallels may have helped make his actions intelligible to a West-Saxon audience.

⁵¹⁰ ASC, 855; Asser, ch. 11.

⁵¹¹ LP, 106:34 (Benedict III).

⁵¹² AB, 839.

⁵¹³ CC, pp. 218-224, refutes the oft-held notion that this referred to Æthelwulf.

⁵¹⁴ HE, v. 7.

⁵¹⁵ Æthelwulf’s genealogy in ASC, 855-8, notes Ine’s death in Rome.

Alongside this, I suspect the influence of Carolingian exemplars. Despite Nelson's assertion that parallels between West-Saxon and Carolingian practice may lie in 'independent borrowings from Roman practice', the immediate inspiration for Æthelwulf's journey must lie in the journeys of Frankish kings and emperors.⁵¹⁶ Charlemagne in particular made four journeys to Rome, showering wealth on the pope and St Peter's which he attempted to enrich 'beyond all other churches'.⁵¹⁷ One thinks predominantly of his final journey to Rome as recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis* where, after the imperial coronation, the compiler lists Charlemagne's valuable gifts as those of Æthelwulf were listed fifty years later.⁵¹⁸ Indeed, Æthelwulf's father Ecgbert had spent time as an exile at the Frankish court between 789-92 (-802?), and may have passed on stories about Charlemagne's visits to Rome.⁵¹⁹ Like Charlemagne, Æthelwulf's gifts were borne of piety but were also an unambiguous display of power, not of 'imperial' power but that of a king who, having dominated Southumbria and inflicted significant defeats on viking armies, was domestically successful.⁵²⁰ By taking a large expedition almost a thousand miles and, once there, bestowing gifts on St Peter and his church, Æthelwulf displayed this domestic power in an international context. Having already used his son to forge a special relationship with the pope and Peter, he showed that, like his West-Saxon predecessors, he was a spiritual man but also a powerful king who was able to engage directly with the centre of the church and Christian sanctity, as

⁵¹⁶ J. Nelson, 'Alfred's Carolingian contemporaries', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), p. 297.

⁵¹⁷ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 27, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS rer. Germ. XXV (Hannover and Leipzig, 1911), 32; trans. P. Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier: the Complete Einhard* (Peterborough, ON, 1998), p. 33; and see R. Schieffer, 'Charlemagne and Rome', in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 279-95, esp. 289-90.

⁵¹⁸ *LP*, 98:23-5 (Leo III).

⁵¹⁹ *ASC*, 839; and see *CC*, pp. 144-5, 214-8.

⁵²⁰ See *ASC*, 851-3 for his victory at Aclea and assistance of the Mercians; see also *CC*, pp. 224-30; and G. Little, 'Dynastic strategies and regional loyalties: Wessex, Mercia and Kent, c. 802-939' (University of Sheffield, unpublished PhD. Thesis, 2007), pp. 38-42.

Charlemagne had done. Rome was part of a widely comprehensible language of power, a language which could be spoken by Anglo-Saxon kings as by Frankish ones.

The later accounts of Æthelwulf's expedition to Rome in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Asser add a little to our knowledge of the trip, but it is the events that they relate either side of the king's journey that are of particular interest. Before mentioning Æthelwulf's trip to Rome in the composite annal for 855-8, the *Chronicle* reports that the king had 'conveyed by charter the tenth part of his land throughout all his kingdom to the praise of God and his own eternal salvation', an action which has come to be called Æthelwulf's 'decimation'.⁵²¹ The nature of this gift are unclear, and interpretations have been further clouded by Asser's statement that the king 'freed the tenth part of his whole kingdom from every royal service and tribute', which points to a more general remission of royal dues.⁵²² Keynes' discovery of a common ninth-century core to the spurious decimation charters suggests that Æthelwulf granted a 'tenth part' of his lands to churches and thegns at an assembly held at the royal place of Wilton on Easter Sunday 854.⁵²³ Although we cannot be sure whether his personal or royal lands were meant, we can be reasonably sure that it represented a substantial gift or 'strategic "tax-cut"', designed to benefit lay and ecclesiastical elites.⁵²⁴ Immediately preceding the expedition to Rome, it is hard not to see the decimation as a staged instance of gift-giving which expressed the king's power while trying to engender elite consensus and loyalty for the period of his forthcoming absence.⁵²⁵

⁵²¹ ASC, 855.

⁵²² Asser, ch. 11.

⁵²³ S. Keynes, 'The West-Saxon charters of King Æthelwulf and his sons', *EHR* 109 (1994), 1119-23; and J. Nelson, 'England and the continent in the ninth century: III, rights and rituals', *TRHS* 6th series 14 (2004), 15-21; and see the discussion of Little, 'Dynastic Strategies', pp. 42-8.

⁵²⁴ Pratt, *Political Thought*, p. 68.

⁵²⁵ R. Abels, 'Royal succession and the growth of political stability in ninth-century Wessex', *Haskins Society Journal* 12 (2005), p. 89.

In this aim the decimation had only limited success, for in a ‘disgraceful episode’ while Æthelwulf was away his son Æthelbald (855-60) – who had been left in control of Wessex whilst his younger brother Æthelbert (860-5) ruled the eastern territories – rebelled along with the bishop of Sherborne and the ealdorman of Somerset, trying to prevent the returning Æthelwulf from regaining his kingdom.⁵²⁶ Æthelbald’s rebellion was probably a reaction to his father’s marriage to the 12 year old Carolingian princess Judith when returning through Francia, and the threat of further heirs posed by this union.⁵²⁷ His rebellion cannot, as Enright argued, have been the reason for the marriage, as Charles had his daughter anointed and, contrary to West-Saxon practice, declared queen; he would not have married her to a king on the cusp of violent deposition.⁵²⁸ But why did Æthelwulf marry Judith? It seems to me that like the decimation and trip to Rome, Æthelwulf’s marriage to Judith was a highly-visible, royal event; and I cannot help but think that, presented with the opportunity, he could not resist the prospect of returning home from his journey with a Carolingian bride, a further symbolic action.

Overall, royal journeys illustrate the different ways in which Rome might affect the exercise or representation of power across the century. At the two extremes are Burgred, for whom Rome provided a saintly retirement home after the irrevocable eclipse of his kingship, and Eardwulf, whose return to the kingdom from which he had been exiled was orchestrated by the Frankish emperor and pope. While Charlemagne took the lead in this, Leo clearly played a key role and all involved coveted his support; his Petrine authority

⁵²⁶ Asser, ch. 12; this goes unreported in *ASC*, 855-8.

⁵²⁷ *AB*, 856; *ASC*, 855-8; Asser, chs. 11-13; and see P. Stafford, ‘Charles the Bald, Judith and England’, in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, eds. M. Gibson and J. Nelson (Aldershot, 1990), pp. 137-51; see also eadem, ‘The king’s wife’, 3-27; and eadem, ‘Succession and inheritance: a gendered perspective on Alfred’s family history’, in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 255-63.

⁵²⁸ M. Enright, ‘Charles the Bald and Aethelwulf of Wessex: the alliance of 856 and strategies of royal succession’, *Journal of Medieval History* 5 (1979), 291-302.

may have been crucial to the success of this scheme which effectively saw pope and emperor use their authority to direct affairs within Northumbria. The West-Saxons did not utilise papal authority in the direct manner of Coenwulf and Eardwulf, but Æthelwulf did use Rome in a series of symbolic actions designed to demonstrate his power. Drawing on insular and Frankish precedents, he sent his son to Rome to create a bond of spiritual kinship, and followed himself two years later in a significant and highly-visible journey. The culmination of a series of public actions designed to illustrate his piety and power, and enhance the authority of his dynasty, this journey capitalised upon Rome's place in the symbolic vocabulary of eighth- and ninth-century Christian kingship. In a similar use of this vocabulary, Alfred's journey was re-packaged as papal anointing in the 890s to create an ideology of divinely-ordained rulership that would help secure his dynastic line.

Royal payments to Rome

In 798, at the end of his reply to Coenwulf of Mercia's letter on the demotion of the archbishopric of Lichfield, Leo reminded Coenwulf that:

‘King Offa of blessed memory...made a vow before a synod of all the bishops and ealdormen and chief men and all the people dwelling in the island of Britain, and also of our most faithful legates the most holy bishops George and Theophylact, to that same apostle of God, the blessed Peter, keeper of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, that he would send every year as many mancuses as the year had days, that is, 365, to that same apostle of the church of God, for the support of the poor

and the provision of lights; which he did, both for himself and for his successors who continue in that kingdom, forever in perpetuity'.⁵²⁹

Coenwulf had included 120 mancuses 'as a token of love' with his letter to Leo sent earlier that year, 'praying you to accept them graciously'.⁵³⁰ This was not the case. As with the other schemes outlined by Coenwulf, the gift and request met with rather high-handed dismissal by Leo who, on receipt of the 120 mancuses, simply reminded Coenwulf that his predecessor had paid three times as much. Offa had promised and paid a mancus a day to the pope, and Leo expected these payments to continue despite dynastic change in Mercia. By 802, a compromise had been reached and Coenwulf continued to make payments to the pope, albeit at the rate of 120 mancuses per annum.⁵³¹ Over fifty years later, similar payments were made again. Writing in 893, Asser reported that Æthelwulf of Wessex, in his will of 856-8, ordered that 300 mancuses should be taken to Rome yearly and divided equally between St Peter's, St Paul's, and the pope.⁵³² For how long these payments were maintained is uncertain, but thirty years later King Alfred was apparently sending yearly alms-payments to Rome; the annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* record four trips for this purpose between 883 and 890.⁵³³

Across the ninth century, large payments were sent to Rome by the kings who, as we have already seen, were enlisting papal support for domestic purposes or using the city in the construction of their authority. It is possible that these payments represent a continued tradition of royal interaction with Rome and its bishops which bridged the divide between Mercian and West-Saxon kingship. Yet, before making such an assertion, I want to consider the numismatic evidence for these payments to Rome then, only after looking again at the textual evidence in light of what this chapter has shown, assess them

⁵²⁹ Appendix 2:4.

⁵³⁰ Appendix 2:2.

⁵³¹ Appendix 2:7.

⁵³² Asser, ch. 16.

⁵³³ ASC, 883-90.

as a group and ask whether they should be perceived as such. This may lead us to an understanding of why kings might alienate sums of money in this way, what they hoped to gain and, ultimately, whether it was in any way connected to their power and authority. Surprisingly, historians have afforded little attention to these payments, and in that little attention they have often distorted their significance.

To date, the study of late-eighth- and ninth-century royal payments to Rome has been dominated by the later notion of ‘Peter’s pence’, something which has distorted understanding of these payments in their contemporary contexts.⁵³⁴ Peter’s Pence was a later-medieval payment of 300 marks a year to the pope, with one penny collected from each household via local ecclesiastical machinery and conveyed to Rome. Such annual disbursements were considered normal at the time of the Norman Conquest, and seemingly continued to be paid until the eve of the Reformation.⁵³⁵ From this point, historians have tended to work backwards, searching for the origins of this payment. To an extent this search is acceptable, for when church dues came to be codified in royal law-codes and supported by the force of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom in the central years of the tenth century, a payment analogous to Peter’s Pence emerges. This due, known as *Romfeoh*, *Romscot*, or ‘hearth-penny’, was enforced in King Edgar’s (959-75) important second code by the rather extreme punishment that anyone who failed to pay by St Peter’s day would have to take it, and an additional fine of thirty pence, to Rome.⁵³⁶ Payment of *Romfeoh* is mentioned earlier in King Edmund’s (939-46) first code.⁵³⁷ Furthermore, in a short ‘code’ entitled *Romscot*, payment of this ‘Rome-money’ was

⁵³⁴ To cite all such examples here would be unnecessary, but see, for example, V. Ortenberg, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Church and the papacy’, in *The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, ed. C.H. Lawrence (Stroud, 1999), pp. 46-7.

⁵³⁵ H. Loyn, ‘Peter’s Pence’, in his *Society and Peoples: Studies in the History of England and Wales*, c. 600-1200 (London, 1992), pp. 241-58 at 242-5; see also the earlier studies of O. Jensen, ‘The ‘Denarius Sancti Petri’ in England’, *TRHS* new series 15 (1901), 171-83; and W. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England to 1327* (Cambridge, MA, 1939), pp. 3-17.

⁵³⁶ II Edgar 4, ed. F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (3 vols., Halle, 1903-16), I, 198.

⁵³⁷ I Edmund 2, ed. F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (3 vols., Halle, 1903-16), I, 184.

demanding before noon on St Peter's day after midsummer, or one would be subject to the penalties laid down in the early eighth-century for non-payment of 'churchscot'.⁵³⁸

This 'code' was inserted between the rubrics and main text in Alfred's *domboc*, something which Wormald saw as occurring early in the textual transmission, certainly before 959 when the harsher strictures of Edgar's code came into force.⁵³⁹

It is thus relatively unproblematic to argue that *Romfeoh*, a render based on the principle of one-penny per household, was in force from around the middle of the tenth century, and would later come to be called Peter's Pence. When the search for the origins of *Romfeoh* is extended back into the ninth century, it does become problematic. This is not because ninth-century payments, particularly those of Alfred, do not provide a possible context for the development of *Romfeoh*. Rather, it is because scholars tend to search for something exactly equivalent to high-medieval notion of Peter's Pence in the ninth century. Most noticeably, Loyn described the payments ordered by Æthelwulf as 'clearly important though still not yet precisely Peter's Pence', those of Alfred as 'taking us a step nearer Peter's Pence', while those of Offa and Coenwulf were 'early efforts' at establishing the payment, foiled only by under-developed administrative structures.⁵⁴⁰

This anachronistic way of looking at ninth-century events obscures the real significance of these payments. First and foremost, they must be analysed on their own terms and placed firmly in the context of ninth-century Anglo-Roman contact.

To now turn to the numismatic evidence, there are two issues to explore here. First, Anglo-Saxon coins found in Rome and, second, the possibility that special coins may have been minted for alms-payments. Five hoards containing Anglo-Saxon coins have so

⁵³⁸ P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 227, 368-9.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., pp. 227, 369; Blair, *The Church*, p. 441 agrees with Wormald's assessment.

⁵⁴⁰ Loyn, 'Peter's Pence', pp. 250-57.

far been found in Rome and its environs, yet only three of these can be satisfactorily reconstructed, with records for the other two frustratingly vague. Regrettably, it is the two vague hoards that are the ones most relevant to discussion of the ninth-century payments. One, found in Rome c.1830, may have contained pennies of Offa and Coenwulf, while another unearthened at some point in the first half of the nineteenth century near Rome was said to contain a large number of Alfredian pennies.⁵⁴¹ Both hoards are now largely untraceable, making it difficult to assess whether they were royal payments to Rome. The structures of the three better-documented hoards point to dates of deposition between 924 and 950; the Vatican hoard found c.1928 contained 517 Anglo-Saxon pennies, mostly of Edward the Elder but containing some of Athelstan, pointing to a date of deposition c.924-8.⁵⁴² The larger Forum hoard of 1883 contained 883 Anglo-Saxon pennies, mostly minted in the reign of Athelstan but including many of his successor Edmund, and was probably deposited around 945, whereas the smaller, poorly-documented 1846 hoard consisted of 94 pennies, and was deposited c.950.⁵⁴³ Buried around the time that *Romscot* was being codified, the Forum and Vatican hoards may represent payments of this due, a conclusion supported by the pair of Anglo-Saxon hooked tags found with the Forum hoard and inscribed with the name of the then pope, Marinus II (942-6), which may have carried a purse containing a payment of *Romfeoh*.⁵⁴⁴ Yet, in light of the ninth-century payments these tenth-century hoards appear quite small; with one mancus worth 30d., the 120 mentioned by Coenwulf would translate to 3600d

⁵⁴¹ C. Blunt, 'Anglo-Saxon coins found in Italy', in *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History: Essays In Memory of Michael Dolley*, ed. M. Blackburn (Leicester, 1986), pp. 159-63.

⁵⁴² M. O'Donovan, 'The Vatican hoard of Anglo-Saxon pennies', *British Numismatic Journal* 33 (1964), 7-29.

⁵⁴³ D. Metcalf, 'The Rome (forum) hoard of 1883', *British Numismatic Journal* 62 (1992), 63-96; on the 1846 horde see Blunt, 'Anglo-Saxon coins', pp. 161-2.

⁵⁴⁴ See J. Graham-Campbell and E. Okasha, 'A pair of inscribed hooked tags from the Rome (Forum) 1883 hoard', *ASE* 20 (1991), 221-9.

and the 300 bequeathed by Æthelwulf equal a sizable 9000d, far more than the 883 pennies in the Forum hoard.

Tenth-century coins dominate the current picture of Roman hoards, yet, as hoard deposition is often associated with instability, so the concentration in the second quarter of the tenth century may say more about central-Italian politics than about Anglo-Saxon payments.⁵⁴⁵ That said, only sizeable hoards are likely to represent royal payments to Rome, other coins are probably to be associated with pilgrims, merchants, and other travellers. For example, the pennies of Æthelwulf and Ecgberht excavated from the *confessio* of St Peter's basilica were thrown there by pilgrims.⁵⁴⁶ Found within the papal patrimony, the three pennies of Offa that are now in the Vatican library, along with one of Archbishop Æthelheard, two of Coenwulf (one of which is a contemporary forgery), and a rare penny of Ecgberht of Kent (c.765-80), are a more intriguing proposition. Possibly to be linked with the elusive hoard of c.1830, they point toward more substantial connections.⁵⁴⁷ Still, as with the lost hoards, these coins are more suggestive than conclusive and, ultimately, the Anglo-Saxon coins found in Rome cannot be said to add a great deal to our knowledge of royal payments to Rome before the tenth century. Yet the absence of any well-documented ninth-century hoards does not mean payments did not occur.

A different line of investigation concerns the possibility that Anglo-Saxon kings minted special coins to be sent to Rome. Payments to Rome were to be made in mancuses. The term mancus – Latin *mancosus* or *mancusus* (pl. *mancosi*, *mancusi*) – is an Arabic loan

⁵⁴⁵ On which, see C. Wickham, “‘The Romans according to their malign custom’: Rome in Italy in the late ninth and tenth centuries”, in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West*, ed. J. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 150-67; and also P. Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (London, 1971), 279-315.

⁵⁴⁶ C. Blunt and R. Dolley, ‘Anglo-Saxon coins in the Vatican Library’, *British Numismatic Journal* 28 (1955-7), 453.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 449-58; and see Blunt, ‘Anglo-Saxon coins’, pp. 163-5, on other lost coins of Offa and Coenwulf in Rome, and the other rare types of this period found there.

word which entered the west and spread rapidly from Italy to England in late eighth century, largely bypassing Francia.⁵⁴⁸ Initially referring to golden Arab dinars, it quickly entered widespread use as a term of value referring, as we have seen, to a gold coin worth 30d.⁵⁴⁹ The legatine synods of 786 – at which Offa promised his payments to Rome – provides a particularly plausible context for the introduction of *mancosi* into England, and it is noteworthy that a single dinar/mancus of Offa survives (see fig. 9).⁵⁵⁰ A copy of an Arabic dinar with OFFA REX inserted upside down into the cufic script, this coin

The material originally presented here is not currently available in ORA

Fig. 9: Offa's mancus or dinar (© Trustees of the British Museum)

The material originally presented here is not currently available in ORA

⁵⁴⁸ M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 323-4.

⁵⁴⁹ P. Grierson, and M. Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage I: The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 327.

⁵⁵⁰ On the synod, see chapter two, p. 73.

Fig. 10: Coenwulf's mancus (© Trustees of the British Museum)

makes most sense in an Mediterranean context and, significantly, it has a Roman provenance.⁵⁵¹ Coenwulf too issued mancuses, a single stunning example minted at London c.805-10 was found in 2001 (see fig. 10).⁵⁵² Gold coinage was, of course, extremely rare in this 'age of silver', and it is striking that two kings known to have made payments to Rome, apparently in mancuses, both issued gold coins of this type.⁵⁵³ Story has argued that the *solidi* of Louis the Pious and their imitations were used as a gold coinage in England after 814, and one could interpret these earlier examples in a similar light.⁵⁵⁴ While they undoubtedly could act as coinage, I would prefer to interpret these coins as primarily symbolic items. Quite what message Offa's mancus conveys is not clear, but it may represent an early attempt to make a 'mancus' from an Arabic exemplar. With its 'powerful Romanised bust', Coenwulf's coin would have been readily recognisable to continental audiences as the image of a significant ruler.⁵⁵⁵ Ultimately, it is the confluence of terminology, denomination, and attested motivations for the minting of such coins that leads me to think they were specially minted for the purpose of royal payments to Rome.

An even stronger case for the special minting of coins intended for Rome can be made for two unparalleled coins of Alfred. These large silver issues – weighing the equivalent of six Frankish or seven Anglo-Saxon pennies and probably minted at Winchester late in

⁵⁵¹ C. Blunt, 'The coinage of Offa', in *Anglo-Saxon Coins*, ed. R. Dolley (London, 1961), pp. 50-1, argues it was for Mediterranean trade; and now see A. Gannon, 'Three coins in a fountain', in *Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, eds. É. Ó Carragáin and C. Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 302-3.

⁵⁵² M. Blackburn, 'Case 41 (2004-5) Coenwulf gold mancus: Statement from the expert advisor', *Museums, Libraries and Archives Council Website*, www.mla.gov.uk/documents/revcom_case041_cas.doc (accessed 18/10/05), pp. 1-7.

⁵⁵³ On gold minting in this period, see Grierson, and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, pp. 326-31; and McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, pp. 323-42, on the role of '*mancosi*' in Carolingian Italy.

⁵⁵⁴ CC, p. 243-55.

⁵⁵⁵ Blackburn, 'Case 41', p. 5.

Alfred's reign – bear the reverse inscription ELI_MO which expanded to *elimosina* means alms or offering (see fig. 11). Dolley, Blunt, and later North have directly associated this coin with the payments of alms to Rome described in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* annals of the 880s.⁵⁵⁶ Given the limited Latinity in England in this period, these coins – which rely on Latin literacy to get their message across – may have been more readily understood on the continent, in which context, according to Dolley, their unusual weight makes sense.⁵⁵⁷ It seems likely they were minted for the purpose of payments to Rome. Of the four Anglo-Saxon kings who made payments to Rome in this period, three issued unusual coins which can be construed as being for this purpose. Not all payments need have been made with special coins, only some of them some of the time, but those that did provided a canvas for royal self-representation. It would seem that kings took this opportunity to send a statement to Rome; for Coenwulf, enshrined in gold as a Roman emperor, it was one of power, for Alfred, whose payments may have differed from these earlier ones, it was one of especial royal piety.

The material originally presented here is not currently available in ORA

Fig. 11: Alfred's *elimosina* coin⁵⁵⁸

Returning to the textual evidence, we must ask how the royal payments relate to the other policies of these kings involving Rome and the papacy, and whether they represent a

⁵⁵⁶ R. Dolley, 'The so-called Piedforts of Alfred the Great', *Numismatic Chronicle* 14 (1954), pp. 76-92; R. Dolley and C. Blunt, 'The chronology of the coins of Ælfred the Great', in *Anglo-Saxon Coins*, ed. R. Dolley (London, 1961), pp. 77-8; J. North, *English Hammered Coinage: v. 1: Early Anglo-Saxon to Henry III, c.600-1272*, (London, 1994), pp. 126-7.

⁵⁵⁷ Dolley, 'The so-called Piedforts', pp. 77-9.

⁵⁵⁸ From: Dolley, 'The so-called Piedforts', plate VI, no. 4.

continuous tradition. To begin with Offa, although we only know of his payments from a letter written after his death, there is no particular reason to doubt the account of them given by Leo III. Offa had made his vow to send a mancus a day to St Peter in front of a large audience at one of the Southumbrian synods in 786 that were attended the papal legates Bishops George of Ostia and Theophylact of Todi, and it must still have been common knowledge.⁵⁵⁹ As we have seen, Offa instituted a bond of spiritual kinship with Pope Hadrian, and was able to enlist papal support for his scheme to elevate the see of Lichfield, probably in order to have his son anointed by an archbishop.⁵⁶⁰ The legate's visit, coming shortly before Lichfield's elevation, provides a likely context for the conferral of papal approval for this idea. Bishop George of Ostia, 'one of the lynchpins of the Franco-papal relationship in the second half of the eighth century' and well aware of Carolingian practice, might have suggested to Offa that a gift to St Peter might help the fulfilment of his wishes.⁵⁶¹ The legates may also have informed Offa about the possibility of spiritual kinship with the pope, something his contribution to Peter would have hastened. Indeed, it is hard not to see Offa's payment of mancuses to Rome as connected to his spiritual kinship with the pope and papal support for the elevation of Lichfield and, in this sense, his gifts were an essential component in schemes designed to give him greater power over the church and legitimise the succession of his heir.

We only know of Offa's alms-payments because Coenwulf failed to match his predecessor's generosity. Leo was clear that the 'small gift (*modicum munus*)' of 120 mancuses Coenwulf had sent with his envoys Cildas and Ceolberht in 798 was insufficient, and that Coenwulf would have to pay the larger sum of 365 mancuses and confirm it 'in perpetuity', in order to obtain the benefits to which his predecessor had had

⁵⁵⁹ Appendix 2:4; 'Legates' report to Pope Hadrian', ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epp. IV (II) (Berlin, 1895), 3; part. trans. *EHD*, 191, the vow was probably made at the second, larger meeting.

⁵⁶⁰ On Lichfield, see chapter two, p. 78-80; and above, pp. 128-9.

⁵⁶¹ On George, see *CC*, pp. 55-6; on Carolingian gifts to St Peter, see above p. 150.

access.⁵⁶² Leo also, as we saw above, ignored the Mercian king's request to be adopted as a spiritual son, and this is perhaps connected to the inadequate nature of the gift. In 802, following his temporary deposition and Archbishop Æthelheard's embassy to Rome, the pope was prepared to accept a 'blessing, however small (*aliquantulum benedictionem*)' of 120 mancuses from Coenwulf, now adopted as his spiritual son, 'with deep affection for your soul's health'.⁵⁶³ For the rest of his reign, Coenwulf maintained papal favour, obtaining privileges protecting his monastic property and successfully employing papal support in his conflicts with Archbishop Wulfred, and the continuation of payments to Rome were doubtless an important factor in this. If Offa paid 365 mancuses annually from 786 until his death, as Leo said he did, and Coenwulf made around 20 payments until his death in 821, then these Mercian kings bestowed 6050 mancuses, some 181,500 silver pennies, on St Peter across this period. In Coenwulf's case, these came 'out of your own abundance', i.e. out of his personal wealth.⁵⁶⁴ This not inconsiderable figure is testament to the value these kings accorded to papal support.

Following the death of Coenwulf, Mercia was ruled by a succession of ill-fated kings and the West Saxons established geo-political dominance in the South. In lieu of any evidence, it seems unwise to posit a continuance of payments to Rome, or their assumption by the West Saxons. Yet when similar payments did resume again in the late 850s, it was a West Saxon king who was responsible for them. Writing in 893, Asser reports that after his return from Rome in 856 Æthelwulf 'had a testamentary – or rather advisory – document drawn up', the purpose of which was to ensure fraternal harmony among his sons.⁵⁶⁵ In this document, the king ordered that 'every year a great sum of

⁵⁶² Appendix 2:2, 4.

⁵⁶³ Appendix 2:5-7.

⁵⁶⁴ Appendix 2:7.

⁵⁶⁵ Asser, ch. 16, Dumville, 'The ætheling', pp. 22-4, prefers a pre-855 date for the will, but this re-dating is based on a misreading of Æthelwulf's kingship post-856.

money, namely 300 mancuses, should be taken to Rome' where a third would go to the 'universal apostolic pope' and a third each to St Peter's and St Paul's, where it was to be spent on oil to fill the lamps on Easter eve and also at cockcrow.⁵⁶⁶ It is tempting to associate these testamentary payments with a number of other bequests of money to Rome. In 762 Dunwald, a thegn of the late King Æthelberht II of Kent, revealed that he was about to convey his former lord's 'money' to Rome 'for the safety of his soul', while in a vernacular will of the mid 830s, the Kentish reeve Abba requested that whoever succeeded to his property should convey his wergild of 2000 pence to 'St Peter'.⁵⁶⁷ Yet there are important differences between these private bequests and Æthelwulf's payments; the former were small one-off payments, while Æthelwulf's was to be a larger and, significantly, an annual due. As we saw above, in 855 Æthelwulf travelled to Rome where he dispensed gifts to churches and inhabitants of the city, and it is quite plausible that, while there, Benedict III reminded Æthelwulf of the Mercian kings who had sent annual monies to the city, and of the benefits it had brought them. Indeed, I find his 855 visit the most plausible context for a resumption of annual large-scale payments to Rome, which should be seen as successors to those initiated by Offa rather than in the tradition of private bequests.

Later, royal payments to Rome are mentioned in the 880s in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sent by Æthelwulf's son Alfred. In its earliest form, the *Chronicle* records the death of pope Marinus in 885, stating that he had freed the *Schola Saxonum* from taxation and given Alfred part of the true cross. In a way, this annal prefaces the subsequent reports that various ealdormen and abbots took 'the alms of the West Saxons and of King Alfred'

⁵⁶⁶ Asser, ch. 16.

⁵⁶⁷ S 1182; trans. *EHD*, 72; S 1482; trans. F. Harmer, *Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1914), 2.

to Rome in 887, 888, and 890.⁵⁶⁸ However, in an early and possibly contemporary insertion to the version of the *Chronicle* underlying manuscripts BCDE, material was added to the annal for 883 which placed Marinus' gift to Alfred of some of the true cross in that year, and stated that the alms which Alfred had promised to Rome were carried there.⁵⁶⁹ This annal creates the impression that payments were resuming due to renewed Anglo-papal friendship and, even if we discount the 883 insertion, the 885 annal suggests the same. The payments ordered by Æthelwulf may well have ceased in the previous decade when Wessex was under intense viking pressure and all resources were channelled into defence and the need to raise tributes.⁵⁷⁰

Papal initiative appears to have been important in this resumption, and it is often thought that the payments were reciprocity for Marinus' freeing of the *Schola Saxonum* from taxation.⁵⁷¹ This alone, however, does not seem enough to account for such an alienation of resources or for the nature of the payments; the exemption from taxation may have been part of a papal attempt to secure a resumption of annual payments. From Alfred's perspective, the resumption of payments may have been part of attempts to establish better relations with Rome following John VIII's reprimand for attacks on the church and archbishop of Canterbury in the 877-8.⁵⁷² Yet, they also appear to be part of a wider Alfredian response to the vikings, in which the king tried to mitigate the divine anger which had prompted Scandinavian attacks.⁵⁷³ The payments are termed 'alms' and may

⁵⁶⁸ ASC, 885-90; appendix 1:33-7.

⁵⁶⁹ ASC, 883 BCDE; appendix 1:31-2; on this insertion, see Keynes, 'Alfred and the Mercians', pp. 21-2; cf. S. Irvine, 'The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the idea of Rome in Alfredian literature', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), p. 65.

⁵⁷⁰ See. R. Abels, 'King Alfred's peace-making strategies with the Vikings', *Haskins Society Journal* 3 (1991), 23-34.

⁵⁷¹ Abels, *Alfred*, pp. 191; and Loyn, 'Peter's pence', 250-4; whose view is overly influenced by twelfth and thirteenth century historians; cf. W. Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims to Rome and the Schola Saxonum* (Fribourg, 1937), pp. 99-104.

⁵⁷² Appendix 2:18-20; and see chapter two, pp. 85-7.

⁵⁷³ These responses were not just military but, as noted by Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p.25 and Abels, *Alfred*, pp. 220-1, religious; see also Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 93-111.

have been made with specially-minted coins bearing this inscription. Also their description as ‘the alms of the West-Saxons and of King Alfred’ suggests the payments were no longer solely drawn from the king’s personal wealth but, as the people were to benefit, the alms were also collected from them.⁵⁷⁴ This widening of the payment represents an important stage in the development and regularisation of this due from royal payments to *Romfeoh*. Moreover, the importance attached to these payments by contemporaries is suggested by the 889 annal, which remarks that ‘there was no expedition to Rome in this year, but King Alfred sent two couriers with letters.’⁵⁷⁵ Perhaps pointing to the size of the party that went to Rome or, to the ceremonial significance attached to its going, it suggests that payments to Rome had become an important means through which the West-Saxons might expiate their collective sins.

From the late eighth to the late ninth century, successive kings sent substantial sums of money to Rome and, while not an unbroken series, these payments do represent a continuous tradition of royal munificence which stretched across the Mercian-West Saxon divide. The last payments in this series were said to be ‘alms’, but should we consider these payments, and the earlier ones, to be an extension of the normal practice of almsgiving? Answering this question is no simple task, for Anglo-Saxon almsgiving has received slight attention, and there is little sense of what constituted normative giving.⁵⁷⁶ Jesus’ exhortation to the rich youth that ‘if thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven’ lay at the foundation of the notion of alms.⁵⁷⁷ The idea that the poor should benefit from alms is apparent in Bede’s story of King Oswald and Bishop Aidan’s Easter meal, when ‘a very great multitude of poor

⁵⁷⁴ See Dolley, ‘The so-called Piedforts’, pp. 80-9, for a useful discussion of the later evidence.

⁵⁷⁵ ASC, 889.

⁵⁷⁶ Foot, *Monastic Life*, pp. 318-21, examines almsgiving in a monastic context; and E. Stanley, ‘Did the Anglo-Saxons have a social conscience like us?’, *Anglia* 121 (2003), 238-64, esp. 254-64 includes a limited examination of almsgiving.

⁵⁷⁷ Matthew 19:21.

people from every district were sitting in the precincts and asking alms of the king', and even more so in Stephanus' statement that Wilfrid gave 'alms in the Lord's name to the poor, the orphan and widow, and those who were inflicted by any kind of infirmity.'⁵⁷⁸ The salvific potential of almsgiving, through which one might obtain 'treasure in heaven', is most clearly expressed in the penitential literature, where almsgiving is recommended as a means of redeeming all manner of sins, along with other practices such as fasting and prayer.⁵⁷⁹ Yet as canon 26 of the 747 Council of Clofesho stated, alms should be given for the right reason and not merely to purchase the right to sin; a layman should not 'give alms to the needy to the intent that he may more freely immerse himself in gluttony and drunkenness.'⁵⁸⁰ This was perhaps a veiled reference to Æthelbald of Mercia (716-57) who that very year Boniface had praised for giving 'very many alms' before going on to accuse him of oppressing the church and fornicating with abandon.⁵⁸¹ Christian kings like Oswald and Æthelbald were clearly expected to give alms and Alcuin, instructing Offa's son Ecgrith on kingly virtues, told him to learn 'generosity in almsgiving' from his parents.⁵⁸²

From this brief discussion, we might consider 'normal' almsgiving to consist of monies given to alleviate the suffering of the poor, possibly via the intermediary of the church, which would bring benefits in the afterlife. The Alfredian payments to Rome were clearly seen as 'alms' intended to ensure the salvation of the West Saxon people, although they may have brought earthly benefits such as the cessation of viking attacks

⁵⁷⁸ *HE*, iii.6; *VW*, ch. 8; the linkages are also clear in the ninth-century will of Ealdorman Oswulf, S 1188; trans. Harmer, *Select English Historical Documents*, 1, and in Archbishop Wulfred's will as reported by his kinsman Werhard, S 1414.

⁵⁷⁹ See, for example, the 'Penitential of Ecgrith', pref., ch. 1, ed. A. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, (3 vols., Oxford, 1869-79), III, 418-9.

⁵⁸⁰ Council of *Clofesho*, 26; ed. HS, III, 371-2.

⁵⁸¹ Boniface, *Epistolae*, ed. M. Tangl, in *Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, MGH Epp. Sel. I (Berlin, 1916), no. 73; trans. *EHD*, 177.

⁵⁸² Alcuin, *Ep.*, 91, trans. 35; and see 18, trans. 13.

and, more practically, better relations with the papacy. We cannot tell who in Rome they benefitted: perhaps, like Æthelwulf's payments, they were divided between St Peter's and St Paul's and the 'universal apostolic pope'. Æthelwulf's payments were also made for 'the needs of the soul' yet their division among churches – for the purchase of lamp oil – and the pope diverges somewhat from our understanding of alms as benefitting the poor and needy.⁵⁸³ When in Rome Æthelwulf had given his finest gifts to St Peter and, when asked by Benedict, he gave gold to the clergy and 'leading men of Rome' but to the people he only gave 'a small amount of silver'.⁵⁸⁴ It appears, then, that in his will as in his visit to Rome, Æthelwulf was not concerned with the Roman poor but with its most powerful men and saints. In contrast, Offa's 365 mancuses were paid 'for the support of the poor and the provision of lights' and so in terms of their beneficiary appear more like alms-payments. That said, when Leo III recalled Offa's payments, he said the Mercian king acted 'for the victory of the kingdom which he held by the support of St Peter, possessing and honouring him as his standard bearer and comrade in that same kingdom', and that he paid them 'on account of the victories of that same kingdom, since the blessed Peter conceded them by his gracious favours'.⁵⁸⁵ If Coenwulf wished 'to have ampler victories and honours in that same kingdom' he ought to pay 365 mancuses annually so that the 'apostle of God may always grant victory through you in that kingdom, and may cause you to reign in eternal life with his saints forever'.⁵⁸⁶ The salvific aim of usual almsgiving is secondary here, and while these payments would bring spiritual benefits, their primary concern was to ensure 'victory' for the Mercians, presumably martial, political, and dynastic success.

⁵⁸³ Asser, ch. 16.

⁵⁸⁴ *LP*, 106:34 (Benedict III).

⁵⁸⁵ Appendix 2:4.

⁵⁸⁶ Appendix 2:4.

By liberating the ninth-century royal payments to Rome from an unhelpful quest for the origins of Peter's Pence, we gain greater insight into the relationship between kings and Rome. The payments, made between 786 and c.890-900, were not an unbroken sequence, but rather a tradition in which later kings could choose to act. Arising from the 786 legatine visit, Offa's initial annual gift of 365 mancuses was primarily concerned with ensuring worldly success via the support of St Peter and, despite benefitting the poor, were not 'alms' as such. They go some way to explaining how he forged bonds of spiritual kinship with the pope and gained papal approval for the elevation of Lichfield. It is less clear how Coenwulf's smaller payments were divided up, but Leo III's letter suggests they were also primarily designed to secure Petrine support for Mercian victory, and Coenwulf, also a spiritual son of the pope, was able to consistently secure papal approval thereafter. The flow of mancuses probably ceased around 825, and when Æthelwulf of Wessex again ordered money to be sent to Rome in his will, he did so having spent a year in Rome where Benedict III may have suggested this course of action. While salvific in intention, these payments differ from normal almsgiving in exhibiting a concern to enlist the support of Roman religious power, perhaps not just for his soul but for the progress of his kingdom. By the late ninth century, his son Alfred was making annual payments, now ostensibly 'alms' (*elmessan*), and it is probable that these were developing into a more fixed and formalised render, partially levied from the people whose collective sins they were designed to expiate.

All these payments to Rome were intimately connected to royal power and authority, albeit in different ways. The Mercian kings sought the direct support of a militaristic Peter, Æthelwulf sought the support of the powerful of Rome, for his soul and also, one suspects, for his sons, and Alfred sought a spiritual forgiveness and the cessation of viking incursions. This transition from the direct and earthly to the more general and

spiritual is perhaps most forcefully evoked by the coins which were minted for these payments; Offa and Coenwulf's gold mancuses, the latter at least a recognisable statement of powerful kingship, contrast with Alfred's *elimosina* coins, a simpler plea for 'treasure in heaven'. Yet through these payments all of the kings in question also sought the support of their spiritual fathers, the popes, who had the capacity to assist their exercise of power and enhance their royal authority.

Conclusions

In the ninth century, Rome and its bishops had a profound impact upon royal power and authority in Anglo-Saxon England. This impact was most pronounced in the first quarter of the century, when Leo III and Charlemagne were able to effect the return of the deposed King Eardwulf to Northumbria. Quite how this 'regime-change' was achieved eludes us, but, while Charlemagne may have provided the threat of force, Leo's papal authority was clearly crucial, and all sides sought his support, not least Eardwulf who travelled to Rome. In the bout of high-level diplomacy that preceded his return, Archbishop Eanbald II of York and possibly Coenwulf made an audacious, if doomed, attempt to prise apart the Franco-papal alliance and use papal power against Eardwulf. In Southumbria, papal influence was similarly direct. Following Offa's example, Coenwulf established a bond of spiritual kinship with the popes and made regular payments to Rome, by which he secured St Peter's support for his royal ambitions. The Mercian king was subsequently able to utilise papal friendship in his conflicts with Archbishop

Wulfred, and also to gain privileges securing his monastic property, and thus part of his landed power, against episcopal attempts to end lay lordship of minsters.

In the 850s, Æthelwulf similarly instituted a bond of spiritual kinship with the popes by sending his son Alfred to Rome, and also ordered annual payments to the city. Yet, while he sought good relations with the pope and the support of Rome's powerful men and saints, he did not seek to employ papal authority directly in Anglo-Saxon affairs in the manner of Coenwulf and Eardwulf. Rather, through a series of symbolic actions which included the establishment of spiritual kinship and his subsequent stately visit to Rome – as well as his decimation and marriage to Judith – he sought to demonstrate his domestic power and elevate his royal line above potential rivals and above those of other kingdoms. Alfred's visit to Rome and consular investiture may have helped protect him while in a weak position in the reigns of his three elder brothers between 858-72, but was later reshaped to portray him as a divinely-ordained king, and establish the authority of his particular dynastic line against that of his brothers and other rivals. His alms-payments to Rome were, however, part of a wider religious response to the vikings, which included the revival of Christian learning, and were designed to secure not just his future but that of his subject people.

These numerous papal influences on various aspects of kingship are more than we might necessarily expect of a distant city lacking the means of direct control to influence matters through threat of force. Of course, Rome was not just any city, and its bishops possessed a profound spiritual authority supported by Peter and by the tradition of Roman involvement in England symbolised by that other important saint, Gregory. There is no evidence that papal authority was ever questioned or challenged, rather, it was deliberately courted by dominant kings who, realising its significance, sought to use it in the variety of ways we have just seen. Carolingian example and particularly that of

Franco-papal practice was crucial in showing how Rome's primarily spiritual authority might be brought to bear on kingship. Its influence on Offa was profound and he set the tone for the early ninth century, with Coenwulf similarly seeking spiritual kinship with the popes. Frankish precedent also helps us understand the otherwise anomalous visits of Alfred and Æthelwulf to Rome, and also the repackaging of the object of Alfred's journey as papal anointing. Yet, despite such parallels and borrowings, Anglo-Saxon practice was no simple aping of Carolingian models and should be judged on its own terms. It is perhaps the series of annual royal payments that, although they originated in the period of most-direct influence, look least Carolingian, and one is tempted to speculate that, as Anglo-Saxon kings could not offer direct military and political support, the popes sought something equally tangible in their relations with Anglo-Saxon kings. While such a suggestion must remain tentative, these payments help illustrate the fact that Rome played a more direct and sustained role in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon kingship than has previously been thought.

Chapter 4

Rome in Anglo-Saxon Visions of the Past

449 In this year Mauritius and Valentinus succeeded to the throne and ruled for seven years. In their days Hengest and Horsa, invited by Vortigern, king of the Britons, came to Britain at the place which is called Ebbsfleet, first to the help of the Britons, but afterwards fought against them.⁵⁸⁷

With this entry, the compiler of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* – writing in the latter part of the ninth century – placed the foundational event of Anglo-Saxon history, the so-called *adventus Saxonum*, into the broader context of the Roman imperial past. By our standards, his knowledge of that past is somewhat imperfect: Valentinus [*recte* Valentinian III, 425-55] had ruled the west in name at least since 425, whereas Mauritius [*recte* Marcianus] governed the eastern empire from 450-7. The annalist's errors of fact pose the question of what the Anglo-Saxons could know about Roman history or, perhaps more interestingly, how they imagined a past that was in essence completely alien to them. Yet, although they never experienced Roman rule or its vestiges, the Anglo-Saxon past was connected to Rome through more than chronological coincidence. The English occupied a former Roman territory and post-Roman landscape, and papal Rome had been a crucial force in their conversion to Christianity and, as previous chapters have shown, continued to play an important role in Anglo-Saxon life. Asking whether and how ninth-century Anglo-Saxon writers represented these links with Rome and an imagined Roman past may reveal much not only about their perception of the city, but also about how they situated themselves in the wider world.

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ASC, 449 ABC.

Recent work on early-medieval historical writing has examined how the past was manipulated and reshaped for contemporary purposes, particularly in the Carolingian kingdoms between 780 and 880.⁵⁸⁸ Supported by the wealth of historical texts written in Francia across the Carolingian period, it has shown how the past could be selectively recorded to create a collective memory for a group and establish the position of a ruling house, also suggesting that compilations of historical texts could be a force for cohesion, criticism, and counsel within the royal court.⁵⁸⁹ Within this, Rome played an important role in Frankish attempts to locate themselves within wider pasts, for example, Noble has argued that early Christian Rome and the popes were central figures in the ‘metahistory’ which pervades the *Libri Carolini* and portrays the Franks as the inheritors of the Abrahamic covenant with God.⁵⁹⁰ With no equivalent boom in historical writing in England, work on Anglo-Saxon histories is less extensive than that on Frankish ‘uses of the past’, tending to focus on specific visions of the past created by Bede and, a century and a half later, in the reign of Alfred.⁵⁹¹ As well as being treated in their immediate contexts, these visions have been assigned a crucial role in the genesis of a unitary ‘English’ identity, and some scholars have even argued that they portray the Anglo-Saxons as marked out as a divinely chosen people.⁵⁹² In looking at portrayals of Roman

⁵⁸⁸ See the overview of M. Innes and R. McKitterick, ‘The writing of history’, in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 193-220.

⁵⁸⁹ R. McKitterick, ‘Constructing the past in the early middle ages: the case of the Royal Frankish Annals’, *TRHS* 6th series 7 (1997), 101-29; eadem, ‘Political ideology in Carolingian historiography’, in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Y. Hen and M. Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 162-74; and also J. Nelson, ‘History writing at the courts of Louis the Pious and Charles the Bald’, in *Historiographie im Frühen Mittelalter*, eds. A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (Vienna, 1994), 435-42; all reflect the influence of J. Wallace-Hadrill, ‘The Franks and the English in the ninth century: some common historical interests’ *History* 35 (1950), 202-18.

⁵⁹⁰ R. McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN, 2006), pp. 35-61; T. Noble, ‘Tradition and learning in search of ideology: the *Libri Carolini*’, in *The Gentle Voices of Teachers: Aspects of Learning in the Carolingian Age*, ed. R. Sullivan (Columbus, OH, 1995), pp. 245-50.

⁵⁹¹ Though A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550-c.1307* (London, 1974), and K. Harrison, *The Framework of Anglo-Saxon History to A.D. 900* (Cambridge, 1976), retain a wider focus.

⁵⁹² See P. Wormald, ‘Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the origins of the *Gens Anglorum*’, in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, eds. P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford, 1983), pp. 99-129; and S. Foot, ‘The making of *Anglecynn*: English identity before the Norman Conquest’, *TRHS* 6th series 6 (1996), 25-49. N. Brooks, *Bede and the English* (Jarrow Lecture, 1999), pp. 2-4, flirts with the

history and its links to the Anglo-Saxon past, this chapter will take account of the contemporary functions of texts, but also reconsider whether Anglo-Saxon writers used the past to mark themselves out as unique, or whether they sought inclusion among other peoples in a wider universal Christian past.

My approach is conditioned by the nature of the sources, and focuses on the relatively plentiful historical texts composed or copied under the aegis of King Alfred of Wessex in the late ninth century. Before then, one has to go back to Bede in the early eighth century to see the composition of history. To help bridge this gap, I will look not just at historical writing in the narrow sense of histories, annals, and chronicles, but in the broader sense of visions of the past, in which category I include texts from all genres which propagate interpretations of the recent or distant past. An initial section will explore perceptions of the Roman past before 800, and then examine the influence of these perceptions in the patchy record of the first three-quarters of the century. Following this, a second section will outline the historical element in King Alfred's programme of education and translation, analysing the role of Roman history within it. A final section explores the visions of the Anglo-Saxon past created in this period, and the ways in which they were linked to wider, Rome-centric historical vistas.

chosen people argument, which is given fullest expression by P. Wormald, 'The Venerable Bede and the 'Church of the English'', in *The English Religious Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism*, ed. G. Rowell (Oxford, 1992), pp. 20-7.

Perceptions of the Roman past before the reign of Alfred

In 798, Alcuin wrote to Archbishop Æthelheard, criticising the prelate for fleeing Canterbury ‘as we read the most holy pontiff of the same see, Laurence, once wished to do, but being chastened by apostolic authority, repented the plan he had begun.’⁵⁹³ Alcuin was referring to an incident in Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*, where, following widespread apostasy in Essex and Kent, the Roman missionaries decided to withdraw home. Laurence (604/10-619), Archbishop of Canterbury since the death of Augustine, was the last to leave but, before he could do so, St. Peter appeared to him ‘and in the dead of night scourged him hard and long’, effecting a miraculous turnaround in the fortunes of the mission.⁵⁹⁴ Circumstances were not exactly the same in 798, the pro-Mercian Æthelheard had fled the newly installed Kentish king Eadberht Præn (796-8), yet the Laurence story provided a close parallel with which Alcuin could further condemn the archbishop’s desertion.⁵⁹⁵ In so doing, he drew on a stock of historical exempla contained in the pages of Bede and presupposed a shared knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon past with his audience. As this particular story of a Roman saint scourging a Roman missionary in Canterbury shows, outside forces had played an important role in this past. It also illustrates the continued potency of Bede’s historical writing in late-eighth and early-ninth-century ecclesiastical circles. Indeed, Bede had provided the fundamental account of not just Anglo-Saxon but also Anglo-Roman history and, consequently, much of this section is concerned with his ideas and their impact.

⁵⁹³ Alcuin, *Ep.*, 128; trans. *EHD*, 203.

⁵⁹⁴ *HE*, ii.5-6.

⁵⁹⁵ See *EHCC*, pp. 120-3.

Bede was not, however, the first nor the last person to think about the Roman past and its links to England. From an early date the physical remnants of Roman civilisation made an impression on the conquering Anglo-Saxons. They used the toponym *ceastre* to denote a range of Roman constructions, suggesting the remains were thus seen as part of a single entity, and the use of a Latin loan-word – Old English *caestre* comes from the Latin *castrum*, meaning camp or fort – implies some knowledge of their function and origin.⁵⁹⁶ Still, the lack of a distinction between forts and walled towns illustrates the limits of such knowledge.⁵⁹⁷ By the early eighth century, Anglo-Saxons were better able to distinguish between Roman structures. An episode in the anonymous *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* (c. 698-705) reports how, on a visit to Carlisle, Cuthbert was shown ‘the city wall and the well formerly built in a wonderful manner by the Romans.’⁵⁹⁸ The tour of these remarkable remains was apparently conducted by the Waga, the city Reeve (*civitatis praepositus*), who explained (*revelavit*) their Roman origins to the party; it was conceivable that secular elites living near remains possessed sufficient knowledge to instruct churchmen.⁵⁹⁹

Exposure to these physical remains would have been common and probably underpinned most people’s ideas about the Roman past. A number of Old English poems express wonder at the stature and aesthetic of Roman ruins. *Maxims II* – a series of truisms about the order of things found in an eleventh-century manuscript – describes cities as ‘conspicuous from afar...the ingenious constructions of giants, ornate fortresses (*ceastra*)

⁵⁹⁶ M. Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-Names and the History of England* (London, 1978), pp. 150-4; and see J. Campbell, ‘Bede’s words for places’, in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 99-119.

⁵⁹⁷ T. Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures in Early Medieval England* (Oxford, 2005), p. 85.

⁵⁹⁸ *Vita Cuthberti*, vi.8, ed. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 122-3

⁵⁹⁹ *Vita Cuthberti*, vi.8, ed. Colgrave, pp. 122-3; Bede also identified the different types of Roman structures visible ‘to this day’, *HE*, i.11-12.

of dressed stone'.⁶⁰⁰ With few other analogues for a fortress of dressed stone it seems certain that this refers to Roman remains, the 'work of giants (*enta geweorc*)' motif reflecting the scale of Roman architecture and stonework.⁶⁰¹ This motif is also found in the fragmentary poem known as *The Ruin*, preserved c.970 in the Exeter Book but often thought to be of essentially eighth-century date, which laments the crumbling of a stone city, while praising the 'wondrously ornate' stone and the 'bold-minded man' and 'lordly builders' who were responsible for it – the giants.⁶⁰² The use of architectural description of a ruined city for a poetic meditation on transience, and for a maxim, suggests a common experience of such ruins, one which inspired awe at the scale of remains and melancholy at their decay. It seems the church may have sought to appropriate some of these associations for, as we saw in chapter two, many early religious structures were erected on or near Roman remains and others were built using *spolia* brought some distance for the purpose.⁶⁰³ These actions are often interpreted as the new church attempting to appropriate the ideas about the power and authority of imperial Rome and, if this were the case, it presupposes a level of knowledge about the Roman Empire and its past role in Britain.⁶⁰⁴

In the second decade of the eighth century, Bede fleshed out the bare bones of these physical remains by sketching the history of Roman Britain, its demise, and the coming

⁶⁰⁰ *Maxims II*, ll.1b-3a, ed. E. Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (New York, 1942), p. 55; trans. S. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), p. 513.

⁶⁰¹ See P. Frankis, 'The thematic significance of *enta geweorc* and related imagery in *The Wanderer*', *ASE* 2 (1973), 254-60; and the discussion of N. Howe, 'Anglo-Saxon England and the postcolonial void', in *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures*, eds. A. Kabir and D. Williams (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 30-5.

⁶⁰² *The Ruin*, ll. 1, 7, 19, 21-2, eds. G. Krapp and E. Dobbie, *The Exeter Book* (London, 1936), pp. 227-9; trans. S. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), p. 402; on dating *The Ruin*, see the R. Leslie, *Three Old English Elegies* (Manchester, 1961), pp. 34-6.

⁶⁰³ See chapter two, pp. 95-6.

⁶⁰⁴ Bell, *Religious Reuse*, pp. 24-8, 152-3, and 69-127; and particularly T. Eaton, *Plundering the Past: Roman Stonework in Medieval Britain* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 111-32; Y. Coz, 'L'image de la Rome Antique dans l'Angleterre Anglo-Saxonne (VII^{ème} siècle-1066)' (Université de Paris-Sorbonne [Paris IV] *Doctorat* Thesis, 2007), p. 159-62, makes the connection less forcefully, while M. Hunter, 'Germanic and Roman antiquity and the sense of the past in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 3 (1974), 35-7, rejects a symbolic element.

of the Anglo-Saxons in both his major historical works, the *Chronica maiora* and the *Historia ecclesiastica*. These two works act as related parts of an overarching vision of the past, the former providing the wider context of universal history into which the latter fits. Rome plays a central role in both texts, and by examining them we gain insight not only into how Bede imagined the Roman past, but into how he thought Anglo-Saxon past related to it.

The scale of Bede's historical writing was made possible by his access to the largest of Anglo-Saxon libraries (c.200 vols.), which contained many Christian histories, but few classical ones: as elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon England, Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus were absent, something partially remedied by the presence of Eutropius' *Breviarium*.⁶⁰⁵ As well as being affected by his sources, Bede's historical vision was profoundly influenced by his abstract understanding of the church, which he delineated in commentaries on the Mosaic Tabernacle (c.721-5) and Solomonic Temple (c.729-31). In exegetical discussions of these structures, he outlined a vision of the universal church which, despite being 'extended throughout the four corners of the world', was united by 'the one rule of catholic faith'.⁶⁰⁶ Within this essential unity and geographical spread Bede saw much diversity of race and class, although he was particularly exercised by a Jew-gentile dichotomy, making it clear that the church was now 'gathered from the Gentiles', with whom he identified.⁶⁰⁷ This move from Jew to gentile gives the picture a sense of flux, as

⁶⁰⁵ M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 34-7, 66-8, 191-228, and his catalogue of authors known in England; and M. Laistner, 'The library of the venerable Bede', in *Bede: His Life, Times, and Writings*, ed. A. Thompson (Oxford, 1935), pp. 244-7.

⁶⁰⁶ Bede, *De tabernaculo*, i.5, ed. D. Hurst, *Beda Opera Exegetica vol. IIA*, CCSL 119A (1969), 20; trans. A. Holder, *Bede: On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool, 1994), p. 20; and Bede, *De templo*, ii.18, ed. D. Hurst, *Beda Opera Exegetica vol. IIA*, CCSL 119A (1969), 203; trans. S. Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple* (Liverpool, 1995), pp. 80-1.

⁶⁰⁷ See Bede, *De templo*, i.14, ii.21, ed. Hurst, 185, 223; trans. Connolly, p. 55, 104; Bede, *De tabernaculo*, i.7, i.8, ed. Hurst, 26, 34; trans. Holder, p. 27, 36.

Christianity spread from Jerusalem to ‘all nations throughout the world’ by the agency of ‘apostolic men’, an ongoing process which underlay Bede’s interpretation of history.⁶⁰⁸

I look first at the *Chronica maiora*, Bede’s major work of universal history, which formed the sixty-sixth chapter of his computistical treatise *De temporum ratione*, written around 725. The *Chronica* synchronised the histories of various peoples in a single chronology of linear Christian time from the creation to the early eighth century, whilst revising that chronology to end potential millenarian speculation.⁶⁰⁹ Bede used Jerome’s translation of Eusebius’s *Chronicle* as his main source, also borrowing directly from Eutropius, Rufinus-Eusebius, Marcellinus Comes, Isidore, and the *Liber Pontificalis*.⁶¹⁰ He followed Isidore in using the Augustinian scheme of the six ages as a means of ordering Christian time.⁶¹¹ Bede also eschewed the columnar format of his main source and listed events sequentially under an *Annus Mundi* (AM) date, something Rabin has argued ‘emphasizes the ordered progression of Christian history over the individual experience of any single political entity.’⁶¹² Within this ‘ordered progression’, however, material relating to different peoples is consistently listed in a particular order, which changes at key moments in the text, and this ranking actually serves to heighten the sense of the importance of a particular people in the divine progression of history at any one time.

From the beginning of the first age until the overthrow of Judea in the fifth, Jewish history heads the chronicle entries and is followed by material pertaining to other peoples,

⁶⁰⁸ Bede, *De tabernaculo*, i.1, ii.5, ii.9, ed. Hurst, 6, 60, 74; trans. Holder, p. 2, 66, 83.

⁶⁰⁹ F. Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 1988), pp. lxvii-lxxi, and 353-66; and M. Allen, ‘Universal history 3000-1000: origins and western developments’, in *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 32-5.

⁶¹⁰ Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, pp. 449-64; A. Knaepen, ‘L’histoire Greco-Romaine dans les ‘Chroniques’ de Bede le Venerable’, in *The Medieval Chronicle III*, ed. E. Kooper (Amsterdam, 2004), pp. 81-7; and Coz, ‘L’image de la Rome Antique’, pp. 319-28.

⁶¹¹ See Allen, ‘Universal history’, pp. 26-39.

⁶¹² A. Rabin, ‘Historical re-collections: rewriting the world chronicle in Bede’s *De Temporum Ratione*’, *Viator* 36 (2005), 35.

among whom the Romans appear in AM 2818.⁶¹³ Toward the end of the fifth age, the entries – now headed by the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt – become increasingly concerned with Rome, both its military dominance and conquests, and its internal politics. Then, in AM 3952, a year also dated by Augustus’ regnal year, the Olympiad, and the founding of Rome, it is stated that when ‘the movements of all the peoples throughout the world were held in check, and by God’s decree Caesar established genuine and unshakeable peace, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hallowed the sixth age of the world by his coming.’⁶¹⁴ Bede’s location of the incarnation in multiple chronologies illustrates its centrality to his universal history, and his coupling of Roman power and divine purpose, derived from Orosian thought, gave the Roman Empire a crucial role in this history.⁶¹⁵

Imperial Rome continued to play a key role in the sixth world age, with each *Chronica maiora* entry headed by notice of the reigning Roman emperor. It was again the implementing of God’s will, when Titus and then Hadrian destroyed the Jews and much of the old centre of divine history, Jerusalem.⁶¹⁶ Bede had earlier made it clear that this slaughter was deserved, a punishment for not accepting Christ.⁶¹⁷ Religious developments in the area equivalent to the Empire provide the central theme of the sixth age, with events such as apostolic wanderings, imperial persecutions, and the lives of famous bishops and ecclesiastical writers all noted. After Constantine, church-building, holy remains, and heresies and doctrinal development become increasingly important. Alongside this, a concern with the buildings, conquests and personalities of secular Rome is transformed into an interest in the popes, their actions and buildings, as Bede charts

⁶¹³ DTR, 66, 464-84; pp. 158-84.

⁶¹⁴ DTR, 66, 495; p. 195.

⁶¹⁵ Although Bede avoided Orosius’ four empires idea, on which see Coz, ‘L’image de la Rome Antique’, pp. 311-2, 315-6.

⁶¹⁶ DTR, 66, 498-500; pp. 199-201.

⁶¹⁷ DTR, 9, 308; p. 38.

Rome's conversion into Christian centre.⁶¹⁸ Noting the death of Aetius in AM 4410, Bede reports that 'with him fell the Western realm' which had not since been revived, and subsequent entries are headed by the reigning eastern emperor.⁶¹⁹ Italy's various conquerors are later recorded, and the popes become increasingly prominent (reflecting the increased use of the *Liber Pontificalis*) figures, attempting to maintain unity in face of eastern heresies.⁶²⁰ All this served to shift the focus and centre of Christian history from Jerusalem, where it had remained for the first five ages, to Rome.

Bede's vision of the universal past gave the Roman Empire a crucial role in the progression of Christian history, while simultaneously placing imperial and then papal Rome at the centre of the sixth, Christian age. In so doing, it realised certain themes from his abstract vision of the universal church, namely the shift from a Jewish to a gentile church, and the spread of that church throughout the (gentile) world. This spread would continue throughout the sixth age, to include groups such as the Anglo-Saxons. Britain and its occupants become increasingly visible as this age progresses; initially appearing in the context of Roman military affairs and persecutions, Bede included information from Gildas on the end of Roman Britain and coming of the Saxons, later noting the Gregorian conversion of Kent and Northumbria, and the achievements of holy individuals such as Æthelthryth and Willibrord.⁶²¹ The growing prominence of the Anglo-Saxons in the *Chronica* serves to shift the gaze, now centred on Rome, westwards, to new gentile peoples being converted.

⁶¹⁸ On secular Rome, see AM 4031, 4033, 4068, 4145, 4188; on papal Rome, see AM 4207, 4328, 4362, 4377; *DTR*, 66, ed., 498-500; trans., pp. 199-226.

⁶¹⁹ *DTR*, 66, 518-9, p. 222.

⁶²⁰ *DTR*, 66, 519-34; 222-37.

⁶²¹ *DTR*, 66, 493-534; p. 193-236.

The *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* – a five-book narrative history completed in 732⁶²² – is in essence a detailed account of one thread from the universal past related in the *Chronica*, Britain in the sixth world age. Bede's use of *Anno Domini* rather than *Annus Mundi* dating firmly locates this vision of the insular past in this salvatory age, and he spent much of the first book sketching the history of Roman involvement in Britain and the coming of the Anglo-Saxons, also outlined in the *Chronica*.⁶²³ This serves to highlight Britain's earlier links to the universal past and central forces of divine history. Bede again details the Roman withdrawal from Britain, the *adventus Saxonum* and subjection of the Britons, and subsequent fall of the Western empire; thereafter the military relationship between Britain and the Empire is replaced by a spiritual relationship between the Anglo-Saxons and Christian Rome.⁶²⁴ As with the *Chronica*, Bede's interpretation of history was driven by ideas from his abstract vision of the church: the *Historia* relates how the Anglo-Saxons – and other gentile peoples of Britain except the Britons – came to be converted to Christianity by apostolic men, and how they and their churches became united with the universal church through the adoption of correct Catholic practices. Rome and its bishops played a fundamental role in this vision. Following the Romano-British history and Anglo-Saxon conquest, Bede devoted the rest of book one to the mission sent by Pope Gregory 'to preach the word of God to the English race (*gens Anglorum*).'⁶²⁵ The pope is presented as the force behind the mission, its instigator and director; his letters of advice and exhortation dominate the account of

⁶²² The best recent account of this oft-studied text is A. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 229-49; and see references therein.

⁶²³ *HE*, i.2-22; on this history see Coz, 'L'image de la Rome Antique', pp. 328-38; and D. Scully, 'Bede, Orosius, and Gildas on the early history of Britain', in *Bède le Vénérable entre Tradition et Postérité*, eds. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, and O. Szerwiniack (Lille, 2005), pp. 36-42.

⁶²⁴ *HE*, i.2-22; and see M. Godden, 'The Anglo-Saxons and the Goths: rewriting the sack of Rome', *ASE* 31 (2002), 49-54.

⁶²⁵ *HE*, i.23.

the initial conversion of Kent.⁶²⁶ Book two continues to recount the efforts of the Roman missionaries and the continued papal sponsorship of the mission.⁶²⁷ Irish missionaries become increasingly active in book three, although Birinus converts Wessex having been sent to England by Pope Honorius.⁶²⁸ The fourth book recounts Pope Vitalian's (657-72) appointment of Theodore of Tarsus as Archbishop of Canterbury, ushering in a golden age of ecclesiastical consolidation and unity.⁶²⁹ Finally, in book five, maturity is reached and these processes are reversed: the Anglo-Saxons themselves begin missionary work, and flock to Rome in great numbers.⁶³⁰ Of course, Rome was not the only religious force in the *Historia*, but Bede did present the Roman missionaries as crucial in spreading the faith and establishing the church, with popes overseeing and supporting the effort initiated by 'our apostle' Gregory.⁶³¹ Rome, the current centre of divine history, was instrumental in spreading the gospels to the westernmost corner of the gentile world through the agency of apostolic men.

As important to Bede as the spread of the church was the maintenance of unity by adherence to a single catholic orthodoxy. In the *Historia ecclesiastica*, this concern principally manifested itself in the account of the conflicts surrounding the correct celebration of Easter. Despite his focus on the Anglo-Saxons, Bede included all peoples of the British Isles within this element of his narrative, something made manifest when he referred to his work as 'the history of the Church of Britain and of the English People in particular'.⁶³² The issue here was that all the other peoples in Britain observed Easter incorrectly – using 'tables of doubtful accuracy in fixing the date of the chief festival' –

⁶²⁶ *HE*, i.23-33.

⁶²⁷ *HE*, ii.3-12, 14-18.

⁶²⁸ *HE*, iii.7, 29.

⁶²⁹ *HE*, iv.1-2, 5-6, 15-16.

⁶³⁰ *HE*, v.7, 9-11.

⁶³¹ *HE*, ii.1.

⁶³² *HE*, v.24; R. Markus, *Bede and the Tradition of Ecclesiastical Historiography* (Jarrow Lecture, 1975), p. 4.

which divided them from the rest of the universal church.⁶³³ Soon after the arrival of the Roman mission, Augustine discovered that the Britons did not celebrate Easter at the correct time and, before his scourging, his successor Laurence wrote a letter to the Irish on this matter, urging them ‘to keep the unity of peace and of catholic observance with the Church of Christ’.⁶³⁴ Bede also noted that Pictish and Ionan Christians similarly erred.⁶³⁵ This came to affect Anglo-Saxons in areas of Irish re-conversion, especially Northumbria, where rival methods of dating Easter coexisted.

Held in 664 to adjudicate between these divergent practices, the Synod of Whitby represented a crucial moment in Bede’s narrative of the development of the Anglo-Saxon church, despite being a largely Northumbrian affair.⁶³⁶ It was not a simple conflict between Roman and Celtic Christianity; rather, the problem was ‘that the Irish observance of Easter Sunday was contrary to the custom of the universal church.’⁶³⁷ Whitby was, as Morehead noted, a case of ‘universal practice versus provincial custom’ but Bede did not, as he goes on to argue, prefer ‘universal rather than Roman practice’.⁶³⁸ Instead, in his account of the synod – a series of exchanges between the Irish bishop Colman and the Northumbrian Wilfred – Bede equated Roman practice with universal practice. He later made this implication explicit, describing the Dionysian reckoning as ‘the catholic rule’ laid down by ‘the decrees of the apostolic see or rather of the universal church (*decreta sedis apostolicae, immo universalis ecclesiae*)’.⁶³⁹ Here, the decrees of the apostolic see are equated with those of the universal church, the latter being a more

⁶³³ *HE*, iii.4; and see Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, pp. xxxiv-lxiii.

⁶³⁴ *HE*, ii.2-4.

⁶³⁵ *HE*, iii.4.

⁶³⁶ On the political dimension of the synod, see R. Abels, ‘The Council of Whitby: a study in early Anglo-Saxon politics’, *Journal of British Studies* 23 (1983), 1-25; see also, A. Thacker, ‘Bede and the Irish’, in *Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk & Northumbrian*, eds. L. Houwen and A. MacDonald (Groningen, 1996), pp. 31-59.

⁶³⁷ *HE*, iii.25.

⁶³⁸ J. Morehead, ‘Bede on the Papacy’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60.2 (2009), 221-2.

⁶³⁹ *HE*, iii.25.

correct (*immo*) term for the former. While this account of Whitby is not as papal-centric as Stephanus, to argue that Bede promoted universal practice over Roman practice is to misunderstand his meaning; he promoted Roman practice as universal practice.⁶⁴⁰

It was thus as centre of the universal church and bastion of orthodoxy that Rome played a crucial role in Bede's account of the inclusion of the Anglo-Saxons within the unity of the church. Throughout the rest of the *Historia* Bede records how, among other things, the Irish and 'their accomplices in obstinacy' the Picts and Britons adopted the correct methods of calculating Easter, gaining similar inclusion.⁶⁴¹ It was a gradual process with occasional dramatic moments, as when Iona – the cradle of incorrect Easter reckoning – finally abandoned its methods of calculating Easter and joined the fellowship of the church.⁶⁴² At this climactic moment Bede notes that the Irish, who aided the conversion of the English, had been repaid 'with a more perfect way of life' yet the ever-maligned Britons, who had not shared the faith, 'still persist in their errors and stumble in their ways' and remain outside 'the fellowship of the church of Christ.'⁶⁴³

Bede undoubtedly possessed a good understanding of the Roman past, but his interest in the city was purely in terms of its role in ecclesiastical and universal history.⁶⁴⁴ He saw pagan Rome as playing an important part in universal history, becoming the centre of the divine in the sixth age and, following the end of empire, helping to spread the faith and maintain unity against heresy. Britain and the Anglo-Saxons appear as the focus of his vision shifts west over time and, in the *Historia*, Bede related how Rome spread Christianity and the church within England, and how Britain came into the unity of the

⁶⁴⁰ Contra Morehead, 'Bede', 222-3. See VW, 10; and see W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), pp. 310-24.

⁶⁴¹ *HE*, iii.25.

⁶⁴² *HE*, iii.3, v.15, v.18, v.21.

⁶⁴³ *HE*, v. 22.

⁶⁴⁴ Coz, 'L'image de la Rome Antique', pp. 347-8.

universal church via the adoption of practices associated with Rome. Rather than establishing Anglo-Saxon uniqueness, Bede was concerned with the inclusion of geographically-remote latecomers, the Anglo-Saxons, within the church and the divine march of universal history.

Alongside its complex overarching visions of the universal and insular pasts, Bede's work provided the Anglo-Saxons with a wealth of detail about their past and its continental links. It is perhaps this that accounts for the subsequent popularity of the *Historia ecclesiastica* in particular, evidenced in its (relatively) strong insular manuscript tradition.⁶⁴⁵ The fate of the *Chronica* is less clear; few early English manuscripts survive, though as part of *De temporum ratione* it achieved wide circulation on the continent.⁶⁴⁶ Still, Asser's apparent familiarity with it suggests copies were circulating in the late ninth century.⁶⁴⁷

Other evidence suggests that Bede's *Historia* continued to be read across the late eighth and into the ninth century. Two thirds of Alcuin's poem about York, probably written in the mid 780s, is directly based on Bede's *Historia* which he simplified, omitting the Easter controversy and all mention of Irish influence, to present a simple linear conversion of Northumbria from Rome.⁶⁴⁸ Also, as we saw earlier, in 798 Alcuin drew on a shared knowledge of the text in his letter to Æthelheard. The documents of 798-803 concerning the demotion of Lichfield suggests that such a shared knowledge existed, repeatedly invoking Gregory's plans for the Anglo-Saxon church that Bede had recorded in the first book of his *Historia*. Indeed, Gregory's letter to Augustine on this subject was

⁶⁴⁵ H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (Tempe, AZ, 2001), lists seven pre-tenth century MSS of the *Historia* with English provenance: nos. 25, 367, 375, 835, 846, 856.2, 863; for a full list see M. Laistner, *A Hand-list of Bede Manuscripts* (Ithaca, NY, 1943), pp. 93-111.

⁶⁴⁶ Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, pp. lxxxv-xcii.

⁶⁴⁷ M. Lapidge, 'Asser's reading', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 38-9.

⁶⁴⁸ Alcuin, *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis Ecclesiae*, ed. and trans. P. Godman, *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York* (Oxford, 1982), ll.19-506.

said to be ‘read throughout our churches’ and, while it is possible that it circulated separately, it seems most likely that it was being read as part of Bede’s text.⁶⁴⁹ The *Historia* was also one of the few texts copied in this barren period, and it also provided the basis of all but two of the accounts of Anglo-Saxon saints in the *Old English Martyrology* – probably compiled in the ninth century – which mentioned information as ‘in the book of the English (*on Angelcynnes bocum*)’.⁶⁵⁰ It appears, then, that the *Historia ecclesiastica* was widely read at the start of the ninth century and probably well beyond, and although we cannot glimpse the fate of Bede’s wider Rome-centric vision, his ideas provided the basis for understanding of the insular and Anglo-Roman pasts.

Alongside Bede, a number of royal genealogies and regnal lists were composed, copied, and augmented across the ninth century, and these attest to different ways of thinking about the past.⁶⁵¹ Genealogies traced a king’s descent from a distant dynastic founder and mythic characters such as Woden, while regnal lists provided the backbone of a kingdom’s secular history, and both types of text attest to primarily secular and royal ways of thinking about the past.⁶⁵² The earliest ‘Anglian’ genealogies are found in three battered and stained bifolia of BL, Cotton MS Vespasian, B.vi – copied from a lost exemplar between 805 and 814 somewhere in Mercia – where they form part of a miscellany of chronological, historical, and encyclopaedic information.⁶⁵³ Among this

⁶⁴⁹ Appendix 2:2; and S 1431a; cf. *HE*, i.29.

⁶⁵⁰ Gneuss dates BL, Cotton MS Tiberius, C.ii, to s.ix^{2/4}, Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 377; on the *Martyrology*, see J. Cross, ‘On the library of the Old English Martyrologist’, in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, eds. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), p. 230; and see chapter two, pp. 118-23.

⁶⁵¹ For an overview, see K. Sisam, ‘Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies’, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 39 (1953), 287-348; on the earliest genealogies and later recensions, see D. Dumville, ‘The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists’, *ASE* 5 (1976), 23-50; a ninth-century West-Saxon text combines the two forms. See D. Dumville, ‘The West Saxon genealogical regnal list: manuscripts and texts’, *Anglia* 104 (1986), 1-32.

⁶⁵² See D. Dumville, ‘Kingship, genealogies and regnal lists’, in *Early Medieval Kingship*, eds. P. Sawyer and I. Wood (Leeds, 1977), pp. 96-8.

⁶⁵³ BL, Cotton MS Vespasian, B.vi, fols. 104-9; the MS is described in Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 28; and S. Keynes, ‘Between Bede and the *Chronicle*: London, BL, Cotton Vespasian B.vi, fols. 104-9’, in *Latin Learning and English Lore*, eds. K. O’Brien O’Keeffe and A. Orchard (2 vols., Toronto, 2005), I, 48-59,

information is a historical note dating the murder of Æthelbald of Mercia and succession of Offa, from the incarnation, the *adventus Saxonum*, and arrival of Augustine. There are also various summaries of Old Testament history, including one set on Solomon's temple until its destruction under Vespasian, and a marginal note identifying the companions in martyrdom of Pope Sixtus II. Measurements of the temple, tabernacle, St Peter's basilica in Rome, Noah's Ark, and other objects are included, as is information on Hebrew months and biblical measures, the six ages of man, and the days of the week. After this, on fol. 107v, comes a list of popes to Leo III with additions up to Hadrian II (867-72), followed by a list of the seventy disciples of Christ, and then the Anglo-Saxon episcopal lists and genealogies for which the manuscript is renowned.

Keynes has argued that the texts 'make sense as a collection', although I am unsure quite what that 'sense' might be.⁶⁵⁴ Still, there is a clear historical dimension in this miscellany. It is concerned with the meaning and structure of pre-incarnation Jewish history. The list of popes orders post-incarnation Christian time, and the episcopal lists similarly present the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical past as a smooth progression of officeholders. The genealogies provide a counterpoint to this, projecting the heritage of Anglian and Kentish kings back into a mythic 'Germanic' past, although the historical note which links Mercian succession to the incarnation, the *Adventus Saxonum*, and the conversion from Rome shows how these threads might be related. While Vespasian B.vi does not present a cohesive vision of the past, appearing more like a compilation of materials useful to someone interpreting or writing history, it does possess three historical poles: Old Testament Jerusalem, Christian Rome, and Anglo-Saxon England.

Interestingly, these historical poles are also those of Bede's vision, but there is no obvious

who argues for a Canterbury provenance, although Sisam, 'Royal genealogies', 289; Dumville, 'Anglian collection', 24-5; and M. Brown, *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage and Power in Ninth-Century England* (London, 1996), p. 170 see it as a Mercian product.

⁶⁵⁴ Keynes, 'Between Bede and the *Chronicle*', 59-61.

point of contact with Bede. Rather, this similarity might indicate the importance of Rome in Anglo-Saxon thinking about the Christian past. Vespasian B.vi shows people thinking afresh about the universal and local pasts, and the linkages between the two, in early ninth-century Southumbria.

This historical thought may have been prompted by the continued prominence of Roman remains in the landscape, even if they had been lessened by collapse and re-use.⁶⁵⁵ Such remains appear to have impressed Bishop Helmstan of Winchester who, in his episcopal profession composed c.838-9, states that his election occurred at ‘the illustrious place constructed by the skill of the ancients Romans and usually called – throughout the spaces of the earth – the great city of London’.⁶⁵⁶ Written in poor Latin, this idiosyncratic profession also contains musings on Rome’s ecclesiastical primacy and its historic delegation of authority to Canterbury, and suggests Helmstan too had been thinking about the Anglo-Roman past. To this we might add the evidence of standing crosses placed in Roman remains and the decorated, round-shafted sculptures explored in chapter two.⁶⁵⁷ Both these ninth-century phenomena point to ecclesiastical communities making statements about their relation to the imperial Roman past, although quite what these statements were is uncertain. In this sculpture, and in Vespasian B.vi and Helmstan’s profession, we have some evidence that Anglo-Saxons were thinking about the Roman past and its relation to their own in the early ninth century, although it is difficult to interpret the meaning of each instance. These meagre examples are a sharp contrast to Bede’s extensive historical visions, which certainly continued to be read in the ninth century and, I suspect, governed understanding of the universal and, in particular, the Anglo-Saxon past for as long as people were able to read them.

⁶⁵⁵ See Bell, *Religious Reuse*, p. 19; and Eaton, *Plundering the Past*, pp. 23-9.

⁶⁵⁶ *Canterbury Professions*, ed. M. Richter (Torquay, 1973), no. 18; on authorship, see *EHCC*, p. 166.

⁶⁵⁷ See chapter two, pp. 95-6, 99-101.

Roman history in the reign of King Alfred

Following decades of fighting against Danish war-bands and of declining literacy and cultural output, King Alfred instituted a programme to educate those subject to him.

Outlined c.890 in the preface to the Old English translation of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, the programme would attempt to reverse the decline in learning visible in the middle third of the ninth century, with the aid of the scholars Alfred had been recruiting from outside Wessex since the mid 880s.⁶⁵⁸ To this effect, all 'free-born young men now in England' who had the means and the time were to learn English, and read 'certain books which are most necessary for all men to know' as translated by Alfred and his scholarly helpers.⁶⁵⁹ In the context of increasing royal demands, such literacy would bring practical benefits in terms of administration and justice, and spiritual benefits, giving the literate wisdom and closeness to God, helping secure the kingdom against the agents of divine vengeance.⁶⁶⁰

Of the works translated as part of this educational programme, the Old English versions of Gregory's *Cura pastoralis*, Boethius' *De consolazione Philosophiae*, Augustine's *Soliloquia*, and the first fifty psalms of the Psalter are usually assigned to Alfred himself, with the translation of Gregory's *Dialogi*, Orosius' *Historiarum adversum paganos Libri*

⁶⁵⁸ *OEPC*, pp. 2-9; pp. 124-6; on the recruitment of scholars, see Asser, chs. 77-81; for a general overview of the programme, see S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other Contemporary Sources* (London and New York, 1983), pp. 25-41; and R. Abels, *Alfred the Great: War Kinship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (Harlow, 1998), 220-43.

⁶⁵⁹ *OEPC*, pp. 6-7; p.126; and Asser, ch. 75, 77-9; though see M. Godden, 'King Alfred's Preface and the Teaching of Latin in Anglo-Saxon England', *EHR* 117 (2002), 597-604; and D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 120-6.

⁶⁶⁰ Asser, chs. 91,106; *OEPC*, pp. 4-9, pp. 125-6.

VII, and Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* completed by others as part of the king's programme.⁶⁶¹ Godden's recent challenge to direct royal composition threatens to disturb this consensus, but it seems unlikely that any of these translations will be disassociated from the context of Alfred's reign.⁶⁶² Surprisingly little weight has been accorded to history as a part of the Alfredian programme, with scholars preferring to focus on the 'royal' translations and the kingly concerns they convey.⁶⁶³ Yet two of the translated texts were histories, suggesting that knowledge of the past was considered an important component in the wisdom Alfred wished his subjects to gain. In this section I will examine these histories and the role of the Roman past within them, also looking at Roman history where it appears in other translated texts.

Translating the Roman past

Two of the late antique texts translated in Alfred's reign explore aspects of the Roman past, the versions of Boethius and Orosius. Not simple translations, the authors transformed the original Latin texts by cutting, adding, and rewriting at will, and these alterations often concerned the Roman history in the text. Historians and literary scholars have attempted to discover the sources of such revisions and, in doing so, have revealed a staggeringly wide range of potential texts, but the uncertain role of glosses and commentaries as intermediaries in the transmission of these materials means we cannot

⁶⁶¹ D. Whitelock, 'The prose of Alfred's reign', in *Continuations and Beginnings*, ed. E. Stanley (London, 1966), pp. 67-103; J. Bately 'Old English prose before and during the reign of Alfred', *ASE* 17 (1988), 93-138; and eadem, 'The Alfredian canon revisited: one hundred years on', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 107-20.

⁶⁶² M. Godden, 'Did King Alfred write anything?', *Medium Ævum* 76 (2007), 1-23.

⁶⁶³ As with Bede, the literature is too vast to list, but see the recent work of Pratt, *Political Thought*, especially pp. 115-30.

be sure which were directly available in late-ninth-century Wessex.⁶⁶⁴ Still, both translators possessed a reasonable understanding of Roman history and mythology.⁶⁶⁵

It has long been thought that Alfred himself translated Boethius' *De consolazione Philosophiae*, a wide-ranging philosophical tract written by an incarcerated sixth-century Roman courtier. Yet recent arguments question the feasibility of royal translation and reliability of the only direct evidence for this attribution, a preface, leaving later tradition the only basis for this identification.⁶⁶⁶ Unseating Alfred as translator is one quite drastic thing, but dislodging the work from the context of his educational programme is another entirely.⁶⁶⁷ Boethius' philosophical meditation may seem a long way from being 'most necessary' knowledge, but to remove its translation from an Alfredian context one must at least provide another, equally plausible context for its translation from Latin into Old English.⁶⁶⁸ No such context exists, and so if it did not come from the king's pen, the work must still be considered part of the translation-programme he initiated.

The *Old English Boethius* begins with a historical introduction not present in the original, detailing the Gothic conquest of Rome and Italy and the crimes Theoderic perpetrated there. It then introduces 'the most righteous' Boethius, who desired to remove his people from Theodoric's tyranny, appealed to the Greeks for assistance, and was imprisoned for his trouble.⁶⁶⁹ Conflating over a century's worth of events, this peculiar passage diverges

⁶⁶⁴ J. Bately, 'The classical additions in the Old English Orosius', in *England Before the Conquest*, eds. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), 237-51; and eadem, 'Those books that are most necessary for all men to know: the classics and late ninth-century England: a reappraisal', in *The Classics in the Middle Ages*, eds. A. Bernado and S. Levin (Binghamton, NY, 1990), 45-78; J. Wittig, 'King Alfred's *Boethius* and its Latin sources: a reconsideration', *ASE* 11 (1983), 157-98; and now M. Godden and S. Irvine, *The Old English Boethius* (2 vols., Oxford, 2009), I, 50-61.

⁶⁶⁵ See Coz, 'L'image de la Rome Antique', pp. 405-69 for a detailed assessment of the sources and accuracy of this knowledge; and also Bately, 'Those books', p. 65, and *OEBo*, I, 58.

⁶⁶⁶ Godden, 'King Alfred', 1-23; and Godden and Irvine, *Boethius*, I, 140-6; I am concerned only with the earlier, prose translation here.

⁶⁶⁷ Godden, 'King Alfred', 15-7.

⁶⁶⁸ Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 302-7, argues that the text was important in the only re-education, but Godden and Irvine, *Boethius*, I, 69-72 see it as a difficult and potentially dangerous work.

⁶⁶⁹ *OEBo*, I, I, 243-4, II, 4-5.

from all other extant summaries of Boethius' life and Anglo-Saxon accounts of the end of the western empire.⁶⁷⁰ It also shows a fascinating view of the different circumstances prevailing in post-imperial Italy, with a Gothic present occupied by Boethius and riddled with injustice contrasted against a deeper sense of the Roman past in which imperial rule had guaranteed certain rights. Theoderic, an Arian and papicide, had 'promised the Romans his friendship, so that they could be entitled to their old rights (*ealdrihta*).'⁶⁷¹ Seeing this promise unfulfilled and Theoderic committing evils 'against Christianity and the Roman counsellors', Boethius 'remembered the privileges and old rights (*para eðnessa and para ealdrihta*) which they had had under the emperors, their old rulers.'⁶⁷² Wanting to replace an 'unjust (*unrihtwisan*) king' with 'the control of a right-believing (*ryhtgeleaffulra*) and just (*rihtwisra*) people', he appealed to Constantinople 'because the emperor was the kin of their old lords', and requested assistance in the recovery of 'their Christianity and their old rights (*ealdrihtum*)'.⁶⁷¹ Two elements were at stake here, the old rights (*ealdriht*) the Romans had possessed under imperial rule, and correct Christian belief. The unjust (*unrihtwis*) Theoderic guaranteed neither, allowing for his legitimate replacement, which Boethius sought from the remaining eastern empire. Hinging on *riht*, this text portrays imperial Rome as a positive time when emperors guaranteed certain rights and privileges, things which were still available in the east.

After this first chapter, the *Old English Boethius* occasionally used exempla from ancient, and predominantly Roman, history to illustrate certain ideas. Many such exempla are expansions of brief allusions in the source text which would mean little to an audience lacking a classical education.⁶⁷² While serving a didactic purpose, these expansions

⁶⁷⁰ *OEBo*, 1, II, 248-57; Godden, 'The sack of Rome', 62-6; S. Irvine, 'The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the idea of Rome in Alfredian literature', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), p. 67-8.

⁶⁷¹ *OEBo*, 1, I, 243-4, II, 4-5.

⁶⁷² See Bately, 'Those books', p. 47; M. Godden, *The Translations of Alfred and his Circle, and the Misappropriation of the Past* (H.M. Chadwick Memorial Lecture 14, 2003), p. 14; and, on the didactic

represent interpretations of the Roman past communicated to a late-ninth-century audience. For example, the author uses the example of Nero and the earlier replacement of the Tarquins by ‘arrogant’ consuls to demonstrate that power will fall into the hands of the unworthy.⁶⁷³ This is expanded at the end of the chapter, when it is stated that ‘the unjust (*unrihtwisa*) emperor Nero’ was able to burn Rome and murder the city’s wisest counsellors and his family yet ‘all this world was none the less subjected to him’ – a fairly maximal interpretation of the extent of Rome’s power.⁶⁷⁴ Other such examples further illustrate the unhappiness of power and the ill-treatment of thegns by unjust kings.⁶⁷⁵ In this light, imperial Rome appears in a more negative context, its rights subverted by unjust rulers who commit crimes equal to those of Theoderic.

At other points, Roman figures receive a more positive treatment, as when meditating upon the transience of fame Wisdom asks ‘where is now the famous and resolute consul of the Romans who was called Brutus, and by a second name Cassius? Or the wise and steadfast Cato, who was also a consul of the Romans, who was openly a philosopher?’⁶⁷⁶ Irvine has argued that this treatment of Rome and its leaders in both positive and negative contexts is part of an ambivalent attitude towards the past.⁶⁷⁷ Certainly the examples of bad leaders modify the wholly positive appearance of the Roman imperial past in the historical introduction, showing that the empire could be subverted by unjust rulers, but this is indicative of a deeper, more complex, and more ‘realistic’ attitude to the past. The clear treatment of the mythological material in the *Old English Boethius* – the tales of Jove and the giants, Orpheus and Eurydice, and Ulysses and Circe – as ‘false stories’ is

element, N. Discenza, *The King’s English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius* (Albany, NY, 2005), 17-18.

⁶⁷³ *OEBo*, 16, I, 272, II, 23.

⁶⁷⁴ *OEBo*, 16, I, 276, II, 25-6; for a fuller exploration of this material, see P. Szarmach, ‘Alfred’s Nero’, in *Source of Wisdom*, ed. C. Wright, F. Biggs, and T. Hall (Toronto, 2007), pp. 147-67.

⁶⁷⁵ *OEBo*, 28-9, I, 300-3, II, 42-3.

⁶⁷⁶ *OEBo*, 19, I, 282-3, II, 30; see also ch. 24.

⁶⁷⁷ Irvine, ‘The idea of Rome’, pp. 71-2; see also Coz, ‘L’image de la Rome Antique’, pp. 423-9.

further evidence of this complex attitude.⁶⁷⁸ It not only informs an uneducated audience how the tales should be received, but shows a basic distinction being drawn between the ‘actual’ past and the realm of myth.⁶⁷⁹ The exception is Hercules who, as Irvine has rightly argued, was separated off from the other mythological figures as an ideal ruler.⁶⁸⁰ Treated at much greater length than the historical exempla, these mythological expansions appears to have been included for their own sake, thus providing some evidence of an interest in classical mythology in the reign of Alfred.⁶⁸¹

Roman history was more central to the Old English translation of Orosius’ *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII* than the Boethius translation. Orosius (c.375-c.419), a Gallaecian priest and disciple of Augustine, wrote his universal history within and partly about the Roman Empire. His work was a polemic, written in response to accusations that the imperial adoption of Christianity had lead to the sack of Rome by Alaric and the Goths in 410.⁶⁸² It was also an account of the Christian past from Adam to the present, which reconfigured universal history around the idea of a succession of four empires and ‘virtually sacralise[d] the concurrence of Christ’s transformative entry into history and the rise of the Roman imperial dispensation under Augustus.’⁶⁸³ As with the Boethius, the author of the *Old English Orosius* was quite free with his source text and, while adding some explanatory material and additional detail, he also cut heavily, the translation being one fifth the length of the original.⁶⁸⁴ That this work of predominantly Roman history was translated at all is significant, as is the way in which the translator

⁶⁷⁸ OEBo, 35-8, I, 332-8, 449-51, II, 63-6, 74-5.

⁶⁷⁹ For further discussion, see Discenza, *The King’s English*, pp. 51-4.

⁶⁸⁰ S. Irvine, ‘Wrestling with Hercules: King Alfred and the classical past’, in *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. C. Cubitt (Turnhout, 2003), 171-88.

⁶⁸¹ See, OEBo, 35-8, II, 407-8; and see M. Herren, ‘The transmission and reception of Graeco-Roman mythology in Anglo-Saxon England, 670-800’, *ASE* 27 (1998), 87-103, on earlier interest in mythology.

⁶⁸² For example, see *OH*, prol., i.16, vi.1.

⁶⁸³ Allen, ‘Universal History’, 26-32, at 27; and Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 50-64.

⁶⁸⁴ J. Bately, *The Old English Orosius* (Oxford, 1980), pp. xciii-c; and on the additions, see eadem, ‘The classical additions’, 237-51.

treated the original, transmitting the Roman past to a ninth-century Anglo-Saxon audience.

The extent to which Orosius' themes and purpose were transformed by the Old English translator is a topic on which opinion has diverged, and which has consequences for the role of the Roman past in the text. Whitelock and Bately argued that much of the polemic was removed, lightening the mood of pre-Christian times and heightening the emphasis on the divinely-ordained flow of history and the succession of empires leading to the *pax Romana*.⁶⁸⁵ Similarly, Kretzschmar argued that the translator removed the force of the anti-pagan rhetoric, retaining Orosius' providential reading of history and emphasising the lineal succession of divine authority.⁶⁸⁶ This consensus that the *Old English Orosius* preserved or even heightened the original author's providential interpretation of history seems justified. Such an interpretation is outlined in the first chapter of the second book, where divine power over man, his kingdoms, and the succession of the four empires is established.⁶⁸⁷ It is also apparent in the salvatory moment of Christ's incarnation, when the divine vengeance for Adam's sins that had dominated history was replaced by 'mercy' and 'concord', because 'those previous things were paid for.'⁶⁸⁸

Less clear is the extent to which the translation preserved the Orosian polemic. Many have suggested that it was largely removed, but such an argument might be accused of neglecting the potential relevance of Orosius' polemic aims to a late-ninth-century audience. Irvine has pointed out that for Alfred, beset by pagan incursions and potential apostasy, the Orosian apology may have had some contemporary force.⁶⁸⁹ Those who state that Orosius' 'consistent, hammering argumentation was shattered' leaving all but

⁶⁸⁵ Whitelock, 'The prose', 89-90; Bately, *Orosius*, pp. xciii-vi.

⁶⁸⁶ W. Kretzschmar, 'Adaptation and *anweald* in the Old English Orosius', *ASE* 16 (1987), 127-45.

⁶⁸⁷ *OEO*, ii.1, pp. 35-8; and *OH*, ii.1-2.

⁶⁸⁸ *OEO*, v.15, p. 132; and see *OH*, vii.1-3.

⁶⁸⁹ Irvine, 'The idea of Rome', pp. 72-3.

‘occasional isolated examples’ are going a touch too far.⁶⁹⁰ Certainly a great deal was removed, but this is unsurprising in such a drastically curtailed work. The text retains regular flourishes questioning the belief that current Christian times are worse than ancient times, and asserting that God’s mercy has lessened the tribulations of this age, whereas pre-Christian times were a miserable, calamity-ridden age of divine vengeance.⁶⁹¹ More generally, the polemic is visible in the tone and subject of pre-incarnation history, which remains a consistently gloomy litany of war, pestilence, and misery. The Orosian polemic was not only retained, it continued to govern the interpretation of history in the Old English version.

The preservation of an Orosian reading of history in the *Old English Orosius* has twofold consequences for the role and image of the Roman past in the text. First, the maintenance of the providential reading gives imperial Rome a central place in the Christian past.⁶⁹² Rome’s importance becomes apparent at the start of the second book, when the translator links the Roman Empire to God.⁶⁹³ Implicit throughout, this link is reiterated at crucial points, as when Christ sends rains to prevent Hannibal conquering Rome so that the Romans ‘and also many others through them, might attain the Christian faith and true belief.’⁶⁹⁴ It also resurfaces at the incarnation when there was ‘peace and friendship over all the earth’, a peace which, as Octavian is said to have stated, ‘no earthly man’ could have made.⁶⁹⁵ Christian and Augustan narratives merged to provide a divinely-ordained context for Christ’s birth, the transformative moment at which God’s vengeance was replaced by Mercy.

⁶⁹⁰ Kretzschmar, ‘Adaptation and *anweald*’, 136.

⁶⁹¹ *OEOr*, i.8, i.10, i.12, ii.1, ii.5, ii.6, ii.8, iii.3, iii.7, iii.8, iii.9, iii.11, iv.7, iv.9, iv.10, iv.13, v.1, v.15, vi.2, vi.4, vi.3, p. 27, 30, 34, 37-8, 48, 50, 52-3, 57, 65-6, 67, 74, 77, 82-3, 99, 102-3, 103-4, 113, 113-4, 132, 134-5, 138, 156.

⁶⁹² S. Harris, ‘The Alfredian *World History* and Anglo-Saxon Identity’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 100.4 (2001), 482-510, at 499, questionably asserts that this theme is removed.

⁶⁹³ *OEOr*, ii.1, pp. 35-8.

⁶⁹⁴ *OEOr*, iv.10, p. 104; and see *OH*, iv.17.

⁶⁹⁵ *OEOr*, iii.5, v.14-5, vi.1, pp. 58-9, 130-4.

The second consequence concerns the impact of the negative tone of pre-incarnation history on the portrayal of the Roman past, from the foundation of the city until the reign of Augustus. From book two, Roman history increasingly dominates the *Old English Orosius*, and this history serves to illustrate the depravity, belligerence, barbarity, and failures of Ancient Rome.⁶⁹⁶ Indeed, the translator sums up pre-Christian Roman history nicely when he states that Orosius said ‘that with the Romans in those days it was nothing but fighting, either with other people or against themselves, together with manifold plagues and pestilences.’⁶⁹⁷ This picture is compounded when the Romans murder the few figures portrayed in a positive light, namely Scipio Africanus (a conflation of elder and younger) and Julius Caesar.⁶⁹⁸ The audience of the *Old English Orosius* must have been left with the impression of the pre-Christian Roman past as one of brutality, treachery, misery, and constant war. Still, the role of the Augustan peace in providing the context for the incarnation meant that this Roman past was part of the divine plan.

The negative picture of Roman history is somewhat altered by the birth of Christ, which brings the possibility of peace and happiness. It is largely the Roman attitude towards Christianity that determines whether there is peace or vengeance. Following the heavenly peace of Augustus’ reign, the Romans suffered divine punishment for scorning Christianity.⁶⁹⁹ Peter and Paul bring Christianity to Rome in the reign of Claudius, and there is harmony for a time until Nero begins the persecutions. The following short entries, centred on the emperors, relate how persecutors received divine punishment, and good emperors, often supporters of Christians, were in receipt of mercy.⁷⁰⁰ This formula becomes diluted from Diocletian onwards where longer chapters lead to the sack of Rome

⁶⁹⁶ Such examples are too many to list, but see *OEOr*, ii.2-3, iii.3, vi.4, vi.7, ed. Batley, pp. 38-41, 56-7, 87-8, 98-9; the translator also explains certain Roman customs: *OEOr*, ii.4, iii.5, iv.1, pp. 41-2, 58-9, 83.

⁶⁹⁷ *OEOr*, iii.10, p. 75; this is an addition to the original, cf. *OH*, iii.21-2.

⁶⁹⁸ *OEOr*, v.4, v.12, pp. 118-9, 126-9.

⁶⁹⁹ *OEOr*, vi.1-3, pp. 132-6.

⁷⁰⁰ *OEOr*, vi.4-30, pp. 136-146; Coz, ‘L’image de la Rome Antique’, pp. 423-9.

in 410 which, as with the original, is portrayed as an instance of divine mercy due to its unobtrusive nature.⁷⁰¹ In this final book, the image of the Roman past is partially redeemed, and the nature of this change in post-incarnation history goes some way to explaining why this particular text was chosen for translation.

It is not, I think, controversial to argue that universal history might constitute ‘most necessary’ knowledge for a late-ninth-century audience; it would have helped readers and listeners understand God’s role in human affairs, and given them a basic, if imperfect, understanding of world history. Yet this does not help us understand why, of all such works, this idiosyncratic and rather dated work was chosen for translation. By arguing that, in his relatively frequent use of the phrase ‘said Orosius (*cwæð Orosius*)’, the translator objectified the original author while implicitly questioning his narrative of imperial triumphalism, Godden has further clouded the logic of this choice: why translate a work the validity of which you doubt?⁷⁰² Rather than seeing this ‘objectification’ as puncturing the Orosian reading of history, we might interpret it as designed to employ the original author’s authority to support a particular and possibly contested vision of the Roman past. The *Old English Orosius*’ reading of history certainly differs from the view of imperial Rome as an age of guaranteed rights in the *Old English Boethius*.

So how was the Orosian vision of the past relevant to an Alfredian audience? First, although it placed the past in a providential framework, the translation was primarily concerned with the ‘secular’ affairs of kings, empires and wars. It is, for example, fundamentally different to the ecclesiastical vision of Bede’s *Chronica maiora*, which focussed on Jewish history and then that of the peoples of God, their bishops, scholars, and martyrs. This more worldly focus was probably more relevant and palatable to an

⁷⁰¹ *OEOr*, vi.30-8, pp. 146-56.

⁷⁰² Godden, ‘The sack of Rome’, 60-2; idem, *Misappropriation*, pp. 6-11.

intended audience which stretched far beyond the church. Second, whereas the pre-incarnation history sees God preserving Rome for its role in the incarnation, after that, the fortunes of the Roman people depend on their attitude towards Christianity. Emperors who support the church benefit from divine mercy, while punishments are meted out to persecutors. For the late-ninth-century audience who had been on the receiving end of similar divine punishments – the vikings – for several decades, the force of this message would not have been lost. It may also have been directed towards the king whose attempts to revive religion and learning and mitigate divine punishment brought about the translation of this work in the first place.

The fate of Anglo-Roman history in the Old English Bede

As we saw above, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* painted a vision of the Anglo-Saxon past which detailed Rome's influence on the development of Christianity in Britain, a vision which was still popular in the early ninth century. An Old English translation of the *Historia* exists although, with no direct evidence linking it to Alfred, we cannot be sure it was made in his reign, and Bately has suggested that 'fresh argument' is needed to place it there.⁷⁰³ The text was certainly no 'royal' translation, but manuscript evidence shows that it was written in an Anglian dialect by the early tenth century.⁷⁰⁴ Alfred's reign provides the most likely context for the translation of such a work, and Bede's text is – to modern eyes at least – a work that fits the 'most necessary' criteria remarkably well.

While certainty is impossible, it seems probable that the *Old English Bede* was translated

⁷⁰³ Bately, 'Old English prose', p. 98.

⁷⁰⁴ D. Whitelock, 'The Old English Bede', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962), 57-90; the fragment in BL, Cotton MS, Domitian ix f.11 is dated by N. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), no. 151, to s.xⁱⁿ, and Gneuss, *Handlist*, no. 330, to s.ix^{ex} or s.xⁱn.

in Alfred's reign, providing crucial evidence for the reception and interpretation of Bede's complex historical vision in the later ninth century, and for how the Anglo-Roman past was perceived.⁷⁰⁵

The translator of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* condensed and abridged the original in a careful and consistent fashion, removing letters, documents, and poems that Bede incorporated verbatim, as well as doctrinal disputes and non-English material.⁷⁰⁶

Whitelock saw the *Old English Bede* as a simplified narrative of almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon history, made for edificatory purposes.⁷⁰⁷ Molyneaux recently updated this impression, arguing that the translator built on Bede's didactic purpose to transform the text into a storehouse of Christian exempla for educating the laity.⁷⁰⁸ It is generally thought that in this refocusing the Romano-British and Anglo-Roman history crucial to the original vision was deemed irrelevant and largely removed.⁷⁰⁹ Discenza has gone further, arguing that the translation 'still tells the story of the English church coming into the Roman fold on the dating of Easter' but that 'Romans play virtually no direct role in English history except in conversion'.⁷¹⁰ The removal of Roman history is, however, overemphasised, and Discenza's account must be inverted; popes and Roman missionaries play a similar role until well after the conversion, but the story of the English church coming into the Roman fold is significantly altered.

To begin with the Romano-British history in Book One, this was indeed significantly abbreviated but it was the detail and not the basic framework which was removed. For

⁷⁰⁵ No Alfredian MS of the Latin Bede survives, though the translator could access a copy and Asser had read it; Lapidge, 'Asser's reading', pp. 38-9.

⁷⁰⁶ Whitelock, 'Old English Bede', 61-6.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 61-6, 74-5.

⁷⁰⁸ G. Molyneaux, 'The *Old English Bede*: English ideology or Christian instruction?', *EHR* 124 (2009), 1307-22.

⁷⁰⁹ Whitelock, 'Old English Bede', 62; Molyneaux, 'Christian instruction', 1307, 1312.

⁷¹⁰ N. Discenza, 'The *Old English Bede* and the construction of Anglo-Saxon authority', *ASE* 21 (2002), 76.

example, the original Latin text contained a wealth of detail on Caesar's conquest of Britain, his construction of 600 ships, the difficulties he faced and the 'cities' he conquered, whereas the *Old English Bede* simply reports that the Romans overran Britain in 60 BC under Gaius Julius.⁷¹¹ While much shorter, the translation still records the involvement of Britain in the wider past. Similarly, the structure of Anglo-Roman history is retained but the detail is reduced, although less extensively than with the Romano-British material. As in the original, the initial conversion of the Anglo-Saxons comes from Rome at the instigation of Gregory.⁷¹² After Gregory, popes continued to support the mission, sending letters of instruction and exhortation, *pallia*, even additional personnel.⁷¹³ Although the papal letters contained in the original are omitted, the translator generally notes that letters were sent, summarising their content where he deemed it appropriate.⁷¹⁴ Far from Roman involvement ceasing with the initial conversion, as Discenza suggests, the popes continued to supervise the developing Anglo-Saxon church, sending Theodore and Hadrian to reform the church and John the Archcantor to investigate the orthodoxy of the Anglo-Saxons' belief.⁷¹⁵ Moreover, as in the original, popes authorise Willibrord's mission to Frisia and later elevate him to archbishop.⁷¹⁶ The *Old English Bede*, then, follows its source-text in emphasizing the important role played by Rome in the conversion and development of the Anglo-Saxon church.

Rome might retain its fundamental role in spreading the church, but the vision of the gradual inclusion of the Anglo-Saxons, Picts, and Irish into the unity of the universal

⁷¹¹ *OEB*, i.2, I, 30; the Roman history is also less accurate than the original: see, for example, the comments on Nero and Britain at i.3.

⁷¹² *OEB*, i.13-6, ii.1, I, 54-98.

⁷¹³ See *OEB*, ii.4, ii.7, ii.9, ii.14, ii.15, iii.5, I, 106-8, 118, 124, 146, 166-8.

⁷¹⁴ *OEB*, i.13, i.16, ii.7, ii.9, ii.14, ii.15, iii.21, I, 56, 88-90, 118, 124, 146, II, 248; though the letters at *HE*, i.24, i.28, i.30, i.31, ii.11, ii.19, to Frankish or Irish bishops and those immediately following other papal letters are ignored.

⁷¹⁵ *OEB*, iv.1-2, iv.20, II, 252-60, 314-6.

⁷¹⁶ *OEB*, v.12, II, 418-22.

church through acceptance of orthodox 'Roman' Easter is disrupted and altered. By the late ninth century, the insular paschal controversy was somewhat passé and we might expect that it, like Pelagianism, would be eradicated from the *Old English Bede*. Yet, as Whitelock noted, a 'significant selection' of references to the Easter dispute were retained, portraying the Irish and Britons as unorthodox while removing 'any prominence' attached to the Northumbrian use of Celtic Easter.⁷¹⁷ Removing any trace of the northern church's Celtic moment, these changes create a portrayal of the Anglo-Saxons as unwavering in their orthodoxy and willing to pass it on to the other peoples. This had drastic consequences for the Bedan vision. Key passages in Bede's narrative of inclusion in the universal church were preserved, including some equating observance of the correct Easter with orthodoxy and ecclesiastical unity, and others relating the adoption of the correct paschal reckoning by the Picts and Ionans.⁷¹⁸ Yet significant excisions, most notably the Synod of Whitby and the Northumbrian paschal dispute which, in the Latin text, formed the crux of the Bedan story of inclusion, disrupt the original vision.⁷¹⁹ Although Roman ecclesiastical forms are portrayed as orthodox and Rome appears as the cultural, doctrinal, and jurisdictional centre of the church, the wider use to which these notions were put by Bede is not present in the translation.⁷²⁰

The *Old English Bede* illustrates the continued relevance of Bede's narrative a century and a half after its completion. Detail was removed from the account of Anglo-Roman history but the basic framework, linking the land occupied by the Anglo-Saxons to the wider Roman past and illustrating the crucial role of the Rome in the conversion and development of the church, was preserved. It is the retention of this, and the wider

⁷¹⁷ Whitelock, 'Old English Bede', 62-3; cf. S. Rowley, 'The paschal controversy in the Old English Bede', in *Bède le Vénérable entre Tradition et Postérité*, eds. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, and O. Szerwiniack (Lille, 2005), pp. 297-308.

⁷¹⁸ *OEB*, ii.2, ii.4, v.16, v.19-23, I, 98-104, 106-8, II, 446-8, 468-80.

⁷¹⁹ It is merely noted that Wilfrid brought orthodoxy from Rome, and the Irish who were opposed to it went home; *OEB*, iii.20, v.17, II, 246-8, 456.

⁷²⁰ *OEB*, iii.21, iv.5, v.7, v.17-19, II, 248, 274, 404-6, 448-64.

narrative of ecclesiastical development, that leads me to think that the *Old English Bede* was not simply intended as a book of salutary *exempla*, but remained a history of the Anglo-Saxon people and church. Nevertheless, only half of Bede's vision of the Anglo-Roman past is retained, with the account of inclusion within the unity of the universal church removed. Generally, the translator excised material to simplify and smoothe the narrative, making Bede more accessible to a less educated audience, and the removal of this intricate and theological line of thought was most probably part of this process.

Locating the past in the late ninth century

Within the historical texts translated as part of King Alfred's revival of learning, the Roman past is envisaged in different ways. As well as exhibiting an interest in classical mythology, the *Old English Boethius* used expanded *exempla* from Roman history to illustrate its argument and, in a historical introduction which contrasted Roman and Ostrogothic Italy, portrayed the imperial past as an age of justice and rights which were lacking in Boethius' time. In contrast, the *Old English Orosius* mostly portrays Roman history as miserable and war-ridden, although the city did play an important role in the divine plan for the world. While Roman history was a small part of the *Boethius* where it provided context and *exempla*, it was more central to the visions of the past contained in the *Orosius* and *Bede*. The *Orosius* charted secular history within a providential framework and illustrated how, after the incarnation, unjust and persecuting emperors were punished by God, thus providing a form of universal history more palatable to a

largely secular audience that also contained salutary lessons. It would also have given its readers and listeners a grounding in world history, while the *Old English Bede* – which preserved the framework of the original, locating Britain in the wider past and depicting the papacy as an essential force in Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical development – would have furnished them with a deeper sense of their own past and its links into wider Rome-centric universal visions.

These visions of the past, then, functioned in a primarily educational context and, taken together, they provide a broad grounding in insular and universal history and a stock of cautionary tales and positive *exempla* for imitation by their later-ninth-century audience. What they do not do, however, is fulfil any immediate political or social needs, beyond those lying behind the Alfredian educational programme as a whole. As we saw in the introduction, Frankish historical writing used the past in an overtly political way, for identity formation, elite cohesion, and to shore up political power and legitimacy. The Alfredian translations narrated distant pasts – the geographically and chronologically closest being that of Bede which ended in 731 – pasts not immediately linked to the present and thus unlikely to function in this way. The texts composed afresh in Alfred's reign may, however, have filled a more immediate political or social purpose while also situating the Anglo-Saxons in wider Rome-centred historical narratives, and I will now focus on three such visions. Two, Alfred's preface to the Old English *Cura Pastoralis* and the prologue to his *Domboc*, are prefatory in nature, contextualising and justifying the works that follow. The third, the 'common stock' of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, contains the most extensive vision of the past created in this period and one which was to have a significant afterlife.

All pervasive in Alfredian studies, the prose preface to the Old English translation of Gregory the Great's *Cura Pastoralis* is a document of great importance for, as we have already seen, it outlined and justified Alfred's educational programme. The preface was actually a letter from the king which was sent, together with the text and an *æstel*, to all the sees in his kingdom at some point between 890 and 896.⁷²¹ It functioned not as an introduction to Gregory's guide for those in authority, but as an explanation of the translation-programme, seeking to persuade its audience, the bishops, of the necessity of royal action so that they might obey and assist him. Alfred frequently refers to the past, creating a vision which has often been subject to scrutiny for what it reveals about the ninth-century decline of literacy and learning.⁷²² Here, however, I wish to examine how the Anglo-Saxon past was imagined and whether it was linked to a wider past.

In the preface, idealised stages in the English past are cast in terms of a series of royal recollections, beginning with the phrase 'when I reflected (*ða ic..gemunde...*)'.⁷²³ The first of these recalls 'how there were happy times then throughout England' when there was an abundance of wise men, godly kings, and zealous clergy, such that foreigners came to receive 'wisdom and instruction (*wisdom & lare*)'.⁷²⁴ This relatively distant past is then contrasted to the time of Alfred's accession (871) when learning had decayed so thoroughly that knowledge of Latin had almost died out. Following an exhortation to

⁷²¹ OEPC, pp. 7-8; p.126; see A. Frantzen, 'The form and function of the preface in the prose and poetry of Alfred's reign', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp.121-36, at 128-32; on production and circulation, see K. Sisam, 'The publication of Alfred's *Pastoral Care*', in his *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 140-7; and S. Keynes, 'The power of the written word: Alfredian England 871-99', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 193-7.

⁷²² On learning and literacy, see chapter two, pp. 69-70; and see N. Discenza, "'Wise wealhstodas'": The prologue to Sirach as a model for Alfred's Preface to the *Pastoral Care*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 97 (1998), 488-99, on the possible influence of the prologue to Sirach (Ecclesiasticus).

⁷²³ OEPC, pp. 4-7; pp.125-6.

⁷²⁴ OEPC, pp. 2-3; p.124.

pursue wisdom, the king asks his reader to ‘remember what punishments befell us in this world when we ourselves did not cherish learning nor transmit it to other men’, a thinly veiled reference to the vikings.⁷²⁵ Then Alfred moves back to an intermediate past ‘before everything was ransacked and burnt’ when churches abounded with clergy, treasures, and books, yet poor language skills prevented benefit being derived from them.⁷²⁶ Having established linguistic barriers as the central hindrance to adequate learning, Alfred again returns to the ‘former’ times, wondering why the plethora of wise men failed to translate books into their own language, a question he subsequently answers by stating that the wise men never imagined such a wanton decay in learning.⁷²⁷

We can discern three broad periods within Alfred’s royal remembrances: a distant golden age, an intermediate period of pre-viking decline in which the material trappings of ‘our ancestors’ remained but their wisdom did not, and a recent shared past of neglect and punishment, which reached its nadir in the general Latin illiteracy at Alfred’s accession.⁷²⁸ In this vision, the clearest chronological marker is the king’s accession, and the dates of the distant and intermediate phases are not specified. The ‘happy times’ are often identified with the ‘*feliciora tempora*’ of the Theodoran golden age related by Bede, and there is certainly some correspondence.⁷²⁹ There are also broader similarities between Bede’s vision and the pan-regional scope of Alfred’s preface, in which he talked of *Angelcynn* and *Englisc*.⁷³⁰ Still, the king’s description of the golden age as a time

⁷²⁵ OEPc, pp. 2-5; pp.124-5.

⁷²⁶ OEPc, pp. 4-5; p.125.

⁷²⁷ OEPc, pp. 4-5; p.125.

⁷²⁸ OEPc, pp. 4-7; pp.125-6.; my interpretation broadly agrees with T. Shippey, ‘Wealth and wisdom in King Alfred’s *Preface to the Old English Pastoral Care*’, *EHR* 94 (1979), 346-55, except in the dating of his period II; but differs from D. Dumville, ‘King Alfred and the tenth-century reform of the English Church’, in his *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 188-9.

⁷²⁹ F. Klaeber, ‘Zu König Alfreds Vorrede zu seiner Übersetzung der *Cura Pastoralis*’, *Anglia* 47 (1923), 55; F. Magoun, ‘Some notes on King Alfred’s circular letter on educational policy addressed to his bishops’, *Mediaeval Studies* 10 (1948), 95-6; and recently, Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p. 294; and see *HE*, iv.2;

⁷³⁰ See Foot, ‘The making of *Angelcynn*’, 29-32.

when foreigners sought knowledge and instruction in England differs from Bede's 'happy times' when such knowledge was sought by Anglo-Saxons from Rome, or imported by figures such as Theodore, Hadrian, and John the Archcantor. We might posit alternatives, but I do not think it is possible to pinpoint the exact moments to which this idealised past refers.

After articulating this vision of the history of Anglo-Saxon learning, Alfred links it to a wider past, writing:

Then I recalled how the Law was first composed in the Hebrew language, and thereafter, when the Greeks learned it, they translated it all into their own language, and all other books as well. And so too the Romans, after they had mastered them, translated them all through learned interpreters into their own language. Similarly all other Christian peoples turned some part of them into their own language.⁷³¹

The king sketches the transmission of scripture, for that is what 'Law (*æ*)' and 'all other books (*elle oðre bec*)' were, through the Christian past. Interestingly, the trajectory of this brief passage, from Hebrews to Greeks to Romans and then widening to all other Christian peoples, bears more similarity to the progression of universal history in works such as Bede's *Chronica Maiora* than that in the *Old English Orosius*. Bede saw divine history shifting from Jerusalem to Rome in the sixth world age, centring on the latter and gazing westward to the gentile peoples that the popes would help convert. Alfred's preface need not reflect the influence of Bede – one could find such information in Jerome's vulgate prologues – but the use of this scriptural example, appropriate for an episcopal audience, reveals another side to the historical thought in Alfredian Wessex.⁷³²

It is also noteworthy that inclusion within the universal through common practice, a

⁷³¹ OEPC, pp. 4-7; pp.125-6.

⁷³² On the role of Jerome's prologues, see Discenza "Wise wealhstodas", p. 494; on knowledge of biblical translations into other languages, see Magoun, 'Some notes', pp. 100-1; and Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, pp. 295-6.

Bedan preoccupation, is implicit in Alfred's statement: if everyone else is doing it, why should he not?

Directly after this appeal to the universal past, Alfred stated that 'therefore it seems better to me, if it seems so to you' that the 'most necessary' books be turned into English and taught to the free-born youth.⁷³³ His appeal thus provides the justificatory hinge for the change he sought to make in English learning. That the central peoples of Christian history – and now all peoples – took this action makes it acceptable as a means to improving the state of English learning. Alfred contrasts the failed Latinity of English learning with the vernacularism of universal practice; the English had attained learning and wisdom but then, having not translated books into the vernacular, let it slip, whereas all other peoples who had attained learning translated some or all of the Bible. The pursuit of learning and wisdom links the Anglo-Saxon past to the wider Christian past, yet a failure to translate means that it also remains slightly separated from the common history of Christian peoples. As with Bede, this individualism is not a source of pride, but something that should be rectified, to improve learning and place the English in their rightful position among all other peoples.

Contextualising law

The prologue to Alfred's *Domboc* – or law-book – also deals with the transmission of divine law and situates the Anglo-Saxons in a wider historical context, yet it does so in a different manner. A lengthy and 'conservative' document, the *Domboc* may not have been 'written' by the king, but was certainly closely linked to him. While disagreeing on

⁷³³ *OEPC*, pp. 6-7; p.126.

how the text was used, recent studies place the once marginalised prologue at the heart of understanding the *Domboc*.⁷³⁴ They also emphasise the influence of Carolingian thought, particularly that of Hincmar of Rheims,⁷³⁵ on the prologue, which relates the tenets of Mosaic Law, their apostolic distillation, and the subsequent commutation of punishment for compensations.⁷³⁶ On its most fundamental level the prologue explains (and justifies) the difference between contemporary Anglo-Saxon law and the severity of Mosaic Law, while locating Alfred's code in a wider tradition of Christian lawgiving.

In fulfilling this role, the prologue creates a short history of Christian lawgiving. Beginning with the Pentateuch, it offers a translation of the Decalogue and several of the laws Moses laid down for the Jews (Exodus 20-3).⁷³⁷ It then moves forward to when Christ 'came into the world', noting that he sought to 'extend...[these laws]...with everything good', teaching mercy and humility.⁷³⁸ The prologue describes the time after the passion when the apostles were together and had not yet 'set out to teach throughout all the earth', giving an abbreviated version of Acts 14-15 where the Council of Jerusalem decided to minimise the extent to which gentile converts had to observe Mosaic Law.⁷³⁹ The prologue, then, links three different periods of the Christian past – the times of Moses' reception of the Law, of Christ's coming, and the time (c. 50 AD) after the passion when the apostles were gathered in Jerusalem – in an account of the institution, amelioration, and narrowing applicability of Mosaic Law.

⁷³⁴ P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century. Vol. 1 Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 264-86, 416-30; Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 214-32; see also A. Frantzen, *King Alfred* (Boston, MA, 1986), pp. 11-21.

⁷³⁵ Wormald, *Making*, pp. 424-30; Pratt, *Political Thought*, 222-32; though B. Carella, 'The source of the prologue to the Laws of Alfred', *Peritia* 19 (2005), 91-118, convincingly challenges one aspect of this influence.

⁷³⁶ Alf-Prl, 26-47; pp. 44-59; where available, I use the partial translation of Wormald, *Making*, pp. 421-22.

⁷³⁷ Alf-Prl, 26-42; pp. 45-55.

⁷³⁸ Alf-Prl, 42-3; pp. 55-7; and Wormald, p. 421; M. Treschow, 'The prologue to Alfred's Law Code: instruction in the spirit of Mercy', *Florilegium* 13 (1994), 79-110, sees this mercy as the central principle of the prologue and Alfred's code as a whole.

⁷³⁹ Alf-Prl, 42-5; pp. 55-7; and Wormald, *Making*, pp. 421-22.

The prologue then goes on to state that ‘afterwards, when it happened that many peoples received the faith of Christ, then were assembled throughout the whole world, as also throughout the English (*Angelcynn*) after they received the faith of Christ, many synods of holy bishops and other celebrated wise men.’⁷⁴⁰ These synods, it is stated, determined that lords might receive monetary compensation for first offences (except betrayal of a lord) without sin and that, ‘many synods fixed compensations for many human misdeeds, and they wrote them in many synod-books’.⁷⁴¹ Here, then, another part of the Christian past is imagined. The previously narrow vision widens to encompass ‘many peoples’ throughout ‘the whole world’ who had convened synods to deal with the penalty for sin. The Anglo-Saxons are placed within this vision of the post-incarnation church as a people who also convened synods and recorded the law, although the ‘after they received’ clause shows awareness that they were relative latecomers and slightly separate from the mass of other peoples.

In narrating the institution, limitation, and replacement of Mosaic Law by monetary penalties, the prologue to Alfred’s *Domboc* outlined the progression of law through successive stages of the Christian past. This vision possesses a similar trajectory to that of the linguistic transmission of the Law and Bible contained in Alfred’s prefatory letter. Although rather than a linear progression from Hebrew through Greek and Roman to all other peoples, it moves from a narrow Hebrew past and into an age when the church was universal, the groundwork for this expansion having been laid by Christ and the apostles. Again, this vision bears greater similarity to the Bedan vision of the universal past, with its movement of divine history from the Jews, via Rome to all peoples, than the Orosian schema, and while Rome is unmentioned the importance of the city and empire in the

⁷⁴⁰ Alf-Prl, 44-7; p. 59; and Wormald, *Making*, p. 422.

⁷⁴¹ Alf-Prl, 44-7; p. 59; and Wormald, *Making*, p. 422; on these ‘synods’ see Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 227-9.

apostolic and conversion narrative sketched by the Prologue would have been clear to any moderately knowledgeable reader or listener. By situating his educational and legal enterprises in a vision of the wider past that was more Bedan (or Eusebian) than the Orosian narrative translated for general consumption, Alfred illustrates an awareness of the range of inherited historical visions. Furthermore, his willingness to place the English within the wider past, as in the *Domboc* where they are one of the Christian peoples to convene synods for penitential-legal purposes, or at odds with it, as in the *Cura Pastoralis* preface where they have failed to use the vernacular, suggests a certain flexibility in dealing with the past. Yet inclusion within that wider past remained as desirable as it had been for Bede.

Situating the 'common stock'

The 'common stock' is the name usually given to the initial set of *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* annals compiled and apparently circulated in the latter part of Alfred's reign. It represents the most extensive piece of historical writing of this period, one which would go on to influence the recording of the past for centuries to come as the text was copied, augmented and rewritten in centres across England. Written in the vernacular, the common stock annals cover Anglo-Saxon history from 60 BC up to the year 891, and appear to have been composed from a mixture of existing and fresh material by two or more scribes.⁷⁴² The earliest surviving copy of the *Chronicle* – known as the 'Parker Chronicle' or MS A – was made at Winchester in the late ninth century, but is at least

⁷⁴² J. Bately, 'The compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 60 BC to AD 890: vocabulary as evidence', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 64 (1978), 93-129.

one remove from the original text.⁷⁴³ It is tempting to situate the original composition in Alfredian Winchester, but doubt has been cast on this proposition and, ultimately, we cannot be certain of where the chronicle was compiled or by whom.⁷⁴⁴ Still, the nature of the material points to royal patronage at the very least and recent years have seen Stentonian doubt about Alfredian composition cast aside, with the text now viewed as royally sponsored and designed to strengthen Alfred's rule and dynasty against threats internal and external.⁷⁴⁵ Indeed, the 'common stock' relates a vision of the Anglo-Saxon past which placed the house of Ecgberht over all others for the consumption of those educated in the vernacular and subject to West Saxon rule.

The common stock creates this vision using a form which differs from the narrative prose texts so far explored. A set of annals characterised by reticence and parataxis, it contains few of the causal and explanatory linkages normally found in narrative texts, and is usually unconcerned with motive and outcome.⁷⁴⁶ Superimposing events onto a list of years dated *Anno Domini*, entries were often left blank, especially in the earlier sections of the text, while in the ninth century more regular entries grow increasingly long. Such laconic, disconnected writing can make the common stock appear naive and non-historical. Through treating the *Chronicle* as a whole, however, certain themes become apparent – some limited to a specific time period, others present throughout the text – and it is these thematic strands that give the text coherence and narrative force.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴³ M. Parkes, 'The palaeography of the Parker manuscript of the *Chronicle*, laws and Sedulius, and historiography at Winchester in the late ninth and tenth centuries', *ASE* 5 (1976), 149-71. MSS A, B, and C are the primary witnesses of the 'common stock'; on the relationship between these manuscripts, see J. Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Texts and Textual Relationships* (Reading, 1991), pp. 1-25.

⁷⁴⁴ Parkes, 'The palaeography', 163-6; but see Bately, 'The compilation', 125-9.

⁷⁴⁵ Keynes, 'Written word', pp. 176-82, esp. 180; and see Wallace-Hadrill, 'Common historical interests', 211-8; R. Davis, 'Alfred the Great: propaganda and truth', *History* 56 (1971), 169-82; and A. Scharer, 'The writing of history at King Alfred's court', *Early Medieval Europe* 5.2 (1996), 178-85.

⁷⁴⁶ See C. Clark, 'The narrative mode of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* before the Conquest', in *England Before the Conquest*, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 215-21.

⁷⁴⁷ See S. Foot, 'Finding the meaning of form: narrative in annals and chronicles', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. N. Partner (London, 2005), pp. 88-108.

The centrality of West-Saxon kingship to the *Chronicle* is immediately apparent in MS A, which is prefaced by a copy of the West-Saxon genealogical regnal list.⁷⁴⁸ It relates the rulers of Wessex from the dynastic founders Cerdic and Cynric down to Alfred, giving the former pair a genealogy to Woden and stating subsequent kings' relation to them.⁷⁴⁹ This preface signals a wider attempt to fuse annalistic and genealogical writing and, to this effect, the compilers incorporated the genealogies of kings of all major kingdoms, except those subjected to Wessex in 825.⁷⁵⁰ Although widening the common stock's vision, these other genealogies lacked the distinction of Æthelwulf and his sons who, in the 855-8 genealogy, were linked Woden, Geat, Adam and Christ.⁷⁵¹ The royal focus of the text is also apparent in the text's other major theme: war and conquest, first against the Britons then, from 600, against the Welsh and between Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and later, from 800, against viking war-bands. While royal themes provide the backbone of the common stock, prominent religious events are also recorded from the conversion onwards. Episcopal deaths and appointments are noted, along with other occurrences such as important synods and the deaths of saints. Spectacular natural events such as eclipses, comets, and the 'great winter' of 763 were also deemed worthy of inclusion.⁷⁵² The sum of these admittedly laconic and fragmentary parts is a vision of the past which, using a framework of post-incarnation Christian time, leads one from the *Adventus Saxonum* to late-ninth-century geopolitical realities, where Alfred was lord over 'all the English people (*Angelcynn*) that were not under subjection to the Danes'.⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁸ See Dumville, 'West Saxon genealogical regnal list', 1-32.

⁷⁴⁹ ASC, pref., A.

⁷⁵⁰ ASC, 547 BC, 552, 560 BC, 597, 611, 626, 670, 674, 685, 688, 694, 731, 757.

⁷⁵¹ ASC, 855; Sisam, 'Royal Genealogies', 328-348; see also Scharer, 'Writing of history', 178-83; and C. Davis, 'Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies', *ASE* 21 (1992), 23-36.

⁷⁵² ASC, 596, 763.

⁷⁵³ ASC, 886. On the significance of this annal, see Foot, 'The making of *Angelcynn*', 25-49; and S. Keynes, 'King Alfred and the Mercians', in *Kings, Currency and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century*, eds. M. Blackburn and D. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 19-34.

How does Roman involvement in the Anglo-Saxon past fare in this vision of West-Saxon triumph? As we saw in chapter three, ninth-century entries recording interaction between the West-Saxon royal house and Rome could take on a dynastic imperative. For example, by casting the infant Alfred's audience with the pope in Rome in 853 as an instance of royal anointing – which it surely was not – the text drew on the symbolic power of Rome and Franco-Roman practice to confer a special status on Alfred.⁷⁵⁴ In such instances, Rome contributed to the immediate ideological aims of the common stock. Earlier Anglo-Roman entries are primarily ecclesiastical in subject. Beginning with Gregory's dispatch of Augustine to Britain to preach 'God's word to the English people (*Engla þeode*)', the *Chronicle* records the progress of the Roman mission including the conversion of the West-Saxons by the 'Roman bishop' Birinus.⁷⁵⁵ Little is said about the insular paschal controversy, perhaps reflecting the fact that, while the chronological summary from the end of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* was used as a source for the *Chronicle*, the main text of the *Historia* was not.⁷⁵⁶ Indeed, the common stock's treatment of the Anglo-Roman past bears more similarity to the *Old English Bede* than the Latin original.⁷⁵⁷ The death of Archbishop Theodore in 690 brought this phase of direct Roman involvement to an end: 'hitherto there had been Roman bishops; afterwards they were English (*englisce*)'.⁷⁵⁸ The compiler subsequently reported episcopal and archiepiscopal journeys to Rome, the receipt of the archiepiscopal *pallium*, and the devotional visits of Kings Caedwalla, Cenred, Offa, and Ine.⁷⁵⁹ Reinforcing the Anglo-

⁷⁵⁴ See chapter three, pp. 145-7.

⁷⁵⁵ ASC, 596, 601, 604 BC, 606 [recte 604], 625-7, 632 [recte 627-8], 633-6, 639, 646, 650, 653, 655, 661.

⁷⁵⁶ ASC, 664, 716; see J. Bately, 'Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' in *Saints, Scholars and Heroes*, eds. M. King and W. Stevens (Collegeville, MN, 1979), pp. 233-254.

⁷⁵⁷ I hope to investigate the relationship between these two texts more closely elsewhere.

⁷⁵⁸ ASC, 690.

⁷⁵⁹ Episcopal visits are ASC, 721, 737, 801, 814-5; royal visits are ASC, 688, 709, 726, 737; the receipt of the *pallium* is recorded in ASC, 601, 736, 766, 806, 834

Roman links established at the conversion, these annals create the impression that Rome was the central external force in Anglo-Saxon religious life.

Despite its predominantly insular and royal focus, then, the common stock does establish Rome and its bishops as the principal outside force in Anglo-Saxon history, initially working in an ecclesiastical context but later helping to legitimise Alfred's rule. Yet the city plays another fundamental, yet often overlooked, role. Between the genealogical preface and the annal relating the arrival of Hengest and Horsa in Britain in 449, a series of entries relate events from the wider, Christian past in which – as in other texts – imperial Rome played a crucial role. These entries drew not only on Bede's chronological summary, but also upon Isidore's *Chronicon*, Rufinus' translation of Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica*, the *Liber Pontificalis*, and Jerome's *De viris illustribus*.⁷⁶⁰ That the compilers went to the trouble of researching and incorporating this material suggests that it played a crucial part in the original conception of the *Chronicle*. Yet, despite this, scholars have paid these entries little attention, other than to examine their sources.⁷⁶¹

These thirty-four entries form something of a 'universal prologue' to the common stock, recounting a number of key events from world history, which fall into three broad strands. First, there is Christian history, including events from Christ's life such as his baptism and crucifixion, as well as the deaths of apostles, evangelists, and later figures such as Ignatius of Antioch. Some papal history is recorded, such as St Peter becoming Bishop of Rome.⁷⁶² Jewish history forms the second, smaller strand, the compiler recording changes in rulers of the Jews and middle-eastern territories, such as when Pilate

⁷⁶⁰ J. Batley, 'World history in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: its sources and its separateness from the Old English Orosius', *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979), 177-194.

⁷⁶¹ Coz, 'L'image de la Rome Antique', pp. 473-9, contains the most thorough analysis, albeit an inconclusive one.

⁷⁶² ASC, 1-2, 30, 33-5, 44-5, 62-3, 69, 85, 100-1, 110, 167, 430.

‘obtained rule over the Jews’.⁷⁶³ These events are usually related to Christ and the apostles, although that is not always specified in the text. A third strand contains imperial Roman history, in which entries range from plain notices of imperial succession, to reports of Romano-Jewish history such as Titus’ slaughter of ‘111,000 Jews in Jerusalem’ in 71 AD.⁷⁶⁴ Prominent in this strand is Romano-British history, the only pre-incarnation annal relating that ‘Gaius Julius, came to Britain, as the first of the Romans’.⁷⁶⁵ Later, in 47 AD, it is noted that Claudius conquered ‘the greater part’ of the island, and the British connections of Severus and the usurper Maximus are also noted.⁷⁶⁶ The Gothic sack of Rome in 410 is linked to the end of Roman rule in Britain although, eight years later, an annal states that ‘the Romans collected all the treasures which were in Britain, and hid some in the ground, so that no one could find them afterwards, and took some with them to Gaul’.⁷⁶⁷ An intriguing entry, this signifies the end of the imperial Rome as a meaningful force in Britain.

What should we make of this prefatory assemblage of world history? The argument that they establish the forces and themes that would come to affect Anglo-Saxon history has some merit.⁷⁶⁸ In the annals recording Pope Eleutherius’ apparent conversion of a British king and Pope Celestine’s sending of Palladius to Ireland, Christian Rome acts as a converting agent, presaging the later conversion of the Anglo-Saxons.⁷⁶⁹ The themes of rule and conquest are also prominent. Yet these annals do more than just prefigure later developments, in fact, they relate key events from Hebrew, Christian, and Roman narratives at the points at which they intersect with each other and drive the centre of

⁷⁶³ ASC, 3, 12, 26, 45, 71.

⁷⁶⁴ ASC, 60 B.C., 1, 16, 26, 39, 44, 47, 70-1, 81, 83, 167, 189, 381, 410, 418, 430, 449.

⁷⁶⁵ ASC, 60 B.C.

⁷⁶⁶ ASC, 47, 189, 381.

⁷⁶⁷ ASC, 418.

⁷⁶⁸ As made by N. Howe, ‘Rome: capital of Anglo-Saxon England’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34 (2004), 150.

⁷⁶⁸ ASC, 1-2, 30, 33-5, 44-5, 62-3,

⁷⁶⁹ ASC, 167, 430.

divine history westwards. In the universal prologue, we see Christ's life and death within the context of those who ruled the Jews, the movement of Peter to Rome via Antioch and his subsequent death there with Paul, and Titus' forcible removal of the Jews and Jerusalem from universal history. This is all plotted within a wider Rome-centred framework of imperial successions. Again, this vision is more similar to Bede's reading of universal history than that of Orosius, by which I mean that it resembles a conventional Eusebius-Jerome style chronicle which exhibits a special concern for the British past. Indeed, Roman involvement in Britain is plotted alongside these wider themes – conquering, building walls, and then burying their treasure and leaving – and this served to link the island into the wider events of providential history which were placed in a Roman framework.

We must now return to the annal for 449 with which the chapter began. For this annal, having related the succession and reign lengths of Mauritius and Valentinus [*recte* Marcian and Valentinian III], stated that '*in their days*, Hengest and Horsa, invited by Vortigern, king of the Britons, came to Britain.'⁷⁷⁰ Here, the rare temporal linkage '*in their days (on hiera dagum)*' anchors the *Adventus Saxonum* to the imperial framework of the universal prologue and, in so doing, locates the common stock's insular vision of Anglo-Saxon history within the universal Christian past. The Anglo-Saxons came to occupy an island that had been part of the Roman Empire which, in the universal prologue, presides over and participates in the central moments of the Christian past, and their arrival on that island is placed in this Roman framework. Anglo-Saxon and Imperial pasts do not overlap in the sense of war and conquest and, perhaps because of this, Rome acts as the hinge between the insular past and the deeper past of Christ, apostles, and emperors. With this annal, we move from the general to the particular, yet subsequent

⁷⁷⁰ ASC, 449 ABC.

involvement with Rome reinforces the fact that the local Anglo-Saxon past is located in a wider flow of Christian history. Despite the primarily insular and royal nature of the common stock's vision, its location of the foundations of Anglo-Saxon history in the universal past signals a desire not for uniqueness but, like Bede and like Alfred, for inclusion in wider narratives.

Conclusions

The Anglo-Saxons occupied a post-Roman landscape and from the conversion, if not earlier, they seem to have understood this fact. Perceptions of Roman remains lay at the heart of initial ideas about the Roman past, but with Christianity came Latin texts and access to a wide range of information on imperial and papal history. In the ninth century, such knowledge had declined from its eighth-century peak, though it is clear that Alfredian translators and compilers of the 'common stock' could use a range of historical texts, and the early-ninth-century scribe of Vespasian B.vi was able to list information about Roman and Jewish history. Anglo-Saxon writers imagined the Roman past in differing ways. Despite giving Rome a central role in Christian history, Bede's attitude to Roman history is best characterised as neutral, something which contrasts with the ideas in Alfred's reign. For the translator of the *Old English Boethius*, imperial Rome was an age of rights and privileges, guaranteed by the emperor but occasionally subverted by figures such as Nero. In the *Old English Orosius*, however, Roman history was an age of unparalleled misery and suffering, something partly but not completely ameliorated by

the advent of Christ. These writers understood the basic facts, if not always the detail of Roman history, clearly distinguishing, for example, between imperial Rome and post-Roman Italy, and the surviving eastern portion of the Empire.

In linking their own past to that of Rome, Anglo-Saxon writers not only narrated the role of that city in their history, but sought to deal with the fact that, while they occupied a post-Roman territory, they were not part of the universal Christian past. Their history in Britain only began in 449 and their Christian history in 596; they were latecomers on the margins, far from the chronological and geographic centres of the wider past. Bede, in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, told the story of how Rome established the English church, but also how the Anglo-Saxons – and through them the Picts and Irish – came to be included in the unity of the universal church. The *Historia ecclesiastica* appears to have been widely read among churchmen at the start of the ninth century, although other texts suggest that clerics were also thinking about their historic links to the Roman past by doing more than just reading Bede. It was translated in the late ninth century and, while the theological narrative of unity was dropped, the text still recounted the conversion from Rome and the earlier links of Britain to the wider Rome past.

Alfred's reign also saw the composition of texts which re-imagined the links between the English and wider Rome-centric pasts. The king envisioned the transmission of scripture and Law as moving from narrow Hebrew beginnings to spread, along with Christianity, to all peoples, through the agency of Christ and the apostles. Imperial Rome provided both the context and a vehicle for this expansion. Yet in failing to translate scripture into their vernacular, the *Angelcynn* remained outside the unity of these Christian peoples, with whom they shared a common history in terms of Christian lawgiving. Most significantly, by prefacing its insular vision with a 'universal prologue', the common stock sought to locate its vision of the Anglo-Saxon past in the deeper and interrelated

narratives of Roman and Christian history. Despite the differing character and purposes of these visions, late-ninth-century writers, like Bede, employed their links to Rome and Rome-centric narratives as a means of placing their history in a wider context. They did not wish to be unique or 'chosen', merely to be included in the wider movements of Christian history.

Chapter 5

Rome and Anglo-Saxon Geographical Understanding

Ninth-century Anglo-Saxon writers positioned their own past relative to the wider histories of imperial and papal Rome, using the city and its past as a means of locating themselves in time. This chronological location poses a series of further questions about how these writers located themselves spatially. Principally, how did they conceive of the spatial configuration of the world beyond Britain? Where did they place the city that had played an integral role in the history of their island and church, and that continued to influence Anglo-Saxon religious and political life? And did they locate themselves relative to it? This chapter seeks to answer these questions, exploring how ninth-century Anglo-Saxons imagined their geographical relationship to Rome. Indeed, we have some reason to think that Rome may have been vital to Anglo-Saxon ideas about the layout of the world for, as with historical writing, the geographical ideas inherited by the Anglo-Saxons had been formulated in a Mediterranean world dominated by imperial Rome. Examining how these ideas were received, interpreted, and redeployed may tell us much not only about Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Rome, but also about the nature of Anglo-Saxon geographical understanding.

Early medieval geography is not a straightforward subject. The term *geographia* was rarely used in Latin texts of the period, and alternatives like *cosmographia* and *chorographia* are scarcely more common.⁷⁷¹ Similarly, while the Anglo-Saxons had their

⁷⁷¹ N. Lozovsky, "*The Earth is our Books*": *Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400-1000* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), pp. 8-9; and A. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 6.

own cosmological and spatial terminologies, there was no Old English term equivalent to ‘geography’ and its cognates.⁷⁷² This linguistic void reflects the peculiar nature of geographical knowledge in this period; geography was not a discrete genre or discipline, in a sense early medieval geography did not exist.⁷⁷³ That does not, however, mean that what we might call geographical knowledge did not exist, or that early medieval writers did not possess a ‘geographical understanding’ of the world and the interrelation of its parts. Rather, such knowledge was spread across a wide range of genres, and was employed in areas such as exegesis, history and computus. Within early medieval geographical understanding, classical and late Antique ideas were dominant, as Lozovsky has argued, ‘writers were mainly concerned with constructing a world image that corresponded to the biblical and classical picture rather than contemporary reality.’⁷⁷⁴ Despite this dominance, early medieval authors did not simply create static and unchanging reproductions of classical *orbis descriptio* but, as we will see, they employed geographical knowledge for their own immediate aims and, in rare cases, revised and clarified the inherited picture.

Occupying the margins: Britain in the world before the reign of Alfred

Writing to Pope Leo III in 798 about various matters, King Coenwulf of Mercia gave thanks that God had seen fit to replace the late Pope Hadrian with a suitable candidate,

⁷⁷² See G. Roy, ‘The Anglo-Saxons and the shape of the world’, in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, eds. J. Roberts and J. Nelson (Exeter, 2000), pp. 461-71; and F. Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest: Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 19-21.

⁷⁷³ P. Gautier Dalché, ‘Principes et modes de la représentation de l’espace géographique durant le haut moyen âge’, *Settimane* 50 (2003), 117-50, at 119; and Lozovsky, *Geographical Knowledge*, pp. 3-10.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 152; this point is often noted.

stressing that ‘we, who dwell at the end of the world’ rejoice more than anyone else ‘because whence the apostolic dignity came to you, thence came to us the truth of faith’.⁷⁷⁵ Beyond its sophisticated evocation of Anglo-papal common ground, this royal statement reveals an interesting geographical self-perception. Coenwulf, or those literate men who wrote his letters, thought of themselves as dwelling at ‘the end of the world (*extremitas orbis tenet*)’. Literally, they saw themselves as occupying an extremity, an edge, a margin. This representation poses the interesting question of why a powerful king communicating with the pope would allow himself to be portrayed as peripheral. Indeed, why was such marginality used to stress a special relationship between the centre and its furthest periphery? Answering such questions takes us to the heart of Anglo-Saxon geographical perceptions at the start of the ninth century, helping us understand how they viewed their position in the world and the importance of Rome in shaping this perception. In order to answer these questions, however, it is necessary to understand the classical, Late Antique, and insular heritage upon which Coenwulf’s scribes were able to draw.

The notion that Britain was situated at the end of the world was no insular innovation, but a staple feature of early-medieval thought that had its roots in classical Greek and Roman geography.⁷⁷⁶ The remote and liminal status of Britain was most succinctly expressed in Virgil’s description of it as ‘thoroughly cut off from the whole world’ and Catullus’ mention of ‘the horrible Britons, remotest of men’.⁷⁷⁷ Horace too placed Britain at the world’s western edge, seeing the ability to subdue the region – and thus rule the known world, the *oikoumene* – as glorifying Rome and the extent of its power.⁷⁷⁸ Of course Horace was, like his fellow poets, looking outwards from Rome at territories conquered

⁷⁷⁵ Appendix 2:2; on this letter see chapter one, pp. 41-2, and three pp. 129-31, 161-3.

⁷⁷⁶ P. Stewart, ‘Inventing Britain: the Roman creation and adaptation of an image’, *Britannia* 26 (1995), 1-11.

⁷⁷⁷ Virgil, *Eclogues*, 1.66, ed. R. Coleman (Cambridge, 1977), p. 45; Catullus, *Carmina*, XI, ed. and trans. F. Cornish, (rev. edn, Cambridge, MA, 1988), ll. 11-2.

⁷⁷⁸ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, I.21, 35, III.5; 7.7, ed. and trans. N. Rudd (Cambridge, MA, 2004), pp. 64-5, 88-9, 158-9, 288-91.

and being conquered, and this triumphal geography is well expressed in his ode to Augustus' stepsons. Here, he stated how 'the ever-present defender of Italy and Rome, mistress of the world' achieved dominion over previously unconquerable peoples, also stating how the Nile, Tigris, Danube and 'the monster-teeming Ocean that roars at the distant Britons' all obey him.⁷⁷⁹ In this poem, Augustus controls the east, the west, the major waterways of the different continents, and the ocean that was thought to encircle them all, in which Britain was located. Barbarous, uncivilized, and distant, Britain was peripheral to a world centred on Rome, but its extremity also gave it a place in this worldview, as the edge.

Classical geographical texts flesh out the allusions of the poets with detail, elaborating the system which underpinned Britain's peripheral status. Like his contemporaries, the Greek geographer Strabo (63-4 BC – c.24 AD) saw the world as divided into the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Libya (Africa), with this landmass encircled by the Ocean and penetrated by four gulfs or seas, the largest being the Mediterranean.⁷⁸⁰ He denied the existence of Thule as the most north-westerly island, using Britain as a waypoint in his measurements of the world and seeing it as surpassed only by Ierne (Ireland), which provided a cold, miserable and savage limit to 'our inhabited world'.⁷⁸¹ Triangular, with its longest side mirroring the coast of Celtica (Gaul), Britain was linked to mainland Europe. Yet it remained marginal and inhabited by people with barbaric customs, and Strabo deemed it not worth the effort of complete Roman conquest.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁹ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, IV.14, ed. and trans. Rudd, pp. 254-9.

⁷⁸⁰ Strabo, *Geographica*, 2.5.13-18, ed. and trans. H. Jones, *The Geography of Strabo* (8 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1931-49), I, 455-69.

⁷⁸¹ Strabo, *Geographica*, 1.4.2-4, 2.5.7-8, ed. and trans. Jones, I, 232-7, 440-7.

⁷⁸² Strabo, *Geographica*, 2.5.8, 4.5.1-5, ed. and trans. Jones, I, 444-7, II, 253-63; Strabo's account of Britain owes something to Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, a text which helped bring Britain into the Roman ambit. See Caesar, *De bello Gallico*, V.8-23, ed. and trans. H. Edwards, *Caesar: The Gallic War* (Cambridge, MA, 1917), pp. 242-63.

In a work which would have a much greater impact on Anglo-Saxon thought, Pliny (23-79 AD) similarly elaborated a theory of three continents in his *Historia naturalis*, with the river Tanais (Don) dividing Europe from Asia and the Nile doing the same for Africa.⁷⁸³ Like Strabo, Pliny's geography was centred on Rome, celebrating 'the head of the world (*Roma terrarum caput*)' and Italy as the place which would 'give mankind civilization, and in a word become throughout the world the single *patria* of all the races.'⁷⁸⁴ Britain lay far from this glorious country among the northern islands facing mainland Europe 'across a wide channel'.⁷⁸⁵ It had been partially explored by Roman forces, and was surrounded by a plethora of other islands, most remote of which was Thule, one day's sail from the frozen sea. Again separated and in the northern ocean, the partially-explored Britain was not quite at the edge where, in this case, Thule lay.

Also read in Anglo-Saxon England and largely based on Pliny, Solinus' *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* (c. 3-4th century AD) sketched world geography.⁷⁸⁶ Consciously beginning at 'the head of the world (*caput orbis*)', Solinus' description of Britain – which he saw as 'almost another world' – focussed more on the barbarity of the Irish and the other islands to 'farthest Thule (*ultima Thyle*)'.⁷⁸⁷ Perhaps because it was now part of the empire, Solinus, like Pliny, concentrated more on the islands surrounding Britain than Britain itself. These works create geographies which centre Rome while placing Britain on the periphery close to the inhospitable boundary islands of Thule or Ierne. Unlike

⁷⁸³ Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, III.i.3-4, ed. and trans. H. Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History* (10 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1938-63), II, 4-5. For a list of MSS and citations of Pliny, see M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), p. 325.

⁷⁸⁴ Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, III.v. 38-40, ed. and trans. Rackham, II, 30-3; on Pliny's 'triumphal geography' see T. Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: the Empire in Encyclopaedia* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 129-64.

⁷⁸⁵ Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, IV, xvi, 102-4, ed. and trans. Rackham, II, 196-9. On Thule and its meanings for Roman writers, see J. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton, NJ, 1992), 156-71.

⁷⁸⁶ For MSS of Solinus and quotations of him by Anglo-Saxon writers, see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 333.

⁷⁸⁷ Solinus, prol., xxii, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, ed. T. Mommsen (Berlin, 1895), p. 2, 100-3.

poetic representations, Britain is not right on the edge but still on the margin, remaining barbarous and distant from the centre of civilisation, with yet more remote places beyond.

Britain retained its place among the earth's peripheral regions in late Antiquity. In his *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (composed c.410-39), the pagan writer Martianus Capella included a lengthy geographical description, principally based on Pliny and Solinus. As for Britain, Capella located this on the 'farther borders of Aquitania and Europe', giving some brief details before moving on to Thule 'the last of all the islands'.⁷⁸⁸ Despite its later influence, Capella's text had little impact on pre-tenth-century England, in sharp contrast to the work of his near-contemporary Orosius, whose *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VI* was widely read, cited and copied.⁷⁸⁹ Orosius placed an account of world geography at the start of his *Historia*, relating both the continents and the countries within them in an unconventional order.⁷⁹⁰ Orosius' description of Britain exhibits the conventional concern with measurements and crossing points, but his statement that the Orkneys are to be found 'in the rear [of Britian], whence it lies open in a limitless ocean (*a tergo autem unde oceano infinito*)' is less usual. Ireland is placed to the South between Britain and Spain while Thule is Northwest, separated from the other islands by an 'indefinite space (*infinitum*)'.⁷⁹¹ By thus losing Thule to infinity and Ireland to the South, Orosius stripped away the islands which keep Britain away from the edge, leaving it not just peripheral but open to 'an infinite ocean'.

⁷⁸⁸ Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, VI.666, ed. J. Willis, *Martianus Capella* (Leipzig, 1983), p. 234; trans. W. Stahl and R. Johnson, *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts* (2 vols., New York, 1971-7), II, 249.

⁷⁸⁹ On the evidence for *De nuptiis* in England, see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 321; compare this with the evidence for Orosius in *ibid.*, p. 323. See Lozovsky, *Geographical Knowledge*, pp. 113-39, on Capella's influence and the glossing tradition.

⁷⁹⁰ OH, pp. 9-40; pp. 7-20. The best discussion of this geography is Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 35-99; see also, Lozovsky, *Geographical Knowledge*, pp. 69-73; and Y. Janvier, *La Géographie d'Orose* (Paris, 1982), esp. 145-220.

⁷⁹¹ OH, I.2, pp. 28-30; p. 16.

Isidore of Seville (c.560-636) introduced an overtly Christian element into geography in book fourteen of his *Etymologiae*, another work which was to have a tangible impact on Anglo-Saxon writers.⁷⁹² Following Orosius' reordered description of continents, Isidore placed Asia first and located the Edenic Paradise, although unreachable by humankind, within its eastern parts. Not just the locus of the earthly paradise, Asia also contained Jerusalem and most of the places mentioned in the biblical narrative.⁷⁹³ Centuries before, Strabo and Pliny had described Europe first and portrayed it as superior to the other two continents, Pliny calling it 'by far the loveliest portion of the earth' and stating that it occupied half of the world, whereas, in Isidore, Asia now occupied the eastern half of the globe, with Europe reduced to a quarter and placed after it.⁷⁹⁴ A further consequence of this Christian challenge to classical Euro-centrism was the partial decentring of Rome, something exacerbated by the puncturing of narratives of imperial triumphalism. For, although Isidore still noted that Italy 'is the most beautiful land in all respects' and the importance of Rome is clear in various parts of his work, geography was no longer centred exclusively on Rome.⁷⁹⁵ Britain was again placed on the very edge of existence; treated not as part of Europe but in the separate category of islands; Isidore asserted that it was 'cut off from the whole globe by the intervening sea'.⁷⁹⁶ As in Solinus, Britain is almost another world and the discussion of the associated smaller islands and even *Thyle ultima*, off to the North West, does not serve to modify this sense of extreme isolation.

⁷⁹² On Isidore's geography, see Lozovsky, *Geographical Knowledge*, pp. 53-5, 103-13; see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 311, on the extensive evidence for the *Etymologiae* in England.

⁷⁹³ Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIV.iii.1-4, and 16-27, ed. W. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum* (2 vols, Oxford, 1911), II; trans. S. Barney, W. Lewis, J. Beach and O. Berghof, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 285-7.

⁷⁹⁴ Strabo, *Geographica*, 2.5.26, ed. and trans. Jones, I, 484-5; Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, III.i. 5, ed. and trans. Rackham, II, 4-5; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIV.ii-iv, ed. Lindsay, II; trans. Barney *et al.*, p. 285-92.

⁷⁹⁵ Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIV.iv.18-24, ed. Lindsay, II; trans. Barney *et al.*, p. 291; this decentring was underway in Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis*, IV.636-8, ed. Willis, p. 221; trans. Stahl and Johnson, p. 235.

⁷⁹⁶ Isidore, *Etymologiae*, IX.ii.102, XIV.vi.2-6, ed. Lindsay, II; trans. Barney *et al.*, p. 198, 294.

Isidore's geography represents a reorientation of classical world-layout in line with the *loci* of the Christian past, but others Christianised geography in different ways, adding an exegetical dimension. It has often been noted how, in his *De excidio Britanniae*, the British writer Gildas (fl. 5th-6th cent.) described the conversion of the Britons as the coming of the sun of Christ 'to an island numb with chill ice and far removed, as in a remote nook of the world, from the visible sun'.⁷⁹⁷ Combining meteorological metaphor with geographical remoteness, Gildas evoked Britain's marginality as distance from the illuminating rays of the church. Other insular writers exploited their peripheral status to make different spiritual points. Writing to Pope Boniface IV in 613, Columbanus, then in Milan, warned the pontiff about the tempest which threatened to sink the church, stating that 'we Irish, inhabitants of the world's edge' had always maintained complete orthodoxy, and that this gave him the confidence to criticise and advise the pope, whereas, writing about the Irish Paschal controversy around 632, Cummmian compared the united observances of the universal church to those of 'an insignificant group of Britons and Irish who are almost at the end of the earth, and, if I may say so, but pimples on the face of the earth'.⁷⁹⁸ For Columbanus, residing on the edge meant distance from the schisms and upsets occurring in the world's centres, giving a purity of faith which allowed one to criticise even the pope. Yet for Cummmian this marginality combined with incorrect observances to make the people in question a blemish.

Britain's location on the imaginative boundaries of the classical, late antique and early medieval world has not gone unnoticed by scholars, who have turned their attention to

⁷⁹⁷ Gildas, *De excidio Britannae*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom, *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works* (London, 1978) ch. 8.

⁷⁹⁸ Columbanus, *Epistolae*, V.3, ed. and trans. G. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera* (Dublin, 1957), pp. 38-9, see also V.8, pp. 44-5, and V.11, pp. 48-51. Cummmian, *De controversia paschal*, Ll. 107-10, ed. and trans. M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (Toronto, 1988), pp. 72-5; and see D. Bracken, 'Juniors teaching elders: Columbanus, Rome, ad spiritual authority', in *Roma Felix – Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, eds. É. Ó Carragáin and C. Neumann de Vegvar (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 254-5.

how the Anglo-Saxons dealt with this inherited positioning. Many have argued, with Bridges, that the Anglo-Saxons cannot have felt this ‘cosmic liminality’ and so reacted against it.⁷⁹⁹ Howe, on the other hand, has argued that certain Anglo-Saxon authors accepted this position which gave them a certain status.⁸⁰⁰ Yet, Anglo-Saxon geographical perception may not have been a simple case of accepting or questioning inherited paradigms. As we have seen, there were a range of texts which writers could employ. Some, such as Pliny, portrayed Britain as a known if distant entity surrounded by an archipelago of small lesser known islands ending in farthest Thule, while others, like Orosius, stripped away these protective *insulae* to place Britain on the edge. Despite the static nature of late antique and early medieval geography, no two descriptions of Britain and its surroundings are quite the same.⁸⁰¹ What is more, as other insular writers showed, marginality could be employed to make a range of spiritual points. The geographical understanding inherited by the Anglo-Saxons was not monolithic, not something to be simply accepted or rejected. While texts such as Pliny and Orosius provided the lenses through which world geography was viewed, the variety of these lenses gave a scope for creativity among those few Anglo-Saxon writers who contemplated the position of Britain in the world.

Early-medieval geography was not a cohesive body of knowledge, rather, writing that we might call geographical or that attempted to describe the layout of the world was scattered

⁷⁹⁹ M. Bridges, ‘Of myths and maps: the Anglo-Saxon cosmographer’s Europe’, in *Writing and Culture*, ed. B. Engler (Tübingen, 1992), pp. 64-89, at 72; N. Discenza, ‘A map of the universe: geography and cosmology in the programme of Alfred the Great’, in *Conversion and Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. C. Karkov and N. Howe (Tempe, AZ, 2006), pp. 83-108; and Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*, pp. 126-7; and eadem, ‘Centrality, marginality and distance: Britain’s changing location on the map of the world’, in *The Space of English*, eds. D. Spurr and C. Tschichold (Tübingen, 2005), pp. 51-68.

⁸⁰⁰ N. Howe, ‘An angle on this earth: sense of place in Anglo-Saxon England’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 82.1 (2000), 7-9; idem, ‘Rome: capital of Anglo-Saxon England’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.1 (2004), 151-2, idem, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (New Haven, CT, 2008), pp. 132-7.

⁸⁰¹ Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*, pp. 119-25, recognises there were differing classical portrayals of Britain.

throughout a range of medieval genres. This is particularly true of Anglo-Saxon England, from where there survive no stand-alone *orbis descriptio* or cosmological texts equivalent to the continental writings of the anonymous Ravenna Cosmographer or the Irishman Dicuil. One text with a geographical element was Bede's *De locis sanctis*, a guide to the location and layout of significant Christian sites in the Holy Land, largely based on a text of the same name by Adomnan.⁸⁰² Illuminating the places of scripture for an audience with little hope of ever seeing them, this text aided interpretation and understanding of the Bible. Geographical and cosmographical elements also appeared in Bede's major computistical work, *De temporum ratione*, where he discussed the shape, climate, and position of the earth as a means to correctly calculating Christian time. At one point, concerned with explaining the differing lengths of days, Bede quoted verbatim passages of Pliny which place Britain far to the north exceeded only by Thule, and marginal relative to Pliny's viewpoint.⁸⁰³ Geographical knowledge thus served the monastic curriculum, where it illuminated scripture and the Christian calendar.⁸⁰⁴ Other texts reveal a matter-of-fact understanding of British and European geography. Indeed, charters, letters, and texts such as the list of saints' resting places known as '*Secgan*' involved a clear sense of location as part of their function, but rarely grappled with the classical inheritance or exploited the exegetical and rhetorical potential of geography.⁸⁰⁵

Geographical information appears most frequently in Anglo-Saxon histories and hagiography, texts concerned with the past. In a recent study, Merrills established the conceptual interdependence of history and geography, arguing that the two exist in

⁸⁰² Bede, *De locis sanctis*, ed. J. Fraipont, *Itineraria et alia Geographica*, CCSL 175 (1965), 251-80; trans. W. Trent Foley, in *Bede: a Biblical Miscellany* (Liverpool, 1999), pp. 5-25; for an interpretation of this text see Howe, *Writing the Map*, pp. 137-41.

⁸⁰³ *DTR*, 31-3, 376-386; pp. 89-96.

⁸⁰⁴ On geography and the Christian curriculum, see Lozovsky, *Geographical Knowledge*, pp. 35-67, 102-38.

⁸⁰⁵ '*Secgan*', ed. F. Liebermann, *Die Heiligen Englands* (Hannover, 1889), pp. 9-19; on which see D. Rollason, 'Lists of saints' resting-places in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 7 (1978), 61-93.

symbiosis and are governed by common assumptions.⁸⁰⁶ The Anglo-Saxon material supports such an argument, and it is through a concern to locate the past that histories and hagiographies demonstrate their inherited geographical knowledge. Writing on St Bartholomew, for example, Aldhelm described India as ‘the last of the lands of the earth, which the writings in books divide up into three parts.’⁸⁰⁷ Later, the *Old English Martyrology* – a hagiographical compendium probably compiled in the early ninth century – placed St Anthony ‘at the utmost end of the earth’s sphere in the desert of Egypt’, described India as ‘the outmost of all countries’ with the encircling Ocean to one side of it, and located Spain ‘in the western part of the world near the setting of the sun’.⁸⁰⁸ Interestingly, while it establishes the limits of the known world in the earth’s southern end and its eastern and westernmost landmasses, the text identifies no northern limit. Furthermore, the compiler mentioned Britain and Ireland, but chose not to repeat inherited views on its remote position; neither marginalising nor centring his homeland. One could take the martyrologist’s reticence as rejection of Britain’s peripheral location or, more plausibly, as evidence that he did not need to explain the position of his island to a vernacular audience unfamiliar with the position of India. Britain’s inherited marginality appears in other texts such as Stephanus’ *Vita Wilfridi*, where he relates that the young Wilfrid first ‘came to Rome “from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom” of the rulers of the world.’⁸⁰⁹ Placing Britain on the edge, Stephanus exploits a Christianised classical geography to create a centre-periphery dichotomy. This dichotomy plays a crucial role in his justification of the controversial bishop, as Wilfrid acts as an agent of the centre in the periphery. Elsewhere, in the *Historia ecclesiastica*,

⁸⁰⁶ Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 7-20; and Lozovsky, *Geographical Knowledge*, pp. 68-101.

⁸⁰⁷ Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica*, iv.9, ed. R. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH Auct. ant. XV (Berlin, 1919), 28; trans. M. Lapidge and J. Rosier, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works* (Woodbridge, 1985), p. 55.

⁸⁰⁸ *OEM*, II, nos. 22, 135, 162 ; pp. 21-3, 129, 151-3.

⁸⁰⁹ *VW*, 5; quoting Matthew 12:42.

Bede related the death of the West-Saxon king Caedwalla in Rome, whence he had come ‘from the very ends of the earth (*a finibus terrae*)’ drawn by the body of Peter.⁸¹⁰ Here the use of Britain’s inherited marginal position occurs, as with Stephanus, in the context of someone travelling to Rome, except here the great distance travelled is evidence of great devotion.

Both Stephanus and Bede employed Britain’s inherited geographical position in its most pithy ‘ends of the earth’ formulation to make rhetorical points, in a manner similar to Cummian and Columbanus. To glimpse more extensive ideas, we must examine the geographical dynamics of historical – and especially universal – visions, something we touched on in the previous chapter. An example of this is Alcuin’s poem on the destruction of Lindisfarne in 793 where, meditating upon worldly unpredictability and transience, he describes the collapse of kingdoms ‘throughout the four corners of the earth’, listing the destruction of the Chaldean, Persian, and Macedonian realms, and saying that ‘Of Rome, capital and wonder of the world, golden Rome, only a barbarous ruin now remains.’⁸¹¹ He also notes the destruction of Jerusalem, the more recent sufferings of Gaul and Italy, and a contemporary situation where Asia, Spain, and Africa ‘the third part of the great world’ are subject to pagans.⁸¹² Alcuin thus places Lindisfarne in a world where, since the Fall, war and cruelty are constant and eclipse all great things. In doing so, he links the succession of empires with its east-west dynamic to a version of the classical threefold continental division, used to outline the shape of recent miseries.

⁸¹⁰ *HE*, v.7.

⁸¹¹ Alcuin, *Poetae*, ll.29-40, ed. and trans. P. Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance* (London, 1985), no. 10; Alcuin was drawing on Jerome’s exegesis of Daniel 2.31-41, not, as Godman argues, Orosius; see Jerome, *Commentariorum in Daniele libri III*, ed. F. Glorie, *Hieronymi Opera Exegetica* vol. V, CCSL 75A (Turnhout, 1964), 793-7; cf. M. Allen, ‘Universal History 3000-1000: origins and western developments’, in *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 24-6; the ‘four corners’ motif comes from Isaiah 11:2 (*a quator plagis terrae*) and Revelation 7:1 and 20:8 (*quator angulos terrae*) and was also widely used by Bede.

⁸¹² Alcuin, *Poetae*, ll. 41-84, ed. and trans. Godman, no. 10.

The resulting combination may not be a consistent picture of world geography and history, but it did serve his poetic and rhetorical purpose.

In the works of Bede we find a more extensive geo-historical vision than that later deployed by Alcuin. As outlined in the last chapter, Bede's abstract idea of the church influenced his understanding of history, and both possessed an important geographical dimension. He saw the church spreading from Jews to gentiles throughout the 'four corners of the world', by the agency of apostles and apostolic men, but maintaining an essential unity through obedience to a single doctrine.⁸¹³ In Bede's work of universal history, the *Chronica maiora*, this spread of the church gained a clear east-west dynamic. Within a wider vision that shifts from the kingdoms of the east, through the Mediterranean region, to a largely western focus, Bede shifted the locus of providential history from Jerusalem to Rome, a process also visible in his earlier commentary on Acts.⁸¹⁴ Having destroyed the Jews and Jerusalem, Rome became the centre of religious history in the sixth world age.⁸¹⁵ The geography of this history continued to shift westwards in this age, as Britain features increasingly in the text and the Anglo-Saxons begin to contribute to Christian history.⁸¹⁶ Bede's geo-historical vision saw the church spreading throughout the world, from East to West, from Jew to gentile, and from Rome to Britain.

The *Historia ecclesiastica* fleshed out the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons first described by Bede in the *Chronica*, also recounting how the Irish and Picts came to be included in

⁸¹³ See chapter four, pp. 179-80; on the patristic foundations of Bede's vision and its geographic dynamic, see J. O'Reilly, 'Islands and idols at the ends of the earth: exegesis and conversion in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*', in *Bède le Vénérable entre Tradition et Postérité*, eds. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin, and O. Szerwiniack (Lille, 2005), pp. 119-24.

⁸¹⁴ See chapter four, pp. 180-2; and Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, ed. M. Laistner, *Beda Opera Exegetica vol. IV*, CCSL 121 (Turnhout, 1960), 3-99; trans. L. Martin, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, (Kalamazoo, MI, 1989), especially chapters 10.7, 23:12, 25:11, and 28.31a-b.

⁸¹⁵ *DTR*, 66, 494-500; pp. 194-201.

⁸¹⁶ *DTR*, 66, 512-534; pp. 216-36.

the unity of the universal church.⁸¹⁷ Inspired by Orosius, the first chapter of the *Historia* consists of an introduction to the geography and ethnography of Britain and Ireland. A tapestry of quotations from Pliny, Solinus, Gildas, and Orosius, the introduction contains all the features of a classical or late antique geography, locating the island vis-à-vis the European mainland, detailing the best crossing points and the island's measurements, and also mentioning the surrounding islands.⁸¹⁸ Bede placed Britain in a remote position, locating it in the encircling Ocean 'at a considerable distance (*multo intervallo*)' from the mainland and so far north it was 'almost under the north pole'.⁸¹⁹ Despite placing the Orkneys behind Britain 'where it lies open to the boundless Ocean (*Oceano infinito*)', they do little to shield the island, instead helping to clarify its extreme position.⁸²⁰ Bede also placed Ireland to the west of Britain stretching south toward Spain, but held back mention of it until later in the section to prevent it comprising Britain's marginality. It is, however, the deliberate exclusion of Thule – which appears elsewhere in Bede's writings – that suggests he wished to promote Britain's peripheral location.⁸²¹

While this positioning of Britain on the edge of the world was only one aspect of a long, complex, and 'deliberately unstable' introductory chapter, it plays an important part in Bede's vision of history.⁸²² Merrills has argued that geographical introductions not only locate history, but that they also reflect and embody the author's ideas.⁸²³ Bede's description of Britain and Ireland certainly illuminates the stage on which subsequent

⁸¹⁷ See chapter four, pp. 184-6; and see the excellent work of Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 229-309; and O'Reilly, 'Islands and idols', pp. 119-45; the cartographic perspective of D. Speed, 'Bede's mapping of England', in *Travel and Travellers from Bede to Dampier*, ed. G. Barnes (Newcastle, 2005), 9-23, is unconvincing; on the limited question of Bede and maps, see P. Harvey, *Maps in the Age of Bede* (Jarrow Lecture, 2006), 1-15.

⁸¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion, see Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 249-68; Howe, *Writing the Map*, p. 133, notes that the passage views Britain from a Roman/European perspective.

⁸¹⁹ *HE*, i.1.

⁸²⁰ *HE*, i.1.

⁸²¹ *HE*, i.1; this is noted by Merrills, *Geography and History*, pp. 254-7; and Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*, pp. 127-9.

⁸²² Merrills, *Geography and History*, pp. 247-8, 307-8.

⁸²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7, and *passim*.

events will occur, but it also embodies a key element in his universal geo-history. The placing of Britain on the world's westernmost edge allows his subsequent narrative to demonstrate the total reach of the church and the extension of the gospel to the farthest corners of the world. It allows Bede's exegetical vision and its historicised east-west dynamic to be realised in the subsequent story of conversion. The geographical element in Bede's universal vision depended more upon Christian histories – such as Orosius and Eusebius-Jerome – than on classical geographies. Yet, he used the classical and late antique geographical inheritance to place Britain on the margins, a location which served his wider ideas.⁸²⁴ Like insular writers before him, Bede did not simply accept or reject inherited geography; he used it to make a larger point about the locus of the divine in time and space. If he was upset at being relegated to the margins of the world, he did not show it in his writings.

To return, then, to Coenwulf's 798 letter to Pope Leo, we have come to understand why the king might see himself as an occupant of the world's periphery and how such a position could be used to rhetorical effect. In this instance Coenwulf and his scribes used their marginality to stress a special relationship with Rome, the superlative distance over which the Anglo-papal relationship was forged demonstrating its special nature. The letter also, like other texts, reveals something of a centre-periphery dynamic, and this dichotomy has often been used in discussions of the Anglo-Roman relationship. Britain was certainly a periphery, but if Rome was a centre, to what extent was it *the* centre of pre-Alfredian geographical perception?

Nicholas Howe has argued that from the conversion onwards Rome was the 'capital' of Anglo-Saxon England. His argument certainly recognises the importance of the city in Anglo-Saxon mentalities, but does little to help us understand the precise nature of its

⁸²⁴ See also his use of hierarchical geography at the synod of Whitby, *HE*, iii.25.

geographical position.⁸²⁵ In the Rome-centric geographies of Pliny and Solinus, the city was ‘*caput orbis*’ – the head of the world – a capital of sorts. Anglo-Saxon writers repeated this opinion, the Whitby *Vita Gregorii* calling Rome ‘the head of cities and mistress of the world (*Rome que urbium caput est orbisque domina*)’, and Alcuin termed it the ‘head and wonder of the world (*caput mundi, mundi decus*)’.⁸²⁶ Yet both were referring to Rome in a historic context, and others saw the city, more properly, as ‘formerly mistress of the whole world’ (*totius quondam orbis domina*)’.⁸²⁷ As the previous chapter showed, Anglo-Saxons knew of the empire and its eclipse, but this earthly force had been replaced by a superlative saintly and pre-eminent spiritual power, evident in the common designation as ‘the threshold of the apostles (*limina apostolorum*)’. Still, neither they nor the classical geographers made the case for Rome as the geographic centre. This position more naturally fell to Jerusalem, described in Ezekiel as ‘in the midst of peoples (*in medio gentium*)’ and as the ‘navel of the earth (*umbilicus terrae*)’.⁸²⁸ Drawing on Adomnan’s *De locis sanctis*, the *Old English Martyrology* described it as such.⁸²⁹ Yet, as Roberts has argued, the compiler of the *Martyrology* ‘saw Rome as the central focus of Christianity’ and it is by far the most prominent and holiest place in the text.⁸³⁰ For Bede, Jerusalem and the Jews had been rightly destroyed by Titus, and Rome inherited its mantle in the sixth age in his *Chronica*. More broadly, although there was some knowledge of Jerusalem, it generally remained beyond the Anglo-Saxons’ geographical horizons.⁸³¹ On the other hand, Rome was the

⁸²⁵ Howe, ‘Rome: capital’, 147-72.

⁸²⁶ *Vita Gregorii*, ed. and trans. B Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 1968), ch. 28; Alcuin, *Poetae*, l. 37, ed. and trans. Godman, no. 10; I have adjusted both translations.

⁸²⁷ Bede, *Nomina regionum atque locorum de Actibus Apostolorum*, ed. M. Laistner, *Beda Opera Exegetica* vol 4, CCSL 121 (1983), pp. 175.

⁸²⁸ Ezekiel 5:5, 38:12.

⁸²⁹ *Old English Martyrology*, ed. Kotzor, II, no. 111a; trans. Herzfeld, p. 105.

⁸³⁰ J. Roberts, ‘*Fela martyra* ‘many martyrs’: a different view of Orosius’s City’, in *Alfred the Wise*, eds. J. Roberts, J. Nelson, and M. Godden (Cambridge, 1997), p. 157; and see chapter two, pp. 118-23.

⁸³¹ Howe, ‘An angle’, p. 8; the exceptions are *De locis sanctis*, and also Willibald’s journey to the holy land, on which see J. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World 690-900* (Turnhout, 2009), 249-80.

most prominent non-Anglo-Saxon place in almost all texts, and while this prominence did not translate into geographic centrality, I would argue that Rome was the *de facto* centre of the Anglo-Saxons' known and knowable world.

Exploration and geography in the late ninth century

With its educational programme based in vernacular translations, its range of diplomatic and documentary texts, and its other compositions, the reign of Alfred provides fertile ground for an examination of ninth-century Anglo-Saxon geographical understanding. It is not just the greater range of texts which makes this period a profitable area of inquiry, for Alfredian texts demonstrate the most obvious concern with geography since the writings of Bede. The *Old English Orosius*, for example, not only translated a geographically-minded text, but added extra, novel material to the Latin original. Focussing on the *Orosius*, scholars often interpret Alfredian geography as an attempt to re-centre England and lessen the Anglo-Saxons' peripheral position in inherited geography, because Alfred of all Anglo-Saxons cannot have felt marginal.⁸³² The idea of accepting or rejecting inherited geographical understanding is overly simplistic; Anglo-Saxon authors always drew on the classical positioning of Britain to make specific rhetorical or spiritual points, or create wider geo-historical visions. Also, the range of

⁸³² Discenza, 'A map of the universe', pp. 83-108, esp. 83-6; and Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*, pp. 117, 126-42; and eadem, 'Centrality, marginality and distance', p. 52-66, esp. 62. Michelet's more sophisticated argument is rooted in primary texts whereas Discenza relies heavily on unsupported assertions. Both consciously depend on the earlier assertion of Bridges, 'Of myths and maps', p. 72, yet nowhere is the idea that the Anglo-Saxons *cannot* have felt marginal adequately supported by primary evidence, indeed, such evidence often appears to suggest the contrary.

inherited ideas gave authors flexibility as to where Britain and other islands lay, meaning it could be placed on the world's edge, or be shielded from that edge by Ireland and Thule. If anything, the superlative extremity of their geographical position gave the Anglo-Saxons a special status. While we should bear these points in mind when studying Alfredian texts, and avoid basing arguments on what the king can and cannot have felt, the idea of geographical re-centring of the Alfredian court is an attractive one, and merits further consideration.

The court and the world

Alfred's court had an 'international' outlook, something attested in a range of overseas contacts and in the composition of the court itself. While various aspects of the contacts are well studied, the internationalism of the Alfredian court has rarely been fully stressed or thoroughly explored. Nelson has illuminated the Frankish contacts and Carolingian aspects of Alfred's reign in a number of articles, and Pratt has noted a 'broadening of horizons' in the same period accompanied by 'consciously cosmopolitan' cultural exchange.⁸³³ While such conclusions are important, more needs to be done to establish whether Alfred's continental connections had a collective significance and, if so, whether this had any impact on geographical thought and the Anglo-Saxons' notion of their place in the world.

⁸³³ J. Nelson, "'A king across the sea": Alfred in continental perspective', *TRHS* 5th series 36 (1986), 45-68; eadem, 'The Franks and the English in the ninth century reconsidered', in *The Preservation and transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, eds. P. Szarmach and J. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, MI, 1997), pp. 141-58; eadem, 'Alfred's Carolingian contemporaries', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), 293-310; and D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 41.

By the late ninth century, contact with Francia was a long established feature of Anglo-Saxon political life. Alfred himself had passed through the court of the West-Frankish ruler Charles the Bald when on the way to Rome with his father, albeit as an infant. By the 880s, circumstances in Francia were different, as can be seen in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entries for these years which demonstrate a remarkable concern with Frankish affairs. They note the premature deaths of several Carolingian rulers and the eventual partitioning of the empire into five parts, as well as the movements of the viking army in Francia before it returned to England in 892.⁸³⁴ Evidence of the international outlook of the court during these years, the annals also suggest that certain channels existed through which information could travel from Francia to Wessex. The precise nature of these links is uncertain; Alfred was certainly in contact with the West-Frankish church and, through negotiation with Archbishop Fulk of Rheims, he obtained the services of the monk Grimbold around 886.⁸³⁵ It is often supposed that Grimbold transmitted this information to the anonymous compiler, but the tendency to attribute every instance of Frankish contact and influence to him is perhaps a touch reductive.⁸³⁶ Fulk's letter hints at wider Anglo-Frankish contacts and, alongside Grimbold, John the Old Saxon became a member of the royal household, pointing to contacts with eastern Francia.⁸³⁷ Also, Alfred married his daughter Ælfthryth to Baldwin II, Count of Flanders.⁸³⁸ Despite the fragmentation of the Frankish *regna*, then, Alfred's court forged or maintained

⁸³⁴ ASC, 879-92.

⁸³⁵ Fulk's letter to Alfred is edited in D. Whitelock, M. Brett, and C. Brooke, *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, I, A.D. 871-1204* (Oxford, 1981), no. 4; trans. *EHD* 223; and see J. Nelson, "...sicut olim gens Francorum...nunc gens Anglorum": Fulk's letter to Alfred revisited', in *Alfred the Wise*, eds. J. Roberts, J. Nelson, and M. Godden (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 135-44. See also, Asser, ch. 78. On Grimbold, see P. Grierson, 'Grimbold of St Bertin's', *EHR* 55 (1940), 529-61; and J. Bately, 'Grimbold of St Bertin's' *Medium Ævum* 35 (1966), 1-10.

⁸³⁶ Nelson, 'Fulk's letter to Alfred', pp. 138-9; eadem, 'The Franks and the English', p. 148; and eadem, 'Carolingian contemporaries', p. 301, connects Fulk to the information in the *Chronicle*.

⁸³⁷ That Alfred was able to ask for Grimbold by name is indicative of wider contact; on John the Old Saxon, see Asser, chs. 78, 94-7; and also *OEPc*, pp. 6-7; p. 126.

⁸³⁸ *Chronicon Æthelwardi*, prol., ed. and trans. A. Campbell (London, 1962), p. 2.

connections with various parts of Francia, from where a number of scholars were recruited to his household.

Alongside these Frankish connections were, of course, the links between the Alfredian court and Rome explored elsewhere in this thesis. Most notable are the contacts of the 880s, when regular alms-payments were dispatched to Rome carried by members of the elite, and Pope Marinus sent some wood of the cross to Alfred, and also freed the *Schola Saxonum* from tax at the his request.⁸³⁹ Before this, the letter John VIII sent to Archbishop Æthelred of Canterbury in 877-8 reveals that relations between the king and metropolitan had broken down, and that Alfred had contacted the pope about the archbishop and received a letter of rebuke from him.⁸⁴⁰ Anglo-papal contacts were maintained in the 890s and, despite renewed viking activity, there is no reason to suppose that all contact with Rome was lost.⁸⁴¹ Alfred's reign thus saw extensive contacts between the Wessex and Rome which, according to the *Chronicle*, were especially vigorous in the 880s when the vikings were dormant. Indeed, the annals for the 880s are strikingly 'international' in perspective and act as something of a culmination to the 'common stock', where inward problems are solved and attention shifts outwards.

While these Frankish and papal contacts seem to represent a concerted effort by the Alfredian court to act in an 'international' sphere, they can still be viewed as an extension of earlier Anglo-Saxon practice. In the late eighth and early ninth century, for example, the Mercian kings Offa and Coenwulf had been in frequent contact with Charlemagne and successive popes.⁸⁴² More recently, the continental contacts of Alfred's father Æthelwulf had culminated in a royal journey to Rome and marriage to a Frankish

⁸³⁹ ASC, 883 BC, 885-90 ABC; see chapter three, pp. 164-6; and appendix 1:31-7.

⁸⁴⁰ Appendix 2:18-20; see chapter one pp. 45-6, and two, pp. 85-7.

⁸⁴¹ Appendix 2:23-4.

⁸⁴² On the Frankish element, see CC, pp. 169-211; and on the papal side see chapters two, pp. 78-84, and three, pp. 128-34.

princess.⁸⁴³ It is when we turn to Asser's comments on Alfred's attitude to foreigners (*advenae, alienigenae*) that things start to look different.⁸⁴⁴ Asser states that Alfred generously gave alms and money to foreigners, with the result that 'many Franks, Frisians, Gauls, Vikings (*pagani*), Welshmen, Irishmen and Bretons subjected themselves willingly to his lordship, nobles and commoners alike.'⁸⁴⁵ Furthermore, he reports that Alfred treated these subjects as if they were 'his own people (*suam propriam gentem*)'.⁸⁴⁶ It is clear that Asser, writing for a Welsh audience, wanted to create an image of Alfred that would be attractive to his countrymen – a king who was kind to outsiders and to whom other foreigners had already submitted.⁸⁴⁷ Yet that does not mean this image was without foundation. Asser's words are supported by his own circumstances and the cases of Grimbald and John, of the three Irishmen who landed at Cornwall and were brought to Alfred in 891, as well as the voyagers Ohthere and Wulfstan.⁸⁴⁸ In his treatment of foreigners and creation of a multi-ethnic court, Alfred behaviour was reminiscent of Charlemagne, whose good treatment of the foreigners who clustered at his court Einhard recalled. The Frankish ruler collected a range of scholars from across Europe, and harboured political exiles, probably including Alfred's grandfather Ecgberht.⁸⁴⁹ Whether Asser based his Alfred on Einhard's Charlemagne or the king was himself imitating the renowned ruler, this image of royal generosity to, and interest in, people from other *gentes* points to a ruler who was not just concerned to act in an international sphere, but who was curious about that wider world and its inhabitants, something reflected in the cosmopolitan character of his court.

⁸⁴³ See chapter three, p. 151.

⁸⁴⁴ Asser, uses *advenae* at chs. 76, 101, and *alienigenae* at chs. 76, 93.

⁸⁴⁵ Asser, ch. 76; see also ch. 101.

⁸⁴⁶ Asser, chs. 76, see also ch. 93.

⁸⁴⁷ See D. Kirby, 'Asser and his Life of King Alfred', *Studia Celtica* 6 (1971), 12-35, on Asser's Welsh audience.

⁸⁴⁸ ASC, 891.

⁸⁴⁹ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 21, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS rer. Germ. XXV (Hannover and Leipzig, 1911), p. 26; trans. P. Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier: the Complete Einhard* (Ontario, 1998), p. 30; on exiles in Francia, see CC, pp. 135-67.

Later, in a passage on the burdens and achievements of Alfred's reign, Asser mentioned the king's 'daily involvement with the nations which lie from the Mediterranean to the farthest limits of Ireland'.⁸⁵⁰ He appears to be referring to 'nations' outside the usual orbit of West-Saxon military and political power – which incorporated the other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, the Welsh and the Cornish – as a means of illustrating Alfred's importance on a wider stage.⁸⁵¹ Asser's statement has a distinct geographical flavour, one slightly obscured in the translation of '*ultimum Hiberniae finem*' as 'the farthest limits of Ireland'. By translating '*ultimum...finem*' as singular (which it is) then it becomes clear the Welshman was not referring to Ireland's westernmost bounds, but to the 'farthest limit of Ireland', i.e. the world's edge. Asser thus employed a classical dichotomy between a Mediterranean⁸⁵² centre and Hibernian periphery to demonstrate the scope of Alfred's repute. Something further increased when Asser added substance to his previous claims, stating that he had 'even seen and read letters sent to him with gifts from Jerusalem by the Patriarch Elias'.⁸⁵³ Alfred's reception of letters and gifts from the religious leader of Jerusalem – a significant and distant centre – sharpens his image as an important figure on a geographical stage far wider than the confines of the insular world.

While Asser used geography to help create a certain image of Alfred, the international connections that lay behind this image – and particularly his contact with Elias III, patriarch of Jerusalem (878-906) – are of great interest. The origins of the contact reported in the *Vita Alfredi* probably lie in letters sent by Elias III to various Western

⁸⁵⁰ Asser, ch. 91; though see Stevenson's notes, pp. 327-8, on the corruptions to this passage.

⁸⁵¹ On Alfred's contact with 'Celtic' kingdoms, see W. Davies, 'Alfred's contemporaries: Irish, Welsh, Scots and Breton', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 331-3.

⁸⁵² Asser, ch. 91, actually uses '*Tyrenno*', as in the Tyrrhenian Sea separating Italy from Corsica and Sardinia, but Stevenson, p. 328, argued – perhaps unnecessarily – that in light of the following sentence it should be emended to Mediterranean.

⁸⁵³ Asser, ch. 91; cf. Charlemagne's contacts with Christians in the Holy Land, Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 16, 27, ed. Holder-Egger, 19-20, 31-2; trans. Dutton, pp. 25-6, 33.

leaders in the 880s seeking funds to restore the churches of Jerusalem.⁸⁵⁴ Further light is thrown on this encounter by a late-ninth-century medical treatise known as Bald's *Leechbook* which, after describing recipes for a number of internal illnesses and a efficacious 'white stone', states that 'all these Dominus Elias, patriarch at Jerusalem, ordered to be said to King Alfred'.⁸⁵⁵ The character of this gift agrees with what Asser wrote concerning the king's illnesses, and it is its personalised nature which appears to suggest that Alfred's contact with the patriarch went beyond the reception of a simple request for funds.⁸⁵⁶ At the very least, it would seem that Alfred had responded to Elias' overtures, and received this medical knowledge in return.⁸⁵⁷ This incident transforms our understanding of the scope of the Alfredian court's international connections – which went well beyond Francia and Rome – and of the king's desire to act, and perhaps to be seen acting, on a geographical stage far wider than that of previous rulers.

Another piece of evidence suggests that Alfred's connections and ambitions stretched further East than even Jerusalem. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* annal for 883 records that 'Sighelm and Æthelstan took to Rome the alms [which King Alfred had promised thither], and also to India to St Thomas and St Bartholomew, when the English were encamped against the enemy army at London; and there, by the grace of God, their

⁸⁵⁴ See M. Lapidge, 'Byzantium, Rome and England in the early middle ages', *Settimane* 49 (2002), 374-7; and see J. Harris, 'Wars and rumours of wars: England and the Byzantine world in the eighth and ninth centuries', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 14 (1999), 37-40.

⁸⁵⁵ 'Bald's *Leechbook*', II.64, ed. O Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England* (3 vols., London, 1864), II, 289-91; on the *Leechbook*, see M. Cameron, 'Bald's *Leechbook*: its sources and their use in its compilation', *ASE* 12 (1983), 153-82; and idem, 'Bald's *Leechbook* and cultural interactions in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 19 (1990), 5-12, which suggests medical ingredients from all over the world were available in England; and see A. Meaney, 'Alfred, the Patriarch and the White Stone', *AUMLA: Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association* 49 (1978), 65-79, on these recipes.

⁸⁵⁶ On Alfred's illnesses, see Asser, ch. 74; and D. Pratt, 'The illnesses of King Alfred the Great', *ASE* 30 (2001), 39-90, esp. 67-70 on this contact with Elias.

⁸⁵⁷ Lapidge, 'Byzantium', 376.

prayers were well answered after that promise'.⁸⁵⁸ A somewhat problematic annal, this whole section is not found in the earliest witnesses to the *Chronicle* – MS A, Asser, and Æthelweard – which only record viking movements in Francia. It is, however, found in all subsequent versions of the text and is most probably an early, possibly contemporary insertion into the *Chronicle*.⁸⁵⁹ Also, both MSS B and C read 'Judea' not 'India'.

Considering the earlier witness of MS B and C and the contacts with Elias, it is tempting to prefer 'Judea', yet the contemporary association of both apostles with missionary activity and martyrdom in India suggests that D and E give the appropriate reading. It would thus seem that this annal should be taken as it appears, as notice of a royally-sponsored almsgiving mission to Rome, which went on toward India with the intention of giving alms at the tombs of Ss. Thomas and Bartholomew. Stevenson doubted whether this journey ever went ahead, but it should be noted that the annal is a notice of dispatch, not of return.⁸⁶⁰ We are unable to tell whether Sighelm and Æthelstan ever went much further than Rome, or even to Rome itself, but the implication is that they were dispatched.

In true *Chronicle* style, this insertion does not enlighten us as to the king's motive in ordering such a journey. As with the alms to Rome and contact with Elias, there was clearly a spiritual dimension to the journey, and the demonstration of royal piety and amelioration of divine anger were probably motivating factors. Furthermore, the martial context and notice of 'prayers...well answered' suggests Alfred's promise was made to ensure success against a particular viking army. Yet, if so, why go any further than the tomb of St Peter?⁸⁶¹ Perhaps the king and his *familia* sought a more elaborate and novel

⁸⁵⁸ ASC, 883 BCDE, the passage in square brackets is corrupt in MSS BC; on Sighelm and Æthelstan see appendix 1:31-2.

⁸⁵⁹ See chapter three, pp. 164-6.

⁸⁶⁰ W. Stevenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford, 1904), p. 289.

⁸⁶¹ On St Peter's ability to facilitate martial success, see chapter three, pp. 167-9.

means of garnering divine favour and saintly patronage, or a new way of displaying the scope of his royal reach. Yet should we assume that Alfred's connections with distant places were solely about power and piety, and their representation?

While compiled from earlier materials, the entries on Thomas and Bartholomew in the *Old English Martyrology* provide one of our best indications of contemporary thought about India, and suggest there may have been something more to the journey.⁸⁶² The *Martyrology* states that Thomas 'passed through the lands of pagan people and the eastern part of the world'.⁸⁶³ Concerning Bartholomew, the martyrologist was more explicit about the location of India, describing it as 'the outmost of all countries, and on one side is dark land (*bystre land*), on the other side the Ocean, that is *garsecg*'.⁸⁶⁴ Although its geographical description is more meticulous, the *Old English Orosius* similarly places India the furthest East of all countries.⁸⁶⁵ India was thus associated with the easternmost parts of the world bordered by the encircling Ocean, and this geographical extremity may have inspired Alfred to order Sighelm and Æthelstan's journey.⁸⁶⁶ More than a particular affinity for the apostles Thomas and Bartholomew, the motives for this eastern expedition reflect something of the king's intellectual curiosity about the wider world and its limits, a curiosity also visible in his attitude to, and gathering of, foreigners. Alfred was probing the horizons of the wider world he had inherited from Christian Latin culture.

⁸⁶² On the sources of these entries, see J. Cross, 'The apostles in the *Old English Martyrology*', *Mediaevalia* 5 (1979), 19-23.

⁸⁶³ *Old English Martyrology*, ed. Kotzor, II, no. 238; trans. Herzfeld, pp. 221-3; it also reports that Thomas's remains were translated to Edessa, but we cannot know whether Alfred knew this.

⁸⁶⁴ *Old English Martyrology*, ed. Kotzor, II, no. 162; trans. Herzfeld, pp. 151-3.

⁸⁶⁵ *OEOR*, i.1, pp. 9-10.

⁸⁶⁶ This location agrees with the far more detailed geographies of Pliny, Orosius, and Isidore, although Isidore says India is bounded by the rising sun in East; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIV.v, ed. Lindsay, II; trans. Barney *et al.*, p. 286.

The geographical curiosity glimpsed in the 883 annal is clearly evident in another insertion into an Alfredian text. At some point probably after its translation, a passage was added to the geographical chapter of the *Old English Orosius* which contains the reports of two travellers, Ohthere and Wulfstan, on the physical, political, and ethnographic geography of the North.⁸⁶⁷ These rare accounts of early-medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic have long been subject to intense scrutiny.⁸⁶⁸ Despite this, the text continues to present a number of intractable interpretive issues, one being the interrelation of the two reports.⁸⁶⁹ While we are unable to ascertain from the language of the text quite how Wulfstan's report was related to that of Ohthere, if at all, the common subject suggests that the two were part of the same enterprise, even if they were not made the same occasion. This is important because the text itself reveals the context in which Ohthere made his report, beginning 'Ohthere said to his lord, King Alfred'.⁸⁷⁰ Not only informing us that his account was given in the presence of the king, this statement affirms Alfred's curiosity about foreigners and world geography. Indeed, it appears that Ohthere – and probably Wulfstan – were brought to the court in order to be questioned about their travels: the places they visited, the people they saw, and the layout of the countries of the North.

Little is known about the two travellers. It is usually thought that Wulfstan was an Anglo-Saxon, something adduced from the fluid nature of his report of a voyage from

⁸⁶⁷ On the possibility of later insertion, see J. Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan in the Old English *Orosius*', in *Ohthere's Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of the Voyages along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and its Cultural Context*, eds. J. Bately and A. Englert (Roskilde, 2007), pp. 32-4; contra S. Gilles, 'Territorial interpolations in the Old English *Orosius*', in *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, eds. S. Tomasch and S. Gilles (Philadelphia, PA, 1998), pp. 79-96.

⁸⁶⁸ Most recently I. Valtonen, *The North in the Old English Orosius: A Geographical Narrative in Context* (Helsinki, 2008), esp. 249-479; and the pair of volumes, *Ohthere's Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of the Voyages along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and its Cultural Context*, eds. J. Bately and A. Englert (Roskilde, 2007); and *Wulfstan's Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as seen from Shipboard*, eds. A. Englert and A. Trakadas (Roskilde, 2009).

⁸⁶⁹ For a summary of these issues, see Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', pp. 26-40.

⁸⁷⁰ 'Ohthere's report', ed. and trans. J. Bately, in *Ohthere's Voyages*, p.44 [excerpted from the *Old English Orosius*].

Hedeby in Jutland through the Baltic to the mouth of the Vistula, and the customs of the *Est* people that he witnessed there.⁸⁷¹ Ohthere was a wealthy Northman (Norwegian) from Halogaland in northern Norway, and behind his stilted account lies an interrogative pattern of questions and answers.⁸⁷² His report contains two short accounts of voyages from his home to *Sciringes healh* (Kaupang) in southern Norway and from there to Hedeby, and one longer account of a voyage from his home round the North Cape of Finnmark into the White Sea. Most interesting here is the latter journey in which Ohthere, who already ‘lived furthest north of all northmen’, sailed northwards to see if anyone lived beyond the wasteland which lay to the north of his home and was only occupied by the itinerant *Finnas* (Sami). He went northwards for 6 days, then East for four days, then in a southerly direction for five days until he reached a large river, beyond which the land was settled by the *Beormas* and he was wary of proceeding further.⁸⁷³

This voyage is cast as in exploratory terms; Ohthere ‘wished to investigate how far the land extended in a northern direction, or whether anyone lived north of the waste’, although later it is stated that ‘he chiefly went there, in addition to the surveying of the land, for the walruses’.⁸⁷⁴ Most of Ohthere’s wealth was derived from tribute extracted from the *Finnas*, and his survey of the land and its occupants should probably be seen as an attempt to increase his wealth by extracting more tribute, as well as hunting more walrus.⁸⁷⁵ In addition to investigating the resource potential of land and sea, was Ohthere

⁸⁷¹ On Wulfstan and his voyage, see Valtonen, *The North*, pp. 402-46; and see ‘Wulfstan’s report’, ed. and trans. J. Bately, in *Ohthere’s Voyages*, pp. 48-50.

⁸⁷² ‘Ohthere’s report’, ed. and trans. Bately, pp. 44-7; on Ohthere and his voyage, see I. Storli, ‘Ohthere and his world – a contemporary perspective’, in *Ohthere’s Voyages*, pp. 76-99; and Valtonen, *The North*, pp. 281-401; on the interrogative pattern, see Bately, ‘Ohthere and Wulfstan’, pp. 30-1; and A. Englert, ‘Ohthere’s voyages seen from a nautical angle’, in *Ohthere’s Voyages*, pp. 117-8.

⁸⁷³ ‘Ohthere’s report’, ed. and trans. Bately, pp. 44-5; see Englert, ‘Ohthere’s voyages’, pp. 125-9; on the general nature of the directional terminology, see M. Korhammer, ‘The orientation system in the Old English Orosius: shifted or not?’, in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, eds. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 251-69.

⁸⁷⁴ ‘Ohthere’s report’, ed. and trans. Bately, pp. 44-6.

⁸⁷⁵ ‘Ohthere’s report’, ed. and trans. Bately, pp. 45-6.

really attempting to discover the northernmost extent of the land? It is difficult to distinguish whether this curiosity – and the concern with the superlative north which pervades this part of the report – reflects the interests of Ohthere or his interlocutors; he certainly went there to investigate and survey, but the concern with the northernmost extent of land seems to reflect a distinctly geographical and scholarly interest. This interest is again visible when Ohthere reports a change of direction in his voyage in the unknown north. When Ohthere struck out east, the text reports that ‘then the land there turned east, or the sea into the land, he did not know which of the two’, a formulation which occurs again when he turned southward.⁸⁷⁶ It appears that Alfred and his interpreters were asking Ohthere whether he had reached the furthest extent of the land or was just entering another sea equivalent to the Baltic.⁸⁷⁷ He did not understand the logic of this question, and so pleaded ignorance. Ohthere was being questioned about the northern margins of the world, and his report reveals a concern on the part of his interlocutors with the geography of Scandinavia and its physical limits.

We have established that Alfred and his courtiers possessed a curiosity about the wider world and its occupants that lead them to probe the horizons of their inherited geographical understanding. Unlike the eastern connections, there is no religious dimension apparent here, and one wonders why foreign travellers were brought to court and questioned about northern geography. Michelet interprets Ohthere’s interrogation as part of the Anglo-Saxons’ attempts to modify their inherited marginality and re-centre Britain.⁸⁷⁸ In the text of his report, she argues, the civilised *Beormas* provide a mirror image of Alfred’s own court, which is remade as a central place. More broadly, this

⁸⁷⁶ ‘Ohthere’s report’, ed. and trans. Bately, pp. 44-5.

⁸⁷⁷ N. Lund, ‘Introduction’ in *Two Voyagers at the Court of King Alfred*, ed. N. Lund (York, 1984), pp. 12-3; and Bately, ‘Ohthere and Wulfstan’, pp. 35-6 support this interpretation, whereas C. Fell, ‘Some questions of language’, in *Two Voyagers at the Court of King Alfred*, ed. N. Lund (York, 1984), p. 57, argued that the phrases relate to fjords; Valtonen, *The North*, p. 471 associates the reports with an interest in the limits of *Germania*, but (p. 454) is unclear on whether sea or fjord is meant.

⁸⁷⁸ Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*, pp. 136-42; see also Discenza, ‘A map of the universe’, p. 94.

rewriting of the North makes Britain a regional centre with its own periphery, and gives Alfred ‘the aura of prestige and power attached to one in contact with and control of distant regions’.⁸⁷⁹ Valtonen criticises Michelet’s reading of the *Beormas*’ function, arguing instead that the accounts of Ohthere and Wulfstan filled an intellectual gap in Anglo-Saxon culture left by a southward shift in perspective that occurred at the conversion.⁸⁸⁰ She also detects a need in the ninth century to redefine Britain’s place in the world, but sees this as a passive, unconscious phenomenon and does not argue that it was part of any Alfredian programme.⁸⁸¹ Valtonen’s study of the text is thorough and insightful, but her desire to incorporate and ratify others’ work clouds the thrust and logic of her wider argument, and her notion of an intellectual shift southward appears to depend more upon the arguments of Howe than on interpretation of primary texts.⁸⁸² In short, neither scholar adequately accounts for the motives behind this geographical endeavour. There is weight to Michelet’s argument that Ohthere’s report made the court something of an intellectual and geographical centre, but it remains to be seen whether this was part of a larger reaction against the classical worldview, or something else entirely. To answer such questions, we must turn to an analysis of the geographical ideas articulated in the texts translated and composed in Alfred’s reign. Such an analysis may also help us to understand the impact of Alfredian engagement with the world and its margins upon the Rome-centric geographical understanding which the Anglo-Saxons had inherited from the Mediterranean world.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 141-2.

⁸⁸⁰ Valtonen, *The North*, p. 357, n. 393 for her criticism of Michelet, and pp. 157-9, 182, 488-90, 536-9, 570-1.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., p. 181, 470-1, 478-9, 536-9.

⁸⁸² Ibid, esp. pp. 157-9.

Geographical understanding in the reign of Alfred

Discussing Anglo-Saxon ideas about the shape of the world, Gopa Roy noted that between early Bedan and later Benedictine periods when the earth was thought to be spherical, came an Alfredian period where the evidence for such knowledge is ambiguous, and there may have been some uncertainty about the earth's form.⁸⁸³

Although more a cosmological issue than a geographical one, this divergence illustrates the potential of late-ninth-century thought to differ from the ecclesiastical – and principally monastic – intellectual traditions that preceded and followed the Alfredian moment. Was there an equivalent divergence in geographical understanding? Earlier Anglo-Saxon attitudes to geography are more complex than sometimes portrayed, with writers adapting classical ideas which centred Rome and marginalised Britain and using them to rhetorical effect or as part of wider visions. The variety of classical and late antique texts available gave Anglo-Saxon writers some flexibility when relaying geographical opinions which never equate to simple acceptance or rejection of classical ideas. Still, their appropriation of classical geography is founded upon an adoption of its ideas. Given the distinctly international outlook of Alfred's court and its geographical curiosity, a curiosity which lead it to probe the inherited understanding of the world, we might expect to find interpretations of the world's layout different from those which preceded them.

As we know, late-ninth-century Wessex saw a royally-sponsored educational revival in which a number of Latin texts were revised and translated into the vernacular and other texts were composed afresh, most notably the earliest portion of the *Anglo-Saxon*

⁸⁸³ Roy, 'The shape of the world', pp. 455-81.

Chronicle. There also survive a number of diplomatic and epistolary texts. As in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period, these practical documents betray a matter-of-fact understanding of geography, used to locate places, estate boundaries, and even negotiated frontiers.⁸⁸⁴ Geographical ideas were also used for rhetorical effect or to make spiritual points, as they had been in the eighth and early ninth centuries. For example, Asser employed the classical dichotomy between a Mediterranean centre and Hibernian periphery to illustrate Alfred's international repute.⁸⁸⁵ The context of royal glorification in which Asser used this notion differs from the earlier period, where Britain and not Ireland was portrayed as marginal in order to make a range of largely spiritual points, with even kings such as Coenwulf insisting on their liminal position.

While this example suggests that old ideas were being employed in new ways, several examples from the *Old English Boethius* show that geography continued to be used to make spiritual or philosophical points. In one such example, Reason argues that, considering both the earth's relatively small size and, according to Ptolemy, its even smaller amount of habitable, temperate land, Boethius' wish to spread his fame 'over such a courtyard' is 'a very foolish labour.'⁸⁸⁶ Although this argument and its reference to Ptolemy were taken over from the Latin original, the retention of this classical theoretical geography suggests the translator was at least comfortable with such material.⁸⁸⁷ Elsewhere, Reason demonstrated that power was only as good as its wielder by alluding to Nero, stating that even though he committed numerous crimes 'all this world was nonetheless subjected to him, from the east to the west and again from the

⁸⁸⁴ For boundaries, see S 345, 348, 350, 354, 355; for places, see the king's will, S 1507; for frontiers, see the 'Alfred-Guthrum Treaty', ed. F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (3 vols., Halle, 1903-1916), I, 126-9; trans. *EHD*, 34.

⁸⁸⁵ Asser, ch. 91.

⁸⁸⁶ *OEBo*, 18, I, 278-9, II, 27-8.

⁸⁸⁷ *Ancii Manlii Severini Boethii Philosophiae consolatio*, ed. L. Bieler, CCSL 94 (Turnhout 1957), II prose 7, 3-7.

south to the north; all of it was under his power.⁸⁸⁸ Here the text uses the cardinal points to illustrate the universality of Roman rule – a given of classical, Rome-centred geography – to make a point about the nature of power. As with the previous example, the *Old English Boethius* uses ideas about the extent of the world to reinforce abstract arguments.

This rhetorical use of geography recurs in a later passage which significantly expands the original Boethian metre. Singing about the qualities necessary to wield power, Wisdom defines ‘all the world’ as ‘from east to west, from India, which is the south-east corner of this world, to the island which we call Thule, which is in the north-west corner of this world, where there is neither night in summer nor day in winter’.⁸⁸⁹ Boethius mentioned ‘distant India’ and ‘ultimate Thule’, but the location of these places at the south-east and north-west corners of the world is the work of the translator who, it seems, was not so much enhancing the argument as providing information to readers unfamiliar with such places. It is interesting that this use of the north and east to demonstrate the extent of the world matches the Alfredian explorations discussed above. The translator was well placed to add such clarificatory information, and while the positioning of Thule is orthodox enough, the unusual placement of India in the south-east may reflect the ‘fruits’ of Sigehelm and Æthelstan’s journey. This use and updating of Boethius’ world-boundaries suggests that Alfredian curiosity had not displaced classical ideas but merely enhanced them. In this text at least, there is no significant break from a Rome-centric classical geography and, although there is also no mention of Britain, we might assume that it remained marginal.

⁸⁸⁸ *OEBo*, 16, I, 276, II, 26; expands the Latin metre of *Boethii Philosophiae consolatio*, ed. Bieler, II, metre 6, 8-15.

⁸⁸⁹ *OEBo*, 29, I, 303, II, 44, and see the commentary at 361; and see *Boethii Philosophiae consolatio*, ed. Bieler, III, metre 5, 5-10.

Much of the geographical information contained in the *Old English Boethius* occurs within its historical exempla. History and geography not only remained conceptually interdependent, but in the later ninth century, as before, almost all writing about the wider world and its geography occurred in texts concerned with the past. In the aforementioned exempla the geographical information consisted of brief illustrative allusions, but it could also play a role in more substantive historical visions, as in the first chapter of the *Old English Boethius*. This chapter provided a historical introduction which contextualised Boethius' musings, and begins by relating the Gothic capture of Rome and subjection of the 'whole kingdom of Italy which lies between the mountains and the island of Sicily'.⁸⁹⁰ Here, the parameters of Italy not only set the scene for Theodoric's persecution of the Romans and Boethius' appeal to the Greeks and subsequent incarceration, but also outline the cultural frame of reference of the rest of the text. The translator thus used geography to place the text in context and also give a relatively unlearned audience an idea of what that context was.

Other historical visions composed in Alfred's reign possess a distinctive geographical dynamic. The prose preface to the *Old English Pastoral Care*, for example, relates the history of learning in England and, to justify vernacular translation, outlines a particular vision of the translation of the Bible from Hebrew into Greek, then relating its translation by the Romans and then 'all other Christian peoples'.⁸⁹¹ Although based around one aspect of the Christian past, this brief vision follows the usual geo-historical trajectory of that past westwards from Judea to Rome, and then to a wider expansion which includes many peoples but not the English. Another text, the prologue to Alfred's *Domboc*, treats the transmission of divine law and widening of Christian experience in more detail, albeit with a different slant. Providing a short history of Christian lawgiving, the text moves

⁸⁹⁰ *OEBo*, 1, I, 243-4, II, 4-5.

⁸⁹¹ *OEPC*, Pref., pp. 5-6; pp. 125-6; on this vision, see chapter four, pp. 207-10.

between a time before the apostles ‘set out to teach throughout all the earth’ when they defined the extent of Christian adherence to Mosaic law, to a later period when ‘many peoples’ had become Christian and synods were ‘assembled throughout the whole world’.⁸⁹² It includes the English in this vision, though separating them from the mass of other peoples due to their later conversion. The concern with the whole world and its occupants is a usual feature of Christian universalist rhetoric, and existed alongside classical geographical understanding which specified the extent of that world and its various parts. Nevertheless, these geo-historical visions and their westward dynamic do represent a different type of geographical idea; albeit one that had been clearly articulated in the eighth century in the writings of Bede.

While the underlying geographical dynamics are integral to these visions of the past, the texts themselves actually say very little about the nature of the world and its layout. Indeed, the dynamic becomes apparent in the relation and juxtaposition of places in the text. The ‘common stock’ of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* creates a far more extensive historical vision than these two prefatory texts but, like them, it contains very little geographical information beyond a concern to locate events.⁸⁹³ As we saw in the previous chapter, at the start of the common stock there is a ‘universal prologue’, an epitome of Hebrew, Christian, British, and Roman history from 60 BC to AD 449 which situates the island of Britain and its subsequent Anglo-Saxon occupation in a deeper context.⁸⁹⁴ There are multiple geographical dynamics in these various strands, but, as with the other Alfredian visions, the overriding concern is with the movement of divine

⁸⁹² Alf-PrI, 42-7, pp. 55-9; I quote from the partial translation of P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century. Vol. 1 Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 421-2; on this text, see chapter four, pp. 210-3.

⁸⁹³ On the common stock and its vision of the past, see chapter four, pp. 214-7.

⁸⁹⁴ See ASC, 60 B.C.-449; on the ‘universal prologue’, see chapter four, pp. 217-20.

power westwards towards Rome, and the links of Britain to the Roman centre.⁸⁹⁵ In the subsequent historical vision – the principal thread of which is the creation and interrelation of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms leading to the ultimate supremacy of the West-Saxons under Alfred – place is important in locating events, especially battles and military movements, but this vision is somewhat insular and static.⁸⁹⁶ Other places such as Ireland, Iona, and Francia are mentioned and, of all foreign places, Rome appears most frequently in a variety of religious and royal contexts.⁸⁹⁷ Despite this, there is no overarching geographical element to this historical vision and, in as much as it has a ‘geography’, the *Chronicle* makes Rome the centre of the non-insular world.

Alongside the composition of the *Chronicle*, Alfred’s reign also saw the translation of two historical texts which began with geographical descriptions of the areas whose past they narrated: Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* and Orosius’ *Historiarum adversum paganos*. In each translation the attitude to the original and its geographical information differs. To take translation of Bede first, we saw earlier how the geographical introduction to the *Historia ecclesiastica* set the stage for Bede’s subsequent text, and his placing of Britain on the margins of the world demonstrated the reach of Christianity, a crucial aspect of his wider vision of the universal past. Shorn from this wider context, the Old English translator had to make choices about whether to augment, alter, or excise Bede’s geographical passages, choices which may reflect something about his preoccupations and that of the intellectual environment in which he worked.

⁸⁹⁵ For divine power to Rome, see ASC, 1, 26, 35, 44, 69, 71, 101, 167; for the occupation of Britain, see ASC, 60 B.C., 47, 189, 381, 410, 418.

⁸⁹⁶ See chapter four, pp. 215-7; on the modes of geographic representation in the *Chronicle*, especially the 892-6 annals, see J. Stodnick, ‘What (and where) is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* about?: spatial history’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 86 (2004), 87-104.

⁸⁹⁷ Ireland appears at ASC, 565, 664, 891; Iona at ASC, 565, 716; Francia at ASC, 650, 660, 782, 814, 842, 880-891; and Rome at ASC, 596, 650, 688, 690, 709, 716, 721, 726, 736, 737, 766, 796, 791, 801, 806, 814, 815, 816, 817, 834, 853, 855-8, 874, 883 BC, 885, 887, 888, 889, 890.

The late-ninth-century translator simplified Bede's text leaving a less complex narrative of Anglo-Saxon religious progress filled with beneficial exempla.⁸⁹⁸ Bede's geographical and ethnographic description of Britain and Ireland remained largely intact in the translation. Detail was cut in many places, but the basic thrust retained. For example, the translator simplified Bede's statement that Britain 'produces a great deal of excellent jet, which is glossy black and burns when put into the fire and, when kindled, it drives away serpents; when it is warmed by rubbing it attracts whatever is applied to it, just as amber does', to simply say that 'jet is also found here, which is a black gem; if put in the fire, adders fly from it.'⁸⁹⁹ The translator retained the basic positioning of the Britain 'opposite to, though far apart from, Germany, Gaul and Spain' but cut significant detail about the island's promontories, circumference, and crossing points to Gaul.⁹⁰⁰ Like Bede, he stated that Britain is positioned 'between the north and the west' and he also preserved the description of the island as 'close under the very north of the world', though he removes Bede's geographical and cosmological specificity, simply stating that Britain had longer summer days and winter nights than 'the southern parts of the world.'⁹⁰¹ In the *Old English Bede*, then, Britain retains the peripheral position it was given in the original text.

This analysis would seem to suggest a neutral attitude to geographical information on the part of the translator, who treated that material exactly as he treated the rest of the opening chapter. Yet this is not entirely the case, for he also excised completely the sentence about Orkney, which Bede placed beyond Britain in the 'boundless Ocean'.⁹⁰²

In addition, while he retained the description of Ireland he cut the information on its

⁸⁹⁸ On the *Old English Bede*, see chapter four, pp. 201-5.

⁸⁹⁹ *HE*, i.1; *OEB*, i.1, I, 26-7.

⁹⁰⁰ *OEB*, i.1, I, 24-7; *HE*, i.1.

⁹⁰¹ *OEB*, i.1, I, 24-7; *HE*, i.1, Colgrave's translation of Bede's positioning of Britain '*inter septentrionem et occidentem locata est*' as 'lies to the north-west' obscures his meaning somewhat.

⁹⁰² *HE*, i.1; *OEB*, i.1, I, 24-7.

location west of Britain.⁹⁰³ The effect of these excisions is to remove the islands which could be placed on the outside of Britain to limit its marginality, something we might construe as a deliberate attempt to position it on the edge of the world. I would, however, argue that these erasures suggest the translator thought of the geographical information as the least relevant section of Bede's opening chapter. His general method for this chapter was to contract while preserving the information conveyed, yet he removed entire passages of geographical information including significant amounts on Britain's circumference.⁹⁰⁴ Also, while the translator preserved the information on the settlement of Britons and Picts, he removed the description of the Firth of Clyde which divided Picts from Dalriada.⁹⁰⁵ Ultimately, the translator of the *Old English Bede* saw geographical information as relatively irrelevant to his purposes and his audience, cutting it where he could. He transmitted much of the original's information on Britain's marginal position, but was not concerned to develop it in any way.

The attitude to geography in the *Old English Bede* could not be more different from that of the other Latin history translated in the later ninth century, the *Old English Orosius*. Orosius famously placed an overview of world geography towards the start of his *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII*, an early-fifth-century polemic written in response to the Gothic sack of Rome in 410. Embodying the universality of his subsequent narrative, Orosius' geography had a lasting impact on both geographical thought and the role of geography in historical writing.⁹⁰⁶ When translated into Old English, Orosius' Latin text was reduced by four fifths by a translator who was notably free with the original, adding material where he deemed it appropriate.⁹⁰⁷ This active

⁹⁰³ *HE*, i.; *OEB*, i.1, I, 26-31.

⁹⁰⁴ *HE*, i.1; *OEB*, i.1, I, 24-7.

⁹⁰⁵ *HE*, i.1; *OEB*, i.1, I, 28-31.

⁹⁰⁶ Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 64-99.

⁹⁰⁷ On the *Old English Orosius*, see chapter four, pp. 196-201.

approach to translation is nowhere more apparent than in the opening chapter on world geography. Here, the translator added material, contracted passages, and thoroughly rewrote the whole chapter in what amounts to a sustained and coherent piece of geographical thought.

Orosius' *Historiarum libri VII* began by describing continental boundaries, before outlining the geography of Asia, Europe, Africa, and then the islands of the central Mediterranean; the *Old English Orosius* preserved this ordering. It also follows the original's account of Asia – its natural borders, countries, and peoples – though systematically endeavouring to clarify the boundaries of the area in question. This led to contraction of the original as, when discussing the borders of Syria, the translator reduced Orosius' convoluted description to sketch the four major borders of the territory, adding a clarificatory reference to the Taurus Mountains in the north.⁹⁰⁸ Elsewhere, the translator amplified the original, as when outlining Parthia he made it clearer that the region lay between the Indus and the Tigris, and was bordered on the north by the Caucasus and to the south by the Red Sea, into which both rivers flowed.⁹⁰⁹ Another good example of the translator's different approach is his description of the Nile, where he rationalises Orosius' speculations and uncertainties, providing a single, indicative account of the river's course from its source to the Mediterranean, and clarifying it with cardinal directions not in the Latin.⁹¹⁰ The *Old English Orosius* attempts to provide a clear, workable geography of a deeply unfamiliar region and rewrites the original to this effect, as Bately has stated, 'everywhere his concentration is on geographical detail', and these conclusions also apply to the accounts of Africa and the Mediterranean islands.⁹¹¹

⁹⁰⁸ *OEO*, i.1, p. 10; and see *OH*, I.2, pp. 14-6; pp. 9-10.

⁹⁰⁹ *OEO*, i.1, p. 10; and see *OH*, I.2, pp. 13; p. 9.

⁹¹⁰ *OEO*, i.1, p. 11; and see *OH*, I.2, pp. 16-7; pp. 10-1.

⁹¹¹ Bately, 'Othere and Wulfstan', p. 22; *OEO*, i.1, pp. 19-21; and see *OH*, I.2, pp. 30-40; pp. 17-20.

Most of the geographical reconfiguration in these parts of the *Old English Orosius* simply used the material contained in the original. There are also numerous additions and alterations which relate information not in the original and Bately has argued that the changes to the accounts of Asia and Africa were based on a range of Latin texts. While it is usually impossible to identify individual sources, the translator had access to a considerable body of geographical knowledge.⁹¹² Her conclusions shed further light upon the scale of a project carried out by an author working at the Alfredian court or at a centre closely associated with it around 889-99. Indeed, it is hard not to draw links between this text and the geographical curiosity apparent in the court's international connections and forays into the east and north. Yet, if all alterations to the section on Asia are based on Latin sources, then it would seem that Alfred's contact with Jerusalem and the journey of Sigheilm and Æthelstan to 'India' had little impact upon ideas about the East in the *Old English Orosius*. The translator certainly did little to alter Orosius' brief description of the boundaries of India and, while the account of northern Asia has been significantly altered, this merely represents a simplification of the original.⁹¹³ It seems that, with Asia and Africa, the translator was happy to work with the available Latin texts alone.

This was certainly not the case when it came to the geography of Europe, where the translator made his most radical changes to the Orosian text. While the *Old English Orosius* follows the outline of the original, after a brief passage on the boundaries of northern Europe, it begins to depart from the Latin text. Whereas Orosius knew little of this area and treated it summarily before moving onto the Danube region, the translation

⁹¹² J. Bately, 'The relationship between geographical information in the *Old English Orosius* and Latin texts other than Orosius', *ASE* 1 (1972), 45-62; and eadem, *Old English Orosius*, lxiii-lxvii.

⁹¹³ *OEOr*, i.1, pp.9-12; and see *OH*, I.2, pp. 12-21; pp. 9-13; though the mention of 'Liubene' as an Old English equivalent for the Latin *Albani* in the passage on northern Asia at ll.12-3 of *OEOr*, i.1, p. 12, provides an intriguing possibility. Bately's commentary (p. 165) suggests it arises from a misreading or corruption.

stated that this area was occupied by many peoples but that ‘it is all called *Germania*’.⁹¹⁴ The translator then launched into a detailed account of the peoples north of the Danube and East of the Rhine; locating one people who acted as a ‘pivotal point’, he would then list the peoples that surrounded them on the points of a compass, before using one such group as the next pivot.⁹¹⁵ In this way, he sketched the ethnic geography of Germany and lower Scandinavia, occasionally stretching beyond this as when, having located the Hungarians to the east of Carinthia ‘beyond the waste’, he noted that ‘the land of the Greeks’ was to the east of the Hungarians.⁹¹⁶ This mention of the Greeks, whose territories were delineated later, served to link this new account of Germany into the wider geography of the text. What sources were used in the compilation of this section is even less clear than for Asia and Africa but, whether transmitted orally, textually, or visually, the material represents roughly contemporary information.⁹¹⁷ This geography of *Germania* represents a significant departure from the original, turning Orosius’ brief imprecision into a detailed, methodical account of northern Europe.

Having moved northward, the account of *Germania* ends with the Northmen, and it is here that the reports of Ohthere and Wulfstan were inserted into the text. While this insertion is thought to have occurred later, given the appropriate placing of these reports one suspects the hand of the original translator. Following these reports which outline the geography of Scandinavia and the northernmost regions, the *Old English Orosius* again picks up the thread of the original, describing Europe south of the Danube. Yet here, as

⁹¹⁴ *OEO*, i.1, pp. 12-3; and see *OH*, I.2, pp. 21-2; p. 13; on earlier geographical writing about this area, see I. Wood, ‘Early medieval accounts of the North before the Old English *Orosius*’, in *Ohthere’s Voyages*, pp. 60-5; and S. Lamb, ‘Knowledge about the Scandinavian North in ninth-century England and Francia’, *Quaestio Insularis* 8 (2007), 82-93.

⁹¹⁵ *OEO*, i.1, pp. 9-12, and the commentary, pp. 165-79; on ‘pivotal points’ see Bately, ‘Ohthere and Wulfstan’, p. 24; and Valtonen, *The North*, 320-2; and ultimately E. Laborde, ‘King Alfred’s system of geographical description in his version of Orosius’, *Geographical Journal* 62 (1923), 133-8.

⁹¹⁶ *OEO*, i.1, p. 13.

⁹¹⁷ See Bately, ‘The relationship’, 52-4; eadem, *Old English Orosius*, lxxvii-lxx; Alfred’s continental contacts provide an obvious point of transmission.

in all of the subsequent description of Europe, the translator rewrote the original, updating it in accordance with contemporary realities.⁹¹⁸ He began by using Constantinople as a pivotal point, then outlined the natural features and peoples of ‘Greek land (*Creca land*)’, Eastern Europe, and the Adriatic region; a significant contraction of Orosius’ methodical description of the regions and Roman provinces from east to west.⁹¹⁹ The account of Italy and Francia is similarly shortened and Roman provincial terms for much of Gaul are replaced by Provence, Burgundy, and Gascony.⁹²⁰ His account of Spain is largely the same as the original, albeit with some alterations. The changes to this section of the text are not as drastic as those to northern Europe but, unlike *Germania*, these parts of Roman Europe had been fully treated in Orosius’ *Historiarum libri VII*. Still, these thorough and unprecedented alterations represent an attempt to bring the original text closer to contemporary ethnic and political geography.

In revising the geographical chapter, the translator of the *Old English Orosius* sought to rectify omissions in the geography of the North and bring the rest of Europe up-to-date, also introducing greater clarity into the geography of Asia and Africa, but was his purpose simply ‘to provide a straightforward account of world geography’?⁹²¹ Michelet has argued that this accurate geography of Europe was part of a wider strategy whereby the Alfredian court re-centred itself, eschewing inherited marginality.⁹²² I agree with her analysis of the text’s reorganisation of European boundaries; Spain did form the south-west limit, Thule the north-west, Ireland is moved west of Britain making it the westernmost point, and the northern boundary of Germania – the *Cwensæ* – is

⁹¹⁸ This is also the opinion of Bately, ‘The relationship’, 52.

⁹¹⁹ *OEOr*, i.1, pp. 18; and see *OH*, I.2, pp. 22-4; pp. 13-14.

⁹²⁰ *OEOr*, i.1, pp. 18; and see *OH*, I.2, pp. 24-6; pp. 14-5.

⁹²¹ Bately, ‘Ohthere and Wulfstan’, pp. 25-6.

⁹²² Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*, pp. 132-6.

ambiguous, allowing for the insertion of the voyagers' reports.⁹²³ By placing Ireland outside Britain, the translator modified Britain's position on the margins but this, of course, reflects geographical reality. Michelet also notes the translator's relative uninterest in Britain, arguing that this is part of a narrative strategy which, through deliberate silence, makes the island a spatial pivot from which the world is surveyed.⁹²⁴ It is true that the *Old English Orosius* adds little other than a questionable north-eastern slant to the original's description of Britain, simply giving its length, breadth, and position relative to surrounding areas.⁹²⁵ Yet Michelet's somewhat counterintuitive reading of the text's 'poetic geography' does not accord with her general understanding of its intended accuracy, and, what is more, there is additional if overlooked information on Britain elsewhere in the chapter. At the start of the description of Europe, for example, a reference to the 'arm of the ocean' that surrounds the 'land of Britain' is inserted, and another almost identical insertion occurs when positioning the South Danes.⁹²⁶ Later, the translator slightly expanded a reference to Britain and its sea when positioning Belgic Gaul.⁹²⁷ The repeated use of Britain and its surrounding ocean as a descriptive feature served to integrate the island more fully into a reconfigured Europe and, while this lessened the island's marginality, it did not make it central.

Ultimately, the revision of Orosius' geography in the *Old English Orosius* was not about placing Britain at the centre of a judgemental geographical schema descended from classical thought. While the repositioning of Ireland lessens the Britain's marginality and its deployment in a descriptive context helps incorporate Britain within a redefined Europe, these changes did not set the island up as a 'centre' vis-à-vis the other parts of

⁹²³ Ibid., pp. 134-6; *OEO*, i.1, pp. 8-9, 12, 19.

⁹²⁴ Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*, pp. 133-4.

⁹²⁵ *OEO*, i.1, p. 19.

⁹²⁶ *OEO*, i.1, p. 12: 'pæs garsecges earm þe þæt lond uton ymblið þe mon Bryttania hætt'; and *OEO*, i.1, p. 13: 'pæs garsecges earm þe liþ ymbutan þæt land Brettannia'.

⁹²⁷ *OEO*, i.1, p. 18; and see *OH*, I.2, pp. 25; pp. 14.

Europe.⁹²⁸ Indeed, centres and judgmental schema are largely absent from this geography, the central thrusts of which seems to be clarity and accuracy. The argument that this Alfredian translation aimed to achieve an ‘accurate’ understanding of world geography may appear anachronistic, yet it provides the most plausible reading of its purpose. Moreover, this desire to understand the geography of the world – its features, layout and inhabitants – is explicable in terms of the geographical curiosity visible at the Alfredian court. For, while Alfred’s international connections were in part about power, piety, and their representation to a wide audience, an interest in the wider world and its limits is evident in those unprecedented connections. It is hard not to see the revisions and updating of Orosian geography as a direct consequence of that royal curiosity.

Such revisionism was not ubiquitous in Alfredian texts; the translator of the *Old English Bede* was not much concerned with geography, and the geo-historical visions of this period exhibit an east-west shift also visible in the writings of Bede. The *Old English Boethius* similarly took over the Rome-centred geography of the original, yet its translator also expanded and clarified geographical information. In the *Old English Orosius* this move towards clarification was fully realised and the translator, under the influence of Alfredian curiosity about the world and its margins, broke from earlier ideas. This break is especially significant given the tendency of early-medieval geography to follow authority over experience.⁹²⁹ Yet it was not a total reaction against classical world view, rather an attempt to work within existing parameters to improve inherited geographical understanding. Despite this, the *Orosius* represents a remarkable attempt to reconsider the geography of the world.

⁹²⁸ Contra Discenza, ‘A map of the universe’, pp. 89-91, who argues that Britain was deliberately marginalised.

⁹²⁹ A similar, if independent, break can be seen on the continent in the ninth-century *orbis descriptiones* of Dicuil and the anonymous author of *De situ orbis*, on which see P. Gautier Dalché, ‘Tradition et renouvellement dans la représentation de l’espace géographique au IXe siècle’, *Studi Medievali* 24 (1983), 121-65.

Conclusions: the consequence for Rome

In this chapter, we have seen how the Anglo-Saxons inherited a geographical understanding from Mediterranean Christianity which always placed their island on the limits of the known world. Classical texts made Rome the ‘head’ of that world, its most significant centre if not its geographical midpoint. Although this centrality is slightly tempered in post-Roman Christian texts, the Anglo-Saxons inherited a geographical schema which put them at the edge and Rome in the centre, something reinforced by their late conversion from that city. While eighth- and early-ninth-century Anglo-Saxons understood world geography through classical and late antique texts, they did not simply accept or reject their inherited position which anyway varied from text to text. Rather, they used the Anglo-Roman centre-periphery dynamic to make spiritual points, and, as part of the east-west dynamic of Christian universalism, in their inclusive geo-historical visions. Although Jerusalem was often identified as the world’s geographical midpoint, it was a city beyond the horizon, and one which was often thought of as having relinquished its status as divine centre to Rome. For early Anglo-Saxons, Rome was the effective centre of the world beyond Britain.

Did this perception continue into the later ninth century, when a court-lead geographical curiosity was leading to the gathering of knowledge about remote regions and the revision of geographical understanding? No simple answer to this question is possible; Michelet argued that the *Old English Orosius* portrayed the Alfredian court as a centre,

questioning 'Rome's obvious centrality' in the text.⁹³⁰ As I have argued, her reading is questionable and, while the text modifies Britain's position, it does not make it central. The geographical position of Rome is not directly addressed in Alfredian texts. Asser employed the classical centre-periphery dichotomy but without mentioning the city itself. Certain exempla in the *Old English Boethius* employ a classical geography centred on Rome, yet these were inherited from the source text, and, while Rome was the most prominent non-insular place in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, this hardly represents recognition of its central position in the knowable world.

Alfred's reign featured extensive contacts with Rome and the pope, contacts which demonstrated the king's power and piety to a domestic and continental audience. For the first time, however, such contacts were extended beyond Rome to include the patriarch of Jerusalem, and a journey to India in search of the apostles Thomas and Bartholomew. While these contacts may have been used to illustrate Alfred's piety and power on an international stage, they evince a geographical curiosity, a desire to explore and know the world and its horizons, something which is also visible in the reports of Ohthere and Wulfstan. Although Rome occupied a central role in the geographical dynamics of Alfredian historical visions, such a desire presupposes some discontent with inherited Rome-centric geography. The geographical chapter of the *Old English Orosius* shows that such a discontent might take the form of careful revision, expansion, and clarification of classical and late antique geography. Indeed, the translator did not seek to topple existing paradigms, but to work with and update them; something which can be seen most clearly in the replacement of Roman provincial geography with a description of 'Greek land' (Byzantium) and with divisions more reflective of contemporary

⁹³⁰ Michelet, *Imaginary Geography*, p. 134.

Francia.⁹³¹ While this may have had no overt consequences for the position of Rome and its status as an important centre – which, as earlier chapters have demonstrated, it still was – it shows that a geographical understanding which reflected the fourth-century world of imperial Rome no longer found universal acceptance.

⁹³¹ See Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan', p. 23 on this replacement.

Conclusion

Rome played an important and varied role in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England. As a place, the city and its bishops shaped the church and its religious practices, and also influenced the exercise of royal power and construction of kingly authority. Rome was also a key figure in classical and Christian thought, and provided a means by which Anglo-Saxon writers linked their past to the wider movements of Christian history, and a central point through which they understood their place in world geography. While there were some distinct continuities with eighth-century practice and thought, in the ninth century Rome affected Anglo-Saxon England, and was imagined there, in new and dynamic ways. In short, the city not only came to influence the immediacies of Anglo-Saxon political and religious life, but also helped the Anglo-Saxons locate themselves in Christian time and space.

At the most fundamental level, there was regular contact between the two geographically distant areas. As we saw in chapter one, surviving records of Anglo-Roman travel suggest that the first quarter of the ninth century was a time when many journeyed from the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to Rome. Records for travel in the middle fifty years are less extensive, but they show that several journeys were made by royal travellers, and there is then more evidence for travel in the final quarter of the century. The impression of the first and final quarters of the ninth century as times of reasonably frequent travel is reinforced when we include the journeys of couriers carrying letters and *pallia*, which also show that people travelled to Rome in the 830s and in the early 870s when viking activity was at its height. Furthermore, the *Liber Pontificalis* shows wealthy Anglo-Saxons visiting the city in the 850s and 860s. Most of these recorded journeys are of a

high-status and official character, being made by or on behalf of kings and archbishops, and this reflects the nature of the sources which are more likely to record this type of journey. Less specific evidence, however, suggests that a constant flow of private travellers, particularly pilgrims and merchants, visited Rome in the first quarter of the century and, while there is less evidence for this ‘stream’ of travellers across the central fifty years – as there is less evidence for everything in Anglo-Saxon England – certain texts suggest it continued across this period and into the final quarter of the ninth century.

It is, perhaps, the existence of the *Schola Saxonum*, a sizeable community of Anglo-Saxons living in Rome by St Peter’s, that provides the most forceful evidence for the vibrancy of Anglo-Roman contacts and the existence of a constant flow of barely-visible travellers. In the ninth century the *Schola* appears in the historical record, surviving several calamities while coming to play a role in the spiritual, military, economic, and administrative life of Rome. Alongside this evidence of travel, the surviving record of ninth-century Anglo-papal correspondence is relatively rich, albeit clustered in the first quarter of the ninth century, the early 850s, and the 870s. From the five letters that survive in full the existence of another seven now-lost letters can be inferred and other sources point to further instances of correspondence. Moreover, the surviving letters hint at a wider and more constant epistolary discourse between England and Rome. Overall, ninth-century Anglo-Roman contacts were regular and varied and, although they may have decreased in the middle fifty years of the century, they never ceased altogether.

It was through such contact and communication that the popes were able to remain abreast of English affairs, and play an important role in the political and religious life of the Anglo-Saxons. In chapter two we saw that, in ecclesiastical terms, the papacy continued to oversee the Anglo-Saxon church across the ninth century, and they continued to certify its archbishops via the bestowal of the *pallium*. Yet Rome also took

on a more direct role, particularly in the first quarter of the century. In Southumbria, the pope played a central role in the successive instances of conflict and cooperation that occurred between the dominant Mercian kings and the well-organised metropolitan province of Canterbury and its archbishops. For example, Leo III supported and ratified the attempts of Archbishops Æthelheard and Coenwulf of Mercia to restore Canterbury's full metropolitan rights which Offa, through Pope Hadrian, had diminished by elevating Lichfield to an archbishopric in 787. Æthelheard and his successor Wulfred were also able to secure papal approval for their attacks on the lay lordship of minsters, but the popes did not support Wulfred's subsequent attempts to wrest control of key Kentish minsters from the Mercian house. In fact, as with Offa some decades earlier, Coenwulf was able to utilise papal support against his archbishop, and Wulfred's position was significantly weakened.

This surprising detail was explained when we looked more closely at the Anglo-papal correspondence in chapter three. This revealed that Coenwulf had entered into a bond of spiritual kinship with the pope, becoming his son by remote adoption, and was also making annual payments to the city to ensure Peter's support of his kingship. In doing so, he continued practices developed by Offa in the Franco-papal context of the 786 Legatine synods, and like Offa, he was able to rely on papal support and gain papal privileges securing his monastic property against successive ecclesiastical attacks. Northumbrian history is poorly attested in this period, but continental sources show that Leo III and Charlemagne managed the remarkable feat of returning the deposed king Eardwulf to power, against the opposition of the archbishop of York, Coenwulf, and others. While Charlemagne was the more interested party, the sources create the impression that papal support was essential to the success of this scheme, and all involved parties petitioned Leo. This period, then, saw a remarkable degree of papal involvement

in ecclesiastical and secular politics. We should not, however, see these events as examples of unwanted papal interference. Rather papal support was consistently sought by parties in England, both in the ecclesiastical matter of episcopal structures but also in the more contested sphere of property disputes, and in all these instances it carried an unquestioned force.

As well as this remarkable degree of papal involvement, the first quarter of the ninth century also saw broader Roman influences on the material culture of religious devotion. While few surviving manuscripts were copied in this period, a sumptuous early ninth-century Kentish gospel-book known as the 'Royal Bible' makes clear use of decorative elements associated with Rome, as we saw in chapter two. In stone monuments, a classicising aesthetic is widely visible in sculptural groups in Northumbria, Mercia, Kent and Wessex which date to the first half of the ninth century, and ancient Roman columns appear to have influenced the form of round-shafted columns or crosses which survive from this period. These monuments employ an aesthetic which, in the eyes of modern scholars, reflects that of classical Roman monumentality but we cannot be sure that they meant the same to ninth-century Anglo-Saxons, or whether they reflect direct influence from Rome: they may simply have been following continental fashions. Still, monuments such as the decorated, round-shafted columns appear to be conscious instances of *imitatio Romae*. Such interpretive problems also affect our understanding of the basilican churches of this period, which look Roman but may equally reflect developments in contemporary Frankish church architecture. Rather, it is the existence of ring-crypts which point to a conscious desire to worship in surroundings which reflected those of Rome, and such a desire is also evident in the spiral columns in the Repton crypt. These crypts also point to a continuation of Rome's influence on Anglo-Saxon cultic practices, and in this period there is evidence for the continued veneration of a range of

Roman saints. Foremost among these were Peter, whose special spiritual power continued to draw people to Rome, and Gregory, whom Anglo-Saxon writers continued to view as ‘their saint’, and who is often invoked in support of an episcopate frequently challenged by secular power.

In the years after 850, romanising tendencies in material culture largely drop away, but there is evidence for the continued veneration of Roman saints: Gregory continued to occupy a special position in Alfred’s reign and newly constructed churches were dedicated to Peter, Paul and Andrew. Also, in the second half of the ninth century, Rome and its bishops played a less direct role in the Anglo-Saxon church. As we saw in chapter two, following Coenwulf’s death in 821 the West Saxons toppled Mercian hegemony and came to dominate Southumbria, also entering into an agreement with the archbishop of Canterbury which put an end to the conflicts which had brought about papal involvement. Also, the synodal activity so central to the earlier vigour of the Southumbrian episcopate came to an end around this time, possibly a reflection of the West Saxons’ different way of ruling their dependant territories. Despite these developments, the relationship between king and archbishop did break down again in the tense years of the 870s, and the conflict followed a remarkably similar pattern to those earlier in the century. Although we do not know what caused this quarrel, it appears that both king and archbishop attempted to enlist papal support against each other, although this time John VIII favoured the archbishop over the king, reprimanding the latter and commanding him to respect Canterbury’s position. We see from this episode how the papacy retained its ability to influence such conflicts, and that papal support remained a valuable tool for those participating in them; changed circumstances made the need for such involvement less likely, however. Other than this instance of conflict, the papal role in ecclesiastical

affairs in the second half of the ninth century was largely limited to supervision of the church and bestowal of the *pallium*.

While the popes played a less prominent role in religion and the church under West-Saxon hegemony, Rome continued to play a key role in kingship, as chapter three demonstrated. Most notably, Æthelwulf of Wessex sent his infant son Alfred to Rome in 853, where he was invested as a consul by Leo IV, creating a bond of spiritual kinship between the West Saxon king and the pope. This journey also paved the way for the Æthelwulf's visit in 855, a highly-visible, royal event recorded in several continental sources. While his journey was in part about piety, both Æthelwulf's sending of Alfred to Rome and his later visit should be interpreted as symbolic actions, demonstrating his domestic power to an insular and international audience using a language of kingship pioneered by Carolingian rulers to which Rome was central. Later, in the 890s, Alfred's journey was reshaped as an instance of royal anointing, exploiting Davidic parallels and Rome's spiritual authority to elevate Alfred's line above that of existing rivals and to ensure elite loyalty. Æthelwulf also resumed annual payments to Rome, probably as a consequence of his journey there. Such payments probably ceased in the 870s, but were again made by Alfred and the West Saxons in the 880s. Papal initiative was important in their resumption, but Alfred also appears to have used the opportunity as a means of establishing better relationships with Rome after his reprimand of the 870s and of expiating the collective sins of his subject people, something apparent in the coins specially minted for this purpose. Ultimately, the West-Saxon kings did not involve Rome in Anglo-Saxon affairs as directly as earlier Mercian rulers, and focussed instead on exploiting its symbolic power. Like the Mercians, they initiated bonds of spiritual kinship with the papacy and made payments to Rome. Yet, in doing so, they sought to

secure St Peter's patronage less for his help with troublesome archbishops and more for his ability to intercede on their behalf.

Alongside the direct roles Rome and its bishops played in Anglo-Saxon Christianity and kingship, the city was also a central feature in the more imaginative sphere of Anglo-Saxon thought. As we saw in chapter four, in the ninth century the Roman past was conceived in several ways, and the historic links between Britain and imperial Rome and between the Anglo-Saxons and Christian Rome provided the means by which Anglo-Saxon writers situated their own past in the progression of universal Christian history. At the start of the ninth century, there is evidence that Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* was widely read in Southumbrian ecclesiastical circles. Writing almost a century earlier, Bede had narrated the crucial role of Rome in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons and the construction and development of their church, also relating how, by adherence to the universal practices of Rome, the Anglo-Saxons became included within the unity of the church. This story was one strand in Bede's wider vision of the past, in which he traced the movement of divine history westwards in the sixth world-age from Jerusalem to Rome, a city which in both its imperial and papal guises did God's work, not least in its spreading of the faith to the Anglo-Saxons. Alongside Bede's work, other ways of thinking about the Anglo-Saxon past are evident in this period. For example, the manuscript miscellany Cotton Vespasian B.vi contains information about the Old Testament, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon history. While not a cohesive vision, it suggests that others were thinking afresh about the Anglo-Saxon past and its links to Rome.

Although we can say very little about the fate of these ideas across the central years of the ninth century, when King Alfred sought to revive learning in the 890s Roman history was an important part of his programme of education and vernacular translation. In the *Old English Boethius*, Roman history both contextualised the work and functioned as a quarry

of *exempla* illuminating the argument, the translator portraying Imperial Rome as a time of established rights and justice, occasionally violated by tyrants, and finally overturned by the unrighteous Gothic conquerors. In contrast, the translator of the *Old English Orosius* preserved the original's polemic and reading of history, with the consequence that pre-incarnation Roman history is portrayed as a litany of pain and misery. After the incarnation, the fate of the Romans depended on their attitude to Christianity, something which provided its audience with salutary lessons to about how to avoid divine punishment. While it cut much of the original's Roman material, the *Old English Bede* retained the framework of Anglo-Roman history, providing a simplified narrative for its unlearned audience, one in which Rome remained central. These translations functioned in an educational and moral context, grounding their readers in Roman and Anglo-Saxon history. In the visions of the past composed afresh in this period, however, Roman history fulfilled a more immediate purpose. For example, Alfred's preface to the *Old English Pastoral Care* appealed to a wider past in which Rome was central to justify his programme of vernacular translation, while his *Domboc* did much the same, situating the king in a tradition of Christian lawgiving. Most importantly, the 'common stock' of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* – a text which created a largely royal vision of the Anglo-Saxon past – used a universal prologue deliberately to place the past of Britain and the Anglo-Saxons in the wider context. As with the other two visions, and that of Bede, the *Chronicle* sought to include the Anglo-Saxons in the wider movements of providential history. Yet it did so in a different way to Bede, focussing not on Anglo-Roman ecclesiastical history but on the links of Britain and the *Adventus Saxonum* to the Imperial Roman past.

Rome loomed large in Anglo-Saxon historical thought but, as we saw in chapter five, it was also an important element within their geographical understanding. This was not

only due to the strong links between England and Rome, but also because the classical and late antique geographical ideas inherited by the Anglo-Saxons centred on the city, which was often described as the head or mistress of the world. At the same time, these earlier texts located Britain at the margins of the known world, either on, or close to, its edge. Previous studies have focussed on how the Anglo-Saxons accepted or rejected this inherited positioning, but, as my analysis showed, while its position was always peripheral, classical and Christian texts varied in their placement of Britain. This gave Anglo-Saxon writers a number of potential ways of situating their island in their geographical passages which, as elsewhere in early medieval Europe, were scattered throughout a range of texts. In a similar fashion to earlier British and Irish authors, some writers compared Britain's distant position to Rome's central one, using a centre-periphery dichotomy to emphasise the holiness of certain individuals. Other early texts created geo-historical visions and, in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede employed inherited geographical ideas to emphasise Britain's marginality, thus demonstrating the total reach of the church centred on Rome. Also, in 798, the Mercian King Coenwulf used his liminal position to evoke the special nature of the Anglo-papal relationship. These writers were mostly aware that Rome was not the world's literal midpoint, a place often occupied by Jerusalem, but the city provided the effective centre of their known world.

By the late ninth century, this situation was changing. Alfred's court possessed a distinctly international outlook, and his contacts stretched beyond Francia and Rome to Jerusalem, with whose patriarch the king exchanged letters and gifts. Alfred also dispatched two notables to carry alms to the shrines of SS Thomas and Bartholomew in India, an action which, while partly comprehensible in terms of piety and power, also evinces a geographical curiosity about the far-flung regions of the world. Such curiosity is also evident in Alfred's apparent desire to recruit foreigners and interrogate them about

their homelands, the most notable cases of which involved Ohthere and Wulfstan, two voyagers who had travelled extensively in the Baltic region. An account of their voyages was incorporated into the *Old English Orosius*, and Ohthere's report appears to show the Northman being questioned about his most northerly journeys, and whether he had in fact reached the northern limit of the world. This geographical curiosity had some impact on the texts produced in Alfred's reign for, while certain writers continued to use earlier geographical ideas in more traditional ways, or created geo-historical visions similar to those evident in the writings of Bede, other texts exhibited a desire to clarify and revise late antique geographical understanding. An example of this occurs in the an expanded exemplum in the *Old English Boethius*, but it is most apparent in the *Old English Orosius*, which extensively augmented and reworked the original's geographical introduction to provide a clear picture of world geography which reflected contemporary realities. This broad reworking reflects the geographical curiosity evident at Alfred's court. Rather than indicating a reaction against the Anglo-Saxons' marginal position in Romano-Christian geography, as some have argued, it points to a frustration with an inherited understanding that reflected an imperial geography now some four centuries out of date. In the late ninth century Rome remained central, but some geographically-minded Anglo-Saxons were beginning to look beyond the city.

This thesis has shown how Rome played an important part in various aspects of ninth-century Anglo-Saxon life. In so doing, it has demonstrated that, in terms of Anglo-Roman contacts, ecclesiastical history, and religious culture, the ninth century should not be overlooked or seen as a hiatus separating more fertile eras. A reduction in travel to and from Rome is evident in the decades either side of the 850s, yet there is good reason to believe that people made the journey throughout the period, and this enabled the city to

exercise a continued hold on Anglo-Saxon mentalities. In religious terms, the ninth century certainly saw some discontinuity, particularly in the copying of manuscripts and composition of literary works in Latin. There were also, however, clear continuities. For example, the papacy continued to oversee the Anglo-Saxon church, and certify its metropolitans through gifts of the *pallium*, and there is continued evidence for the veneration of a range of Roman saints, particularly Gregory and Peter. Anglo-Saxons also continued to imitate Roman material forms, and while some such instances were perhaps not as intentional as early Anglo-Saxon examples of *imitatio Romae*, other examples such as the 'Royal Bible', the cylindrical sculpture, and the crypt at Repton were. Broader continuities in Anglo-Saxon thought are also evident. Rome remained a central figure in Anglo-Saxon ideas about history and geography, even if, in Alfredian texts, Roman history was used in new ways, and there was some discomfort with the outdated nature of inherited geographical ideas.

Alongside these continuities, Rome and its bishops came to play new roles in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England. Most noticeable is the papal participation in ecclesiastical politics in the first quarter of the century, where successive popes authorised Canterbury's recovery of its metropolitan rights and supported its attacks on lay lordship of minsters, while also effectively weakening those attacks by ratifying royal control of certain minsters. Another innovation was the greater papal role in Anglo-Saxon kingship throughout the century. Dominant Southumbrian kings formed spiritual bonds with the bishops of Rome, journeyed to the city in conspicuous displays of power, and also sent considerable payments there to enlist St Peter's support. Carolingian example did much to inspire these developments, but it was first and foremost Rome's spiritual power and authority that made the assistance of the popes worth seeking and its symbolism worth exploiting. Indeed, of all the external influences on England in this dynamic century,

Rome's was the most extensive, for it shaped Anglo-Saxon thought and experience more than any other place.

Additional Abbreviations for the Appendices

<i>ArF</i>	<i>Annales regni Francorum</i> , ed. F. Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. VI (Hanover, 1895); trans. B. Scholtz, in <i>Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories</i> (Ann Arbor, MI, 1970), pp. 37-125
<i>CAA</i>	<i>Charters of Abingdon Abbey</i> , ed. S.E. Kelly (2 vols., Oxford, 2000–1)
<i>C & S</i>	<i>Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church. I, A.D. 871-1204</i> , eds. D. Whitelock, M. Brett, and C. Brooke (Oxford, 1981)
<i>Ep.Sel. Leo.</i>	<i>Epistolae selectae Leonis IV</i> , ed. A. Hirsh-Gereuth, MGH Epp. V (III) (Berlin, 1899), 585-612
<i>GPA</i>	<i>William of Malmesbury: Gesta Pontificum Anglorum. The History of the English Bishops</i> , ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom, notes by R. Thomson (2 vols., Oxford, 2007)
<i>GRA</i>	<i>William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum. The History of English Kings</i> , ed. and trans. R. Mynors, R. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (2 vols., Oxford, 1998-9)
<i>HEA</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis: The History of the Abbey of Abingdon</i> , ed. and trans. J. Hudson (2 vols., Oxford, 2002-7)
<i>LD</i>	<i>Liber diurnus Romanorum pontificum</i> , ed. Hans Foerster (Bern, 1958)
<i>Leo Ep.</i>	<i>Leonis III papae epistolae X</i> , ed. K. Hampe, MGH Epp. V (III) (Berlin, 1899), 87-104
<i>LVB</i>	<i>Der Memorial und Liturgiecodex von San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia</i> , eds. D. Geuenich and U. Ludwig, MGH Libri mem. N. S. IV (Hannover, 2000)
<i>PE</i>	<i>Papsturkunden in England. Vol. III: Oxford, Cambridge, Kleinere Bibliotheken und Archive und Nachträge aus London</i> , ed. W. Holtzmann (Göttingen, 1952)

RPR

Jaffé, P., ed., *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum ab condita ecclesia ad annum post Christum natum MCXCVIII*, 2nd edn in 2 vols., by W. Wattenbach, S. Loewenfeld, F. Kaltenbrunner, P. Ewald (Leipzig, 1885-8), I

Appendix 1: Ninth-Century Journeys between England and Rome

No.	Date	Traveller(s)	Status/Office	Direction	Motivation	Returned	Source
1	c. 800	Æthelric, son of Æthelmund	Wealthy layman, landed, (father was ealdorman of Hwicce)	England to Rome	Pilgrimage	Yes	S 1187 (804), trans. <i>EHD</i> , 81
2	801*	Æthelheard	Archbishop of Canterbury	England to Rome	To ensure the demotion of the archbishopric of Lichfield through papal mandate	Yes	ASC, 801. Alcuin, <i>Ep.</i> 206, 230, 231, 255; trans. 20, 51, 52, 53; also Appendix 2:7, 8a.
3	801*	Cyneberht	Bishop of West-Saxons	England to Rome	Uncertain; possibly supporting Æthelheard	?	ASC, 801; Alcuin, <i>Ep.</i> 206; trans. 20, mentions two bishops travelling with Æthelheard
4	801*	Anonymous	Unspecified bishop	England to Rome	Uncertain; possibly supporting Æthelheard	?	Alcuin, <i>Ep.</i> , 206; trans. 20, mentions two bishops travelling with Æthelheard
5	801*	Torctmund	Northumbrian nobleman and <i>fidelis</i> of king Æthelred (d. 796)	England to Rome	Probable exile following his murder of Æthelred's assassin	?	Alcuin, <i>Ep.</i> , 206, 231; trans. 20, 52
6	801*	Ceolmund	Former thegn of Offa	England to Rome	Uncertain; possibly pilgrimage, or working on behalf of Coenwulf concerning the demotion of Lichfield	?	Alcuin, <i>Ep.</i> , 206, 231; trans. 20, 52
7	808	Anonymous, presumably Aldulf	Papal messenger	Rome to England	Delivery of a letter from Leo III to Archbishop Eanbald II of York	Yes: Aldulf returned with no. 8	<i>Leo Ep.</i> , 2-3

* All these individuals travelled as a group

8	808	Anonymous	Messenger of Archbishop Eanbald II of York	England to Rome	Carrying letters to Leo III	?	<i>Leo Ep.</i> , 3
9	808	Eardwulf	Deposed king of Northumbria	England to Rome	To obtain the support of Charlemagne and Leo III in order to facilitate his return to Northumbria	Yes	<i>ASC</i> , 806 D; <i>ArF</i> , 808-9; <i>Leo Ep.</i> , 2-4
10	808 - 809	Aldulf	Papal messenger, a deacon and 'a Saxon from Britain'	Rome to England	To escort Eardwulf back to Northumbria; captured by pirates on his return, he was ransomed by Coenwulf of Mercia	Yes	<i>ArF</i> , 808, 809; <i>Leo Ep.</i> , 4
11	814 - 815	Wulfred	Archbishop of Canterbury	England to Rome	Presumably to obtain papal support for his subsequent attack on the lay lordship of minsters	Yes	<i>ASC</i> , 814, 815
12	814 - 815	Wigberht,	Bishop of Sherbourne	England to Rome	Uncertain: possibly supporting Wulfred's case	Yes	<i>ASC</i> , 814
13	824	Nothelm (Noðhelm)	A messenger (<i>praeco</i> : literally herald) from the Pope Eugenius (elected 24 May 824)	Rome to England (?)	Presumably carrying letters from the pope	?	S 1433; trans. <i>EHD</i> , 84; see also S1187
14	839	Ecgberht	King of Wessex	England to Rome	Pilgrimage: the journey was not completed	Journey not completed	<i>AB</i> , 839, relates that 'the king of the English (<i>rex Anglorum</i>) sent envoys to ask permission to travel through Francia on his way to Rome on pilgrimage.'
15	853	Alfred	West-Saxon ætheling (b. 849), later king	England to Rome	Sent by Æthelwulf in preparation for his journey, and to forge a spiritual bond with the pope; Alfred's journey was later construed as anointing by the <i>Chronicle</i> and Asser	Yes	Appendix 2:13; also <i>ASC</i> , 853 ABC; and Asser, ch. 8

16	855 - 856	Æthelwulf	King of Wessex	England to Rome	To display royal power, piety, and wealth	Yes	<i>AB</i> , 855-6; <i>LVB</i> , p. 167, fol. 27v; <i>LP</i> , 106:34; <i>ASC</i> , 855-8; Asser, ch. 11
17	855 - 856	Æthelred (Ederath)	West-Saxon ætheling, later king	England to Rome	To accompany Æthelwulf	Yes	<i>LVB</i> , p. 167, fol. 27v
18	855 - 856	Alfred (Elfreth)	West-Saxon ætheling, later king	England to Rome	To accompany Æthelwulf	Yes	<i>LVB</i> , p. 167, fol. 27v; Asser, ch. 11
19-20	855 - 856	[?]-]thryth (Atruth), Alfred (Elfreth)	Unknown	England to Rome	Appearing in a sub-column next to Æthelred and Alfred, these names probably represent other people travelling with the king and his sons	?	<i>LVB</i> , p. 167, fol. 27v
21	874	Burgred	Deposed king of Mercia	England to Rome	Exile and pilgrimage	No	<i>ASC</i> , 874; Asser, ch. 46; <i>LVB</i> , p. 171, fol. 31v, contains a group of 10 Anglo-Saxon names with 'Burgureth rex' the first entry
22	874 (or 888?)	Æthelswith	Queen of Burgred (m. 853), daughter of Æthelwulf of Wessex	England to Rome	Presumably to accompany her husband on his exile/pilgrimage; <i>ASC</i> , <i>ABC</i> , state that she died in Pavia in 888, and – discounting the later and possibly reworked <i>MS DE</i> and <i>GRA</i> – it seems most likely that she remained in Italy after the death of her husband	Uncertain but unlikely	<i>LVB</i> , p. 171, fol. 31v; <i>ASC</i> , 888 <i>ABC</i> , 888 <i>DE</i> ; <i>GRA</i> i.96, ii:69
23-30	874	Alamunth, Eadburg, Aldulf, Ulbsuith, Adelulf, Elfsuith, Edereth, Adelulf	Uncertain	England to Rome	Accompanying Burgred and Æthelswith; it is possible they were being remotely commemorated in the <i>Liber Vitae</i> , but the context suggests otherwise	Uncertain, but unlikely	<i>LVB</i> , p. 171, fol. 31v, these names (5 male 3 female) are displayed in a bi-columnar format, with four males underneath the king's name and three females and one male under the queen's name

31	883	Sigehelm	Sigehelm is probably the Ealdorman of Kent (S 350, 1276) killed at the battle of the Holme in 902 (ASC, 903)	England to Rome	To take to Rome 'the alms' which Alfred is said to have promised; he was then said to have travelled to India 'to St Thomas and St Bartholomew'	Yes	ASC, 883 BC, not in MS A or Asser; most likely a contemporary insertion into the ASC
32	883	Æthelstan	Uncertain: possibly the Mercian priest mentioned by Asser, ch. 74	England to Rome	Accompanying Sigehelm	?	ASC, 883 BC; Asser, ch. 74
33	887	Æthelhelm	Ealdorman of Wiltshire	England to Rome	Carrying West-Saxon alms to Rome	Yes	ASC, 887; Asser, ch. 86
34	888	Beocca	Ealdorman	England to Rome	Carrying West-Saxon alms to Rome	Yes (he attests S 1286 in 904)	ASC, 888
35-6	889	Anonymi	Two couriers	England to Rome	To transport Alfred's letters to Rome	?	ASC, 889
37	890	Beornhelm	Abbot (possibly of one of the Canterbury communities?)	England to Rome	Carrying West-Saxon alms to Rome	?	ASC, 890

Appendix 2 – Anglo-Papal Correspondence in the Ninth Century

No.	Date	Type	Sender	Recipient	Text	Business
1	c.798	Letter – not survived	Æthelheard	Leo III	Now lost, this letter is referred to in 2 and 4; seems to have originated at a synod, possibly the Clofesho synod of 798 at which S 1258 was produced	2 reveals that Archbishop Æthelheard wrote to Leo ‘about his own affairs and the needs of those of all Britain’, presumably his flight from Kent during Eadberht Praen’s uprising and the archbishopric of Lichfield
2	798	Letter	Coenwulf of Mercia	Leo III	Only preserved in <i>GRA</i> , i.88, I:124-29	Argued for the demotion the Lichfield and the relocation of the southern metropolitan to London
3	798	Letter – not survived	Leo III	Æthelheard	Now lost, but is directly referred to in 4 when Leo stated ‘...we have sent a reply more clearly to his holiness [Æthelheard].’ This letter is the reply to 1	Leo informed Æthelheard that he had excommunicated Eadberht Praen
4	798	Letter	Leo III	Coenwulf	Survives in B.L., Cotton Vespasian MS A. Xiv, s.xi ⁱⁿ , ed. Alcuin, <i>Ep.</i> , 127; trans. <i>EHD</i> , 205.	Leo refuses to demote Lichfield, expresses outrage at Eadberht Praen, and asks Coenwulf to pay 365 mancuses per annum to Rome
5	c.801	Letter – not survived	Coenwulf	Leo III	Now lost, but is directly referred to in 7, where Leo says he has received a ‘missive (<i>sillabas</i>)’ from Coenwulf, via Æthelheard, containing two letters from the king	According to 7, letters 5 and 6 were full of ‘true faith’ and devotion to the papacy, containing Coenwulf’s assurance that his subjects would obey apostolic decrees, as well as offering the pope 120 mancuses
6	c.801	Letter – not survived	Coenwulf	Leo III	Now lost, this letter is the partner of 5 above	The division of subjects between the two letters is unclear
7	802	Letter	Leo III	Coenwulf	Only found in <i>GRA</i> , i.89, I:130-3.	Praises Coenwulf and Æthelheard effusively; urges Coenwulf to obey Æthelheard’s decrees, relates his decision to restore Canterbury’s rights

8	802 (18 Jan)	Papal decree	Leo III	Æthelheard	Found in: <i>GPA</i> , i.37, I:76-9; also ed. H&S, III, 536; and trans. <i>EHD</i> , 209, where Whitelock suspects later tampering, although this is not necessarily the case, as Leo refers to the situation before York was elevated. This decree is frequently referred to in S 1431a; trans. <i>EHD</i> , 210.	Restored Canterbury's metropolitan rights as had existed before the elevation of Lichfield; formal decree containing curse, papal subscription and dating clauses
9	803	Papal decree – not survived	Leo III	Æthelheard & the Anglo-Saxon church	Papal decree is referred to in a document from the synod of Clofesho, 803: S1431b (preserved in contemporary single-sheet form), clearly a different decree from 8	The Clofesho document endeavours to prevent minsters coming under lay lordship, in accordance with a mandate from the 'apostolic lord' pope Leo, and 'privileges granted by the apostolic see'
10	808	Letter – not survived	Leo III	Archbishop Eanbald II of York	In a letter of 808 to Charlemagne, Leo III states he has composed a letter to Eanbald and discusses arrangements for its delivery; <i>Leo Ep.</i> , 2	Described as 'an exhortatory letter of our apostolic authority', it would have asked Eanbald to account for his opposition to Eardwulf, also requesting that the archbishop send someone to Leo
11	808	Letter – not survived	Archbishop Eanbald II of York	Leo III	A second letter of December 808 reveals that Eanbald II had sent a messenger to Rome, and it is clear that the messenger carried at least one letter from Eanbald II; <i>Leo Ep.</i> 3	Presumably, this contained the archbishop's response to Leo III's pro-Eardwulf stance
12	c.811	Privilege	Leo III	Coenwulf (and Winchcombe)	Survives in the twelfth-century <i>Annals of Winchcombe</i> and a thirteenth-century Winchcombe Cartulary; ed. <i>PE</i> 1; cf. <i>LD</i> , no. 86	An incomplete but ultimately genuine papal privilege, granting Winchcombe immunity and protection as well as granting Coenwulf the right to freely dispose of his other monastic properties in ' <i>insula Saxonia</i> '
12a	c.796-816	Privilege, potentially the same as 10	Leo III	Abingdon, or another foundation	A privilege of Leo III for Abingdon (or another house) in the reign of Coenwulf was used in the concoction of the immunity clause and parts of the dispositive section of S 183 (CAA 9), <i>CAA</i> , pp. 43-4. This charter is only preserved in the twelfth-century <i>HEA</i> (MS C) and its later revision (MS B), <i>HEA</i> , I. 9-11, B.16-7; but the references to a <i>vetustum privilegium</i> in various orthodoxorum charters point to its earlier	Potential papal privilege granting exemption from episcopal interference and, possibly, the right to dispose of monastic property Note: The 2 versions of the <i>HEA</i> include a series of chapters which relate Leo III and Coenwulf granting privileges to Abingdon in the early ninth century, <i>HEA</i> , I. 9-11, B.16-7. These are actually an inventive extrapolation from the immunity clause in S 183 by the twelfth century chronicler, but gave rise to erroneous

					existence and the likelihood of it being a mid-10 th century Æthelwoldian concoction, <i>CAA</i> , pp. cciv-v, 38-9	entries in <i>RPR</i> , 2505-8
13	817, December	Privilege	Paschal I	Coenwulf	Survives in the twelfth-century <i>Annals of Winchcombe</i> and a thirteenth-century Winchcombe Cartulary; ed. <i>PE</i> 2, which includes the reconstruction of the dating clause from <i>ECEC</i> , 255-7, cf. <i>LD</i> , no. 93	Another incomplete but genuine papal privilege, from Paschal I to Coenwulf, granting Coenwulf full control of his monastic property and its appurtenances
14	851	Letter – fragment	Leo IV	Archbishop Ceolnoth of Canterbury and King Berhtwulf of Mercia	London, BL, Additional MS. 8873, s.xii ⁱⁿ (central Italy), known as the <i>Collectio Britannica</i> and containing register fragments of various popes; ed. <i>Ep.Sel Leo</i> , 14	This brief extract is concerned with the regulation of pastors, arguing that they should not go beyond the standards affixed by their fathers in the sacred canons or worldly laws
15	853	Letter – fragment	Leo IV	Æthelwulf	From the <i>Collectio Britannica</i> ; ed. <i>Ep.Sel Leo</i> , 31; trans. <i>EHD</i> , 219	Concerns Alfred's visit to Rome (appendix 1:15), the pope notifying Æthelwulf that he had 'decorated him, as a spiritual son, with the dignity of the belt (sword) and the vestments of the consulate'
16	873-4	Letter – fragment	John VIII	Burgred	From the <i>Collectio Britannica</i> ; ed. C & S, no. 1; trans. <i>EHD</i> , 220	Exhorts the king to eradicate the sins of fornication and incest from his kingdom, or refer the unrepentant to the pope
17	873-5	Letter – fragment	John VIII	Archbishop Æthelred of Canterbury, Archbishop Wulfhere of York and all the bishops, priests, deacon and clergy	Found in Cardinal Deusdedit's collection of canons (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 3833, s.xii); ed. C & S, no. 2; trans. <i>EHD</i> , 221	Relates that the 'Englishmen' living in the <i>Schola Saxonum</i> had decided to adopt a Roman vestments, and exhorts all English clergy to do the same

18	c.876-7	Letter – not survived	Æthelred (Archbishop of Canterbury)	John VIII	Now lost, but directly referred to in 20, which John begins by saying ‘having perused your letter’	Æthelred professed devotion to Christ and the apostolic see, and wrote of the ‘necessary concerns of ...[his]... church’, and complained about the hardships he was suffering including those inflicted by ‘the king’
19	c. 877-8	Letter – not survived	John VIII	‘The king’, almost certainly Alfred	Now lost, but 16 directly refers to it: ‘we have been at pains to admonish and exhort your king with a letter from the apostolic see’	It is clear from 20 that Æthelred had complained (in 18) to the pope about Alfred, and this letter would have admonished the king advising him to respect the church
20	877-8	Letter	John VIII	Archbishop Æthelred of Canterbury)	Preserved in the surviving portions of John VIII’s register (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. Vat. 1, s.xi ^{2/3}); ed. C & S, no. 3; trans. <i>EHD</i> , 222	Urges Æthelred to keep protecting the church against the depredations of the king and others, whilst offering him full papal support in his conflict with the king; it also encourages Æthelred to uphold the laws on marriage
21	883	Letter – not survived	Marinus	Alfred of Wessex	<i>ASC</i> , 883 BCDE, reports that ‘Pope Marinus sent some wood of the cross to King Alfred’	It seems certain that this wood of the cross would have been accompanied by a letter which would have explained the gift
22	889	Letters – not survived	Alfred	Stephen V	<i>ASC</i> , 889: ‘There was no expedition to Rome in this year, but King Alfred sent two couriers with letters’	These letters probably explained why there had been no ‘expedition’ carrying alms that year
23	c. 891-6	Letter – not survived	Archbishop Plegmund of Canterbury	Formosus	Now lost, but referred to in 24 by the statement that ‘our beloved brother Plegmund has informed us...’ It seems likely Plegmund would have done this by letter	Plegmund reassured Formosus about religious and pastoral standards in England
24	891-6	Letter	Formosus	Bishops of England	Ed. C & S, no. 8; trans. <i>EHD</i> , 227; also <i>GPA</i> , i.38, I:78-83; survives among post-conquest materials concerning the Canterbury primacy dispute and is often thought to have been ‘improved’. Also copied by Eadmer and William of Malmesbury	A hortatory epistle; Formosus reveals he had considered excommunicating the Anglo-Saxons, before offering spiritual encouragement and advice on the succession of priests and bishops

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