Janet L. Nelson

West Francia and Wessex in the ninth century compared

Marc Bloch's famous exercise in comparative French and German medieval history began in impatience with the 'desultory dialogue' that resulted when historians of different countries and traditions had no agreed agenda of questions to be addressed.[1] Bloch proved here that if one and the same historian tackles the comparanda from both sides, the 'dialogue' can be much improved. But that historian relies perforce on two distinct national historiographies which, like parallel lines, may never meet. The Wittgenstein rules of engagement go far to solving the problem of historiographical solipsism, but they do also highlight it. The late Timothy Reuter, and Chris Wickham in his Reuter Memorial Lecture, were aware of the risk of a 'game of mirrors' in which 'comparison' means only that existing certitudes of one tradition are reflected back in the other.[2] Then there is the problem of exceptionalism, to which the English are allegedly particularly prone. Of course, difference encountered in national historiographies can reflect real difference – that is, testable against contemporary evidence. But as Chris Wickham himself showed, early medieval sources are seldom similar enough to be altogether comparison-friendly.

My brief is a comparison that has to begin from two very distinct historiographies. In the red corner (forgive my addiction to this boxing metaphor but it has the merit of highlighting two men),[3] is Alfred the Great representing Wessex: an Anglo-Saxon state successfully extracting economic dues and military service from all the free directly, unmediatised, because the aristocracy have felt the smack of royal government but also basked in royalty's warm smile and been trained to act as agents of the state, a state capable of effectively seeing off the providentially-provided Viking threat, a state meriting a maximum view.[4] In the blue corner, is Charles the Bald representing West Francia: a failing if

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[1] Marc Bloch, A problem in comparative history: the administrative classes in France and in Germany, in: Land and Work in Medieval Europe. Selected papers by Marc Bloch, trans. J. E. Anderson (London 1967) 82–123, at 82, this paper was originally published in: Revue historique de droit français et étranger (1928) 46–91; see in the same volume, Marc Bloch, A contribution towards a comparative history of European Societies, in: Land and Work in Medieval Europe. Selected papers by Marc Bloch, trans. J. E. Anderson (London 1967) 44–81, read at the International Congress of Historical Sciences at Oslo, in 1928.

[2] Timothy Reuter, Medieval: another tyrannous construct?, in: The Medieval History Journal 1 (1998) 25–45, repr. in: id., Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities, ed. Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge 2006) 19–37, esp. at 33–37, see also the index to this volume: "Historiography, and the comparative approach"; Chris Wickham, Problems in doing Comparative History, The Reuter Lecture 2004 (Southampton 2005) esp. 6–7; Jürgen Kocka, The uses of comparative history, in: Societies Made up of History. Essays in Historiography, Professionalisation, Historical Social Proto-Industrialisation, ed. Ragnar Björk/Karl Holin (Edsbruck 1996) 197–209.

[3] For a strong germanophone tradition of personalising early medieval 'Staatlichkeit', see Walter Pohl, Staat und Herrschaft im Frühmittelalter: Überlegungen zum Forschungsstand, in: Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Stuart Airlie/Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006) 9–38, at 14–15; cf. Mayke de Jong, Ecclesia and the early medieval polity, in: Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Stuart Airlie/Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006) 113–132, esp. 113–115.

[4] For some representative, chiefly positive, judgements on Alfred, see Nicholas P. Brooks, England in the ninth century: the crucible of defeat, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5/29 (1979) 1–20, repr. in: id., Communities and Warfare 700–1400 (London 2000) 48–68; Janet L. Nelson, "A king across the sea": Alfred in Continental perspective, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5/36 (1986) 45–68, repr. in: ead., Rulers and Ruling Families in Early Medieval Europe: Alfred, Charles the Bald and Others (Variorum Collected Studies Series 657, Aldershot 1999) chapter 1; Simon Keynes, A Tale of Two Kings: Alfred the Great and Æthelred the Unready, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5/36 (1986) 195–217; Alfred P. Smyth, King Alfred the Great (Oxford 1995); Richard Abels, Alfred the Great: War, Culture and Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England (Harlow 1998); James Campbell, Asser's Life of Alfred, in: The Inheritance of Historiography, 300–1900, ed. T. P. Wiseman/Christopher Holdsworth (Exeter Studies in History 12,

not yet quite a failed state; a state incapable of retaining loyal service of either humbler free men or aristocrats; a state subverted by external Viking threat and also internal rebellion; a theatre-state in which the king unedifyingly bargains with incurably unfaithful faithful men and, still unable to secure their support, is reduced to substituting ritual for real resources.[5]

I only slightly caricature some very deeply-etched pictures. An exceptional single-handed exponent of a key aspect of the very comparison I am dealing with was J.M. Wallace-Hadrill back in 1950, more interested in ideology than governmental practicalities, and predisposed (despite his subtitle: "some common historical interests") to emphasise contrast rather than similarity between West Frankish and West Saxon kingship.[6] Since then, mainstream Anglo-Saxonist historians have been less inclined to ignore the uses of Continental comparison, and to that extent grown a lot less insular – or, more accurately, never were as insular as their intermittently exceptionalist tone sometimes suggested.[7] It remains true that these historians have in their various ways made Wessex look, still, very different from West Francia: different in general because the kingdom and the kingship of Wessex emerged, bloodied, battered, but unbowed, indeed strengthened, from the Viking ordeal, "the crucible of defeat"; different in particular because Alfred seems more than ever to hold centre-stage, not just as a successful governor and man of action, but – an almost unique early medieval phenomenon – as a thinking king, a noble mind, a "lay intellectual", as Patrick Wormald called him.[8] I want, not to knock that image, but in so far as the sources allow, to contextualise it. On the West Frankish side, the

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Exeter 1986) 117–135, repr. in: id., The Anglo-Saxon State (London 2000) 29–51; Patrick Wormald, The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century 1: Legislation and its Limits (Oxford 1999) 416–429; and most of the contributors to two collective volumes, Alfred the Wise: Studies in Honour of Janet Bately on the Occasion of her Sixty-Fifth Birthday, ed. Jane Roberts/Janet L. Nelson, with Malcolm Godden (Cambridge 1997), and Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences, ed. Timothy Reuter (Studies in Early Medieval Britain, Aldershot 2003).

[5] For mostly critical views of Charles the Bald, see Marc Bloch, Feudal Society, trans. L. A. Manyon, 2 vols. (London 1961) 17–18, 41, 61–62, 193–195; François Louis Ganshof, Feudalism, trans. P. Grierson (London [3]1964) 42–48; Jan Dhondt, Études sur la naissance des principautés territoriales en France, IXe–Xe siècle (Bruges 1948) 40–78, 264–246; Pierre Riché, Les Carolingiens. Une famille qui fit l'Europe (Paris 1983) 187–209; Jean Dunbabin, France in the Making, 843–1180 (Oxford 1985) 1–17; Klaus Herbers, Rom im Frankenreich – Rombeziehungen durch Heilige in der Mitte des 9. Jahrhunderts, in: Mönchtum – Kirche – Herrschaft 750–1000, Festschrift für Josef Semmler, ed. Dieter R. Bauer/Rudolf Hiestand/Brigitte Kasten/Sönke Lorenz (Sigmaringen 1998) 133–169, at 138; Introduction to Medieval Europe, 300–1550, ed. Wims Blockmans/Peter Hoppenbrouwers (London 2007) 97–98, 105. For more positive views of Charles' political performance, see Peter Classen, Die Verträge von Verdun und Coulaines als politischen Grundlagen des westfränkischen Reiches, in: Historische Zeitschrift 196 (1963) 1–35; Janet L. Nelson, Charles the Bald (Medieval World, London 1992); and more recently Simon Coupland, The Frankish tribute payments to the Vikings and their consequences, in: Francia 26 (1999) 57–75, repr. in: id., Carolingian Coinage and the Vikings. Studies on Power and Trade in the 9th Century (Variorum Collected Studies Series 847, Aldershot 2007) 11–31; Adelheid Krah, Die Entstehung der 'potestas regia' im Westfrankenreich während der ersten Regierungsjahre Kaiser Karls II., 840–877 (Berlin 2000) esp. 205–296; Olivier Guillot, Dans l'avant Xe siècle du royaume de l'ouest franc: autour de Coulaines (843) et Quierzy (877), in: Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae 6 (2001) 151–193.

[6] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, The Franks and the English in the ninth century: some common historical interests, in: History 35 (1950) 202–218, repr. in: id., Early Medieval History (Oxford 1975) 201–216.

[7] See above all James Campbell, Observations on English government from the tenth to the twelfth Century, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5/25 (1975); and id., The Significance of the Anglo-Norman State in the Administrative History of Western Europe (Beihefte der Francia 9, Sigmaringen 1980); id., Essays in Anglo-Saxon History (London 1986), respectively chapters 10 and 11; also id., The Late Anglo-Saxon State: A Maximum View (Proceedings of the British Academy 87, London 1994); id., Was it infancy in England? Some questions of comparison, in: id., The Late Anglo-Saxon State: A Maximum View (Proceedings of the British Academy 87, London 1994) 179–200; and id., Some agents and agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State, in: ibid. 201–226; respectively chapters 1, 8 and 9 in ibid. esp. 7–9, 13, 15, 28–30. Patrick Wormald, Lex scripta and verbum regis: Legislation and Germanic Kingship from Euric to Cnut, in: Early Medieval Kingship, ed. Peter Sawyer/Ian N. Wood (Leeds 1977) 105–138, repr. in: id., Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West. Law as Text, Image, and Experience (London 1999) chapter 1; id., English Law, place early Anglo-Saxon law and political traditions firmly within continental ones. See further, Timothy Reuter, The making of England and Germany, 850–1050: points of comparison and difference, in: Medieval Europeans. Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe, ed. Alfred P. Smyth (London 1998) 53–70, repr. in: id., Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities, ed. Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge 2006) 284–299; Timothy Reuter, All quiet except on the western front?, in: ibid. 432–458, at 437; Matthew Innes, State and Society in the Early Middle Ages. The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000 (Cambridge 2000) 222–250; Wickham, Problems.

[8] Wormald, English Law 429.

sources do allow, indeed they invite, a focus on aristocratic families rather than the king, on the provinces rather than the centre, hence enhancing a view of the ninth century that highlights state-fragmentation rather than state-maintenance, or else a focus on the Church, often through the partisan eyes of Hincmar of Rheims, whose uppity remarks on episcopal authority, defence of church property and démarches on ecclesiastical discipline, have recently been attracting more attention than his views on kingship.[9]

National historiographies are seldom as homogenous as the phrase implies, nor do they effectively hold monopolies in every medievalist discipline. On Charles the Bald, in recent decades, research has developed a pleasingly international aspect, diversely European as well as North American. Specialists in 'Staatssymbolik' and ritual, art historians, numismatists, and literary and linguistic specialists have tended towards decidedly appreciative judgements, and even political historians have produced a wider range of interpretations, from relatively upbeat to, still, apocalyptically gloomy ("Mais non, Madame", Professor Robert-Henri Bautier cried, after hearing me argue in Paris, some twenty years ago, for positive features in the final phase of Charles's reign, "c'etait une catastrophe!").[10] The historians of Alfredian Wessex, have, by contrast, almost to a man, been English or anglophone, with the distinguished exception of the Austrian Anton Scharer; and there has been virtual unanimity about Alfred's achievements, on the part of historians, archaeologists, art historians, numismatists, and liter-

[9] See Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Stuart Airlie/Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006), esp. Walter Pohl, Staat und Herrschaft. For aristocratic families, their court connexions and local power, see Régine Le Jan, Familles et pouvoir dans le monde franc, VIIe–Xe siècle (Paris 1995); La royauté et les élites dans l'Europe carolingienne (du début du IXe aux environs de 920), ed. ead. (Collection Histoire et littérature régionales 17, Villeneuve-d'Ascq 1998); Stuart Airlie, The palace of memory: the Carolingian court as political centre, in: Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe, ed. Sarah Rees Jones/Richard Marks/Alastair J. Minnis (York 2000) 1–20; and the case-study of Florian Mazel, Des familles de l'aristocratie locale en leurs territories: France de l'Ouest, du IXe au XIe siècle, in: Les élites et leurs espaces. Mobilité, rayonnement, domination (V^{e}–XIe siècles), ed. Philippe Depreux/François Bougard/Régine Le Jan (Turnhout 2007) 361–398. On episcopal authority, see Steffen Patzolt, Die Bischöfe im karolingischen Staat. Praktisches Wissen über die politische Ordnung im Frankenreich des 9. Jahrhunderts, in: Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Stuart Airlie/Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006) 133–162; on Hincmar in particular, see Martina Stratmann, Hinkmar von Reims als Verwalter von Bistum und Kirchenprovinz (Quellen und Forschungen zum Recht im Mittelalter 6, Sigmaringen 1991), and the introductions to the excellent new editions of Hincmar's works, Collectio de ecclesiis et capellis (ed. Martina Stratmann, MGH Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui 14, Hannover 1990); De divortio Lotharii regis et Theutbergae reginae (ed. Letha Böhringer, MGH LL Concilia 4, 1, Hannover 1992); De villa Noviliaco et capitula (ed. Hubert Mordek, Ein exemplarischer Rechtsstreit, Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanon. Abt. 83, 1997) 86–112; and De presbiteris criminosis. Ein Memorandum Erzbischof Hinkmars von Reims über straffällige Kleriker (ed. Gerhard Schmitz, MGH Studien und Texte 34, Hannover 2004).

[10] Robert-Henri Bautier, Sacres et couronnements sous les Carolingiens et les premiers Capétiens: recherches sur la genèse du sacre royal français, in: Annuaire-Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de France, 1987–1988 (Paris 1989) 7–56, at 33–44, repr. in: id., Recherches sur l'histoire de la France médiévale (Aldershot 1991) chapter 2, drawing on Percy E. Schramm, Kaiser, Könige, und Päpste 2: Beiträge zur allgemeinen Geschichte (Stuttgart 1968) 113–139; Franz-Reiner Erkens, Herrschersakralität im Mittelalter (Stuttgart 2006) 117–23. On Charles as patron, see J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, Charles the Bald: a Carolingian Renaissance prince, in: Proceedings of the British Academy 64 (1978) 155–184, expanded version, in id., The Frankish Church (Oxford 1983) 241–257; and Rosamond McKitterick, Charles the Bald and his library: the patronage of learning, in: English Historical Review 95 (1980) 28–47, repr. in: ead., The Frankish Kings and Culture in the Early Middle Ages (Aldershot 1995). See further John J. Contreni, Carolingian Learning, Masters and Manuscripts (Variorum Collected Studies Series 363, Aldershot 1991); Lawrence Nees, A Tainted Mantle: Hercules and the Classical tradition at the Carolingian Court (Middle Ages Series, Philadelphia 1991) esp. 150–154, 262–266; John Marenbon, Wulfad, Charles the Bald and John Scottus Eriugena, in: Charles the Bald. Court and Kingdom: Court and Kingdom, ed. Margaret T. Gibson/Janet L. Nelson (Oxford 1981) 375–383; id., John Scottus and Carolingian theology, in: Charles the Bald. Court and Kingdom, ed. Margaret T. Gibson/Janet L. Nelson (Aldershot ^{2}1990) 303–325; John Lowden, The royal/imperial book and the image or self-image of the medieval ruler, in: Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe, ed. Anne J. Duggan (King's College London Medieval Studies 10, London 1993) 213–239; Paul Edward Dutton/Herbert L. Kessler, The Poetry and Paintings of the First Bible of Charles the Bald (Ann Arbor MI 1997); and the doctoral thesis of Joëlle Alazard-Fontbonne, La commande artistique et littéraire de Charles le Chauve (Université de Paris X, Nanterre 2007), currently being revised for publication. On Charles and theology see David Ganz, The debate on predestination, in: Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom, ed. Margaret T. Gibson/Janet L. Nelson (Aldershot ^{2}1990) 283–302, and id., Theology and the organisation of thought, in: The New Cambridge Medieval History 2: c. 700–c. 900, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1995) 758–785, esp. 767–772, 778–779.

ary and linguistic specialists alike.[11] Only in that last quarter has some serious unsettling appeared recently, with the welcome likelihood of equally serious debate.[12]

Choice of comparanda matters a lot, and the most successful comparers explicitly or implicitly rely on something like Weberian ideal-types which were, as Chris Wickham points out, not definitional but lists of things to look for.[13] Selection is inevitable. Some subjects seem a little too similar or else the evidence is too disparate: the coinage, for instance, was apparently equally well-controlled in Wessex and in West Francia though the volume of transactions, hence scale of use, may have differed, but because metal-detectorists' finds are available for Wessex but not Francia, the corpora of evidence are diverse.[14] Some aspects are quite dissimilar: size is an obvious one. If Chris Wickham's comparison of tenth-century England south of the Humber and France north of the Loire is justified by rough similarity of size, the same does not go for the hexagon and Wessex in the ninth century.[15] Other topics seem as just right as we are going to get – so, like Goldilocks, I will go for those. We could probably all agree with the dinner-table comment of a New Labour politician, "The central problem of government is resource-allocation", though we might quibble at the definite article. With resource-allocation in mind, I will look at the conduct of war, and church property, less because these are topics I have considered in the past than because there has been some stimulating new work on both; and also because they are connected as institutionalised functions of my comparanda, which I unapologetically call two states – 'Staaten'. Finally, mindful of our collective duty, I will consider, and compare, some elements of social practice and cultural perception in the construction of 'Staatlichkeit'.

In Alfred's Wessex, key military institutions were the king's retinue of mounted warriors, his *bellatores*, and then similar retinues of aristocrats whom the king could summon for both offensive and defensive war.[16] In local defensive warfare, bridge-work and fortress-work, small-scale landowners and peasants too played an important part. Here the costs of defensive war were not offset by royally-

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[11] Anton Scharer, The writing of history at King Alfred's court, in: Early Medieval Europe 5 (1996) 177–206; id., Herrschaft und Repräsentation. Studien zur Hofkultur Königs Alfreds des Grossen (Wien/München 2000); and now the interdisciplinary approach of David Pratt, The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4/67, Cambridge 2007). For numismatic and artefactual evidence, see below n. 14.

[12] See Allen J. Frantzen, The form and function of the preface in the poetry and prose of Alfred's reign, in: Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences, ed. Timothy Reuter (Studies in early Medieval Britain, Aldershot 2003) 121–136; and especially Malcolm R. Godden, The player-king: identification and self-representation in King Alfred's writings, in: ibid. 137–150; id., Did Alfred the Great write anything?, in: Medium Aevum 76 (2007) 1–20.

[13] Cf. Wickham, Problems 13. For a fine example of the method, see Wendy Davies, Celtic kingships in the early Middle Ages, in: Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe, ed. Anne J. Duggan (King's College London Medieval Studies 10, London 1993) 101–124.

[14] Mark Blackburn, Alfred's coinage reforms in context, in: Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences, ed. Timothy Reuter (Studies in early Medieval Britain, Aldershot 2003) 199–217; Michael Metcalf, Variations in the composition of the currency at different places in England, in: Markets in Early Medieval Europe. Trading and 'Productive' Sites, 650–850, ed. Timothy Pestell/Katrina Ulmschneider (Oxford 2003) 37–47. For West Francia, see Michael Metcalf, A sketch of the currency in the time of Charles the Bald, in: Charles the Bald. Court and Kingdom, ed. Margaret T. Gibson/Janet L. Nelson (Aldershot ^{2}1990) 65–97; Simon Coupland, The early coinage of Charles the Bald, 840–864, in: Numismatic Chronicle 151 (1991) 121–158, repr. in: id., Carolingian Coinage and the Vikings (Aldershot 2007) chapter 9.

[15] Wickham, Problems 15 and 17; Davies, Celtic kingships 105–110. Wessex c. 800 was some 200 km x 90 km in extent; and by 899, when Alfred died, included Devon in the West, Surrey, Sussex and Kent in the east, and the south-western parts of Mercia, and Berkshire, in the north, bringing the expanded kingdom to some 800 km. x 100 km, or 80 000 km. sq.; the West Frankish kingdom was roughly 600 km x 800 km (480 000 km sq).

[16] The following section draws on the works of James Campbell, Nicholas P. Brooks and Richard Abels, cited above, and also Nicholas P. Brooks, The development of military obligations in eighth-and ninth-century England, in: England before the Conquest. Studies Presented to Dorothy Whitelock, ed. Peter Clemoes/Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge 1971) 69–84, repr. in: id., Communities and Warfare 700–1400 (London 2000); Guy Halsall, Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450–900 (London 2003) esp. 71–110. My own contributions on Frankish and Alfredian military matters are reprinted as chapters 4 and 6 in my Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe (London 1986), and chapters 1, 2 and 6 in my Rulers and Ruling Families in early Medieval Europe: Alfred, Charles the Bald and Others (Variorum Collected Studies Series 657, Aldershot 1999); on the Vikings see, Janet L. Nelson, The Frankish Empire, in: The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings, ed. Peter Sawyer (Oxford 1997) 19–47; also ead., England and the continent in the ninth century 2: the Vikings and others, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 6/13 (2003) 1–28.

directed plunder and tribute distributed among lords and their retinues, but borne by the king and the elites themselves, and also spread across rural and urban populations. These institutions had developed in the eighth and earlier ninth centuries in a context of endemic conflict between different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. At all levels, the actual delivery of service depended on loyalty and commitment. This dependence became even more critical under the pressure of outside enemies, assorted bands of Vikings, who were different but not that different from the Anglo-Saxons and whose leaders therefore presented alternative focuses of loyalty for dissident royals, aristocrats and landowners generally. Alfred nearly lost his kingdom in 877–878 for just this combination of Viking threat and Viking attraction.

In Charles the Bald's West Francia, the process of adapting to defensive warfare, not new in itself but more urgent now, caused strain and stress. Horizontal associations – *coniurationes*, *gildones* – permissible in other contexts, were perceived by king and elites as a threat to public order which in the eyes of a contemporary bishop justified the slaying of resourceful local resisters in 859 by "our more powerful (Frankish) men"[17]. As far as Vikings were concerned, however, defence was eventually organised.[18] There was a remarkable display of state power in the areas directly and indirectly affected: data on resources existed, since basic survey material *per mansos* had been regularly taken and updated since Charlemagne's reign, and surpluses were creamed off effectively, to pay off Viking war-bands, notably in 866 and 877, when *proceres* were the key collecting-agents in the regions, which included Burgundy as well as Francia in the narrow sense.[19] There was, for the period and given the scale of the realm, a serious effort to co-ordinate central with local defensive organisation: witness fortifications of *civitates* and palaces on key rivers as far north as the Oise and as far south as the Charente, and fortified bridges in the Seine basin and on the Loire.[20] Large numbers of people felt the smack of government.

Cost-calculation was at a new premium. Ninth-century kings needed to know what their resources were. The increasing use of the written word offered a means.[21] Among many cross-Channel contacts relevant here, consider the meeting of one of Charles the Bald's right-hand men, Lupus of Ferrières, with one of Alfred's father's, King Æthelwulf's head notary Felix, at the royal convent of Faremoutiers on 6 August 843.[22] Lupus was en route to Verdun and the biggest concentrated application of the technology of writing to resource-allocation that Carolingian government had yet seen. I assume Felix reported this back to his West Saxon employer, King Æthelwulf, and that it confirmed, if it did not introduce, the use of estate-inventories for those apparently arcane pious exercises, the Decimations of 854, which were in effect Æthelwulf's own experiments in resource-allocation.[23]

The slaying of Frankish peasants by Frankish nobles is not paralleled by any episode in Wessex. The 859 notice in the Annals of St Bertin is unique for West Francia, but I regard it as indicative. I do

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[17] For Prudentius, bishop of Troyes, see Annales Bertiniani a. 859 (ed. Félix Grat/Jeanne Vielliard/Suzanne Clémencet/Léon Levillain, Paris 1964) 80. Cf. Janet L. Nelson, Peers in the early Middle Ages, in: Law, Laity and Solidarities. Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds, ed. Pauline Stafford/Janet L. Nelson/Jane Martindale (Manchester 2001) 27–46, esp. 39–46, repr. in: Janet L. Nelson, Courts, Elites, and Gendered Power in the Early Middle Ages: Charlemagne and Others (Variorum Collected Studies Series 878, Aldershot 2007) chapter 6.

[18] Halsall, Warfare and Society 99–101, 113, 115.

[19] Coupland, Frankish tribute payments. For surveys per mansos, see Janet L. Nelson, Le partage de Verdun, in: Media Francia, ed. Marie-José Gaillard/Michel Margue (Paris 2008).

[20] Simon Coupland, The fortified bridges of Charles the Bald, in: Journal of Medieval History 17 (1991) 1–12; Halsall, Warfare and Society 219–220.

[21] Rosamond McKitterick, The Carolingians and the Written Word (Cambridge 1989) esp. 25–37; Janet L. Nelson, Literacy in Carolingian government, in: The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge 1990) 258–296, repr. in: ead., The Frankish World (London 1996) 1–36; Hubert Mordek, Kapitularien und Schriftlichkeit, in: Schriftkultur und Reichsverwaltung unter den Karolingern, ed. Rudolf Schieffer (Opladen 1996) 34–66; Mark Mersiowsky, Regierungspraxis und Schriftlichkeit im Karolingerreich: Das Fallbeispiel der Mandate und Briefe, in: ibid. 109–166.

[22] Lupus Servatus, Epistula 105 (ed. Peter K. Marshall, Leipzig 1984) 102, numbered as Epistula 28 in Lupus of Ferrières, Epistulae (ed./trans. Léon Levillain, Loup de Ferrières, Correspondance 1: 829–847, Les classiques de l'histoires de France au Moyen Âge 10, Paris ^{2}1964).

[23] Janet L. Nelson, England and the continent in the ninth century 3: rights and rituals, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 6/14 (2004) 1–24, at 14–24.

not infer that social relations were happier or less happy in one realm than another. As for tribute payments: there is evidence in Frankish annals for deep resentment at the contributions required, but these annals were not controlled by the king. In Wessex, where the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was a court production, references to tributes were euphemised as peace-making; but an episcopal charter and a more independent version of the Chronicle spill the beans.[24] Infrastructural arrangements in Wessex – the administrative division of the land into shires, and the public defence exactions levied on hides as documented by the Burghal Hidage – permitted the raising of tribute.[25] The requirement of labour to build fortifications in West Francia was said explicitly by Charles the Bald in the Edict of Pîtres (864) to be modelled on "the custom of other [contemporary] peoples' [i.e. not prescribed by late Roman law], and the likeliest 'foreign' people are the West Saxons"[26]. It is, I think, not just an accidental distribution of evidence that gives the impression of a West Frankish regime more able to impose its demands north of the Loire than south of it; yet the occasionally-recorded attendance of southern magnates, lay and ecclesiastical, at Charles the Bald's assemblies, and his acknowledgement as reigning king in private charters, does indicate that the state's writ ran, intermittently, throughout the territory Charles claimed to rule. Probably in both kingdoms, the incidence of the tax-burden was patchy and there was variety in the operations of aristocratic farming of the proceeds, a factor on which depended the effectiveness of the system from the king's standpoint. The long and short of it was, though, that a recognisably similar response was made to similar challenges in Wessex and West Francia.

My second comparandum is the extent of royal control over church property and churches as property. Susan Wood in a recent book has pinpointed the reign of Charlemagne as the moment when royal control over larger churches (bishoprics and great abbeys) acquired a new range and bite.[27] More or less the same period is that at which John Blair has shown in another recent book that churches in Mercia became increasingly heavily exploited, even annexed, by kings.[28] Aristocrats owned great churches as well as many small ones, yet Mercian kings intervened, sometimes violently, to limit their control. Was ninth-century Wessex different? Some Anglo-Saxonists have thought so, indeed seen in that difference one of the secrets of the rise of Wessex at Mercia's expense.[29] But perhaps the difference between high-handed intervention on the one hand, and 'protection and lordship' on the other, is in the eye of the beholder.[30]

All this has obvious connexions with the king's military needs and the Church's contributions to them. Hincmar of Rheims, a comparativist 'avant la lettre', shortly before the Edict of Pîtres wrote a little treatise in which he claimed that English greater churches were less extensively endowed than Frankish ones, hence did not owe military service on the system, by now well-established in Francia, of having *milites* resourced by benefices on church lands, hence of embedding the Church in the

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[24] Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography 1278 (ed. Peter Sawyer, London 1968); the revised edition, with the same numbering, by S. E. Kelly is available online at www.trin.cam.ac.uk); Æthelweard, Chronicon (ed. A. Campbell, London 1962) 40.

[25] Nicholas P. Brooks, Alfredian government: the West Saxon inheritance, in: Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences, ed. Timothy Reuter (Studies in Early Medieval Britain, Aldershot 2003) 153–73, at 158–162, with further references, implicitly accepts that the core of this document is Alfredian; cf. David Hill, The origin of Alfred's urban policies, in: ibid. 219–233.

[26] Janet L. Nelson, The Franks and the English in the ninth century, in: The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture, ed. Paul E. Szarmach/Joel T. Rosenthal (Studies in Medieval Culture 40, Kalamazoo 1997) 141–158, repr. in: ead., Rulers and Ruling Families in early Medieval Europe: Alfred, Charles the Bald and Others (Variorum Collected Studies Series 657, Aldershot 1999) chapter 6.

[27] Susan Wood, The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West (Oxford 2006) 211–219, 224–235.

[28] John Blair, The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society (Oxford 2005) 122–134.

[29] Patrick Wormald, The age of Offa and Alcuin, in: The Anglo-Saxons, ed. James Campbell/Eric John/Patrick Wormad (Oxford 1982) 101–128; id., The ninth century, in: ibid. 132–159, at 106, 115–118, 122–128, 139–140; Simon Keynes, Mercia and Wessex in the Ninth Century, in: Mercia. An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe, ed. Michelle P. Brown/Carol Ann Farr (London 2001) 310–328.

[30] Anglo-Saxon Charters 1438, ed. Sawyer; see Nicholas P. Brooks, The Early History of the Church of Canterbury (Leicester 1984) 197–203.

(defensive) military service of the kingdom.[31] In successive considerations of this claim, I first doubted if this difference was real (hence the question-mark in my title), then thought Hincmar ought to be taken seriously, though hedged my bets by referring to "the relative underdevelopment of church-state relations in the English kingdoms [including Wessex]"[32]. By the 1990s, I had reverted to my first thoughts, that is, decided not to take Hincmar too straightforwardly. It is true that there is "no direct evidence for the church of Sherborne as a major support for Alfred"[33], but the involvement of Bishop Eahlstan in military campaigns in 825 and 848, and his successor's involvement in the revolt of Alfred's elder brother against his father King Æthelwulf in 856 and eventual death in battle against Vikings in 871, amount to evident clues. There is also charter evidence from Worcester for "the beginnings of an English imperial Church on Carolingian lines"[34]; and the clauses in Alfred's laws fining for forcible entry into the *burhs* (fortified residences) of archbishops and bishops, with a double penalty if this occurs "while the army is out", point the same way.[35] David Pratt now argues that Alfred's political rhetoric – a rhetoric of service – was "shaped by the essential homogeneity of duties attached to land", i.e. common services: a "unitary legal discourse" which collapsed the distinction between churches and other landholders.[36] He sees a 'deep' contrast here with Carolingian ways of doing. Yet he himself acknowledges the complicated realities of churches' involvement in military service on both sides of the Channel, citing, for instance, a grant by Alfred to one of his thegns, "with the consent of the *familia* of Malmesbury" and with reversion to it, that looks very like a Carolingian-style, royally-instigated benefice on church property. Susan Wood proposes to see such arrangements, welldocumented in later Anglo-Saxon England, as originating in "pressure of military necessity" in "the Viking wars".[37] All this suggests to me that the Church's military service was another case of ninth-century rough-and-ready similarity between Wessex and West Francia. No doubt practice accommodated all kinds of local variations and oscillations, while ninth-century conceptualisations are apt to strike modern viewers as baggy, multi-layered and messy rather than homogenous or unitary.

This is good point to take stock: my two comparanda have yielded evidence of similarity rather than contrast. So, how do we explain the very different tenth-century trajectories of Wessex and West

[31] Hincmar, Collectio de ecclesiis et capellis, ed. Stratmann 119–20, with n. 292. This work was written for Charles the Bald to emphasise amongst other things the huge contributions of Hincmar and his church to the security of the realm. Hincmar's vision tended to be focused on the province of Rheims, and his interest in lands across the sea as evidenced in his section of the Annales Bertiniani and in the capitularies he drafted for Charles, is extremely patchy.

[32] Janet L. Nelson, The church's military service in the ninth century: a contemporary comparative view?, in: Studies in Church History 20 (1983) 15–30, repr. in: ead., Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe (London 1986) chapter 6; cf. ead., King 45–68, repr. in: ead., Rulers and Ruling Families in Early Medieval Europe: Alfred, Charles the Bald and Others (Variorum Collected Studies Series 657, Aldershot 1999) chapter 1, esp. 67.

[33] Nelson, King across the sea 66.

[34] Anglo-Saxon Charters 223, ed. Sawyer.

[35] Alfred's Laws 40 and 40.1 in Alfred the Great: Asser's 'Life of the King Alfred' and Other Contemporary Sources (trans. Simon Keynes/Michael Lapidge, Harmondsworth 1983) 168. I interpret "while the army is out" as meaning, in effect, "during the absence of any of the foregoing office-holders, including the bishops, on military service". The alternative reading, that the army is forcibly entering properties while foraging, is possible (I think of a string of Frankish prohibitions on Frankish armies doing just that) but less likely.

[36] David Pratt, The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great (Cambridge 2007) 22–27.

[37] For Anglo-Saxon Charters 356, ed. Sawyer, see Wood, Proprietary Church 291 with n. 94; and Pratt, Political Thought 101, who also cites two instances of land-exchanges between Alfred and a layman, Anglo-Saxon Charters 347 (891), ed. Sawyer, to the ealdorman Beorhtwulf, where the land (Sutton Poyntz in Dorset) ended up with Glastonbury, and Anglo-Saxon Charters 355 (892 x 899), ed. Sawyer, to Deormod (identifiable as the *discðegn* of Anglo-Saxon Charters 348 [892], ed. Sawyer) where the land ended up with Abingdon. David Dumville, Ecclesiastical lands and the defence of Wessex, in: Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar, ed. id. (Woodbridge 1992) 29–54, esp. 43–46, highlighted these charters, further commenting on the "complicated nexus of relationships between the royal dynasty and the church of Winchester", which I think may stand for other less well-documented and even more complicated nexuses. Three charters constitute 30% of what is available for Alfred, cf. Brooks, Alfredian government 155: "only ten [of Alfred's charters] have any call upon our attention", i.e. are certainly genuine. Like Ian Wood, I see these complicated nexuses as three-way, involving local ealdormen and thegns along with kings and church-*familiae*, and like Blair, Church 323–329, as having Frankish parallels, though I would not limit those to the tenth century or associate them specifically with "la mutation féodale", cf. Paul Fouracre, Cultural conformity and social conservatism, in: History Workshop Journal 33 (1992) 152–160; Innes, State and Society esp. 141–143, 251–259.

Francia? The answers proposed by Chris Wickham boil down to West Francia's exceptional dynastic problems, and aristocratic consolidation in the regions, especially the passing of the Île-de-France out of royal and into aristocratic control.[38] But I would lay a further stress on the scale factor: it was ninth-century West Francia's huge size that made regional parcellisation likelier than in Wessex, and even a united England could be called relatively speaking a right-little tight-little state. If we re-set the comparison for the thirteenth century, we would still find France, for all its monarchy's new-won glamour, a much less consolidated kingdom than England.

In the final part of this paper, I want to re-examine another alleged contrast: between what have been interpreted as different ideological underpinnings, or as different styles of kingship, but which I propose to treat as different forms of 'Staatlichkeit', assessed qualitatively, in terms of perceptions of the state harboured by agents and leading aristocrats – their sense of serving, benefiting from, and belonging. The laying-down of some important thought-tracks in both Wessex and West Francia had a lot to do with state-formation in the 'longue durée'. First, there is the question of funded office, especially comital office, and its revocability or otherwise. Charles the Bald was a fourth-generation Carolingian: there had been plenty of time for old habits of heritability to re-embed themselves, hence for office-lands and inherited lands to merge de facto. The methods of extending royal lands available to Charles very often involved re-establishing bonds with sitting office-holders. Nevertheless in dealing with rebellions, he was able in several cases to remove counts, transferring their offices and confiscating and reallocating their local resources to new holders. He was also able to maintain direct bonds with royal vassals in at least parts of the realm, including, notably, the Rheims/Laon area, and more widely the Île-de-France where from 867 the king held the abbacy of St Denis, and perhaps to keep some countships vacant, with their lands under his direct administration.[39]

Much of all that applied to Alfred too, though the evidence is sparser and often prescriptive rather than descriptive. His military success in expanding his kingdom allowed him to install some new ealdormen, thegns, and reeves as well as new ecclesiastical appointees.[40] The evidence for eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon kings assigning lands to earls (the new scandinavianised name for ealdormen) "on an ex officio basis for the durability of their period in office"[41] is lacking for the ninth century; but it may be that similar re-assignments were made then too, and out of similar circumstances of political upheaval that encouraged and allowed high-handed regality. Alfred is represented by his biographer as "exploiting and bending ealdormen, thegns and reeves to his will and to the common good". If he found anything unjust in the judgement of judges (a few lines later identified as ealdormen, thegns and reeves), "he would ask them about it politely, as is his wont", but would threaten the recalcitrant with

[38] Wickham, Problems 17 and 22–34.

[39] Nelson, Charles the Bald 50–59, 213–214, 219. See Karl Ferdinand Werner, Untersuchungen zur Frühzeit des französischen Fürstentums 3, in: Welt als Geschichte 18 (1958) 256–289; id., Untersuchungen zur Frühzeit des französischen Fürstentums 4, in: Welt als Geschichte 19 (1959), 146–93; id., Missus – marchio – comes: entre l'administration centrale et l'administration locale de l'empire carolingien, in: Histoire comparée de l'administration (IVe–XVIIIe siècle), ed. Werner Paravicini/Karl Ferdinand Werner (Beihefte der Francia 9, München 1980) 191–239, at 221–227; Stuart Airlie, The aristocracy in the service of the state in the Carolingian period, in: Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. id./Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006) 93–111, at 110–111. I have benefited much from advance-views of parts of Charles West's forthcoming book, Reframing the Feudal Revolution (forthcoming).

[40] For thegns, see above n. 37; for thegns 'promoted' to ealdormen, and a high "rate of turnover reflecting in part the hazards arising from their military duties", see Abels, Alfred the Great 270–271. For churchmen, the cases of Plegmund, and Asser himself, are telling, Asser, De rebus gestis Ælfredi Regis 77 (ed. William Stevenson, Oxford 1904) 81, 62, 68; with the comments of Campbell, Asser's Life of Alfred 139–140.

[41] Stephen Baxter/John Blair, Land tenure and royal patronage in the early English kingdom: a model and a case-study, in: Anglo-Norman Studies 28 (2005) 19–46, at 27. From the large number and varied status of tenants of these lands in Domesday Book, the authors infer, "Royal patronage thus offered a tenurial stake in the wider polity to a very broad spectrum", at ibid. 45. Compare Stuart Airlie's analysis of the arrangements created for greater and lesser office-holders in the reign of Louis the Pious, Airlie, Aristocracy 93–112, esp. his comment at 95 on Campbell's claims for the late Anglo-Saxon state's "integration of the 'gentry'" as "particularly striking". Cf. James Campbell, Some agents and agencies of the late Anglo-Saxon state, in: id., The Late Anglo-Saxon State: A Maximum View (Proceedings of the British Academy 87, London 1994) 201–226, at 204–205, an apt reference to Carolingian parallels for Alfred's paid *ministri* and household troops.

loss of “their offices of earthly power”.[42] Asser says Alfred used the spoken and written registers of *affabilitas* and *familiaritas*.[43] In the letter-preface to the translation into Old English of Gregory the Great’s Pastoral Care, Alfred addressed his bishops “lovingly and friendlily (*leoflice and freondlice*)”, saying, “it seems better to me – if it seems so to you – that we should turn into a language we can all understand certain books most necessary for all men to know”. In the preface to the translation of Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy that appears to assert his authorship, the king “implores each of those whom it pleases to read this book to pray for him”, which implies regarding each copy as if it were a gift from the king.[44] On these and other texts generally believed to have been written by Alfred, rest the claims of modern historians to have an entrée into his mind: claims that have grown in recent years. Malcolm Godden recently issued a sceptical counterblast entitled, “Did King Alfred write anything?”[45] David Pratt’s study of Alfred’s political ideas which is also a study of the king’s political practice, was published near-simultaneously, making the case for Alfredian authorship more powerfully and persuasively than anyone ever has.[46] Methodological questions are always timely: historians do well to heed the literary scholars, and ask what it could mean to credit a ninth-century person with authorship, or literary patronage. A further response is to look beyond texts, beyond the book as gift, to *aedificia*, Asser’s word for costly and prestige-giving artefacts.[47] That their makers (*operatores*) received a seventh of Alfred’s annual revenue from *census* is a remarkable claim on Asser’s part which, infused as it is by Solomonic example, ought to be taken seriously.[48] What about the recipients of the *aedificia*?

By considering a group of precious small objects that can now be more or less confidently associated with Alfred, we can get closer not just to his kingly style, but to the ‘Staatlichkeit’ he promoted. Leslie Webster, drawing on a rich hoard of modern interdisciplinary scholarship, and especially recent work by David Pratt, argued that an ideology associated with wisdom and literacy was conveyed in the famous Alfred Jewel. Its inscription, *Ælfred mec heht gewyrcan* (“Alfred ordered me to be made”), the high value of its materials, and the high quality of its workmanship, above all the fact that there were known to be three smaller but formally similar analogues, prompted the thought that it was commissioned by the king as part of a group, or ranked series, of significant objects. Linked in form with the smaller analogues, the so-called ‘Jewel’ could be credited with likely use as a book-pointer, literally an indicator of wisdom.[49] Alfred’s preface to the Old English translation of the Pastoral Care

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[42] Asser, De rebus gestis Ælfredi regis 91 and 106, ed. Stevenson 78 and 93, esp. Stevenson’s interesting note at 278, on the expression *suatim utens*: “acting according to his natural disposition”, which recurs in chapter 56 and 74, trans.: Alfred the Great, ed. Keynes/Lapidge 101–102, 109–110.

[43] Asser, De rebus gestis Ælfredi regis 76 and 81, ed. Stevenson 59 and 67.

[44] Alfred the Great, ed. Keynes/Lapidge 124 and 132.

[45] Godden, Player-king, see above n. 12.

[46] Pratt, Political Thought.

[47] Asser, De rebus gestis Ælfredi regis 91, ed. Stevenson 76–77: *Quid loquar...* [de] *aedificiis aureis et argenteis incomparabiliter illo edocente fabricatis*, trans.: Alfred the Great, ed. Keynes/Lapidge 101; cf. De rebus gestis Ælfredi regis 76 ed. Stevenson 59: [rex] *aedificia supra omnem antecessorum suorum consuetudinem venerabiliora et pretiosora nova sua machinatione facere... pro viribus studiosissime non desinebat*, trans.: Alfred the Great, ed. Keynes/Lapidge 91; and De rebus gestis Ælfredi regis 101, ed. Stevenson 87: *operatoribus quos ex multis gentibus collectos et comparatos propemodum innumerabiles habebat, in omni terreno aedificio edoctos* [partem censuum rex largiebatur], trans.: Alfred the Great, ed. Keynes/Lapidge 106, with 249–250 and 257, helpful notes on the meanings of *aedificium*/*aedificia*, variously translated as “treasures”, cf. ibid. chapters 76 and 102, and “craft”. See further Robert Deshman, The Galba Psalter: pictures, texts and context in an early medieval prayerbook, in: Anglo-Saxon England 26 (1997) 109–138, at 132–133.

[48] Asser’s inspiration was I Reg. 5: 13–14, as observed by David R. Howlett, Alfredian arithmetic – Asserian architectonics, in: Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences, ed. Timothy Reuter (Studies in Early Medieval Britain, Aldershot 2003) 49–61, at 60–61.

[49] Leslie Webster, Aedificia nova: treasures of Alfred’s reign, in: Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences, ed. Timothy Reuter (Studies in Early Medieval Britain, Aldershot 2003) 79–103, at 81–87; David Pratt, Persuasion and invention at the court of King Alfred the Great, in: Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages: The Proceedings of the First York Alcuin Conference, ed. Catherine Cubitt (Turnhout 2003) 189–221, at 194–200, with full references to the large literature (Pratt originally delivered his paper at a conference in 1998, Webster hers in 1999). The Alfred Jewel (6.2 cm long) found in 1693 and now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, is unique among these objects in size, costliness, and iconographic interest. The smaller (3.1 cm long) æstel found in or about 1860 at Minster Lovell (Ox-

mentioned an æstel 'on' or 'in' each copy sent out to one of his bishops. The form of each extant 'jewel', with a "head" associated with a socket with holes for a vertical rivet into which a thin rod of organic, hence now-perished, material, could be fitted, suggests a pointer's function. Webster also drew attention to some still extant Torah-pointers from the early modern period, whose form resembled that of the "jewels".[50] Add to all this the apparent derivation of æstel from (*h*)*astula*, or "little spear", and the fact that Ælfric thought æstel the right gloss for *indicatorium*, a pointer, and the case for this interpretation becomes very strong.[51] Percy E. Schramm had identified the Alfred Jewel as a piece of 'Staatssymbolik': the terminal of a royal sceptre.[52] But David Pratt noted other aspects of each of the four objects that tell against Schramm's idea and conclusively demonstrate a common design (in both senses): the small size, the fitting's flat back which would have enabled the user to lay the æstel flat on the page "like a computer mouse", and the delicate join between the head and socket would indicate that the user held, not the rod, but the fitting "as a conductor holds a baton" (that works for Webster's Torah-pointers too). Each æstel was "a functional symbol of the user's desire for wisdom", and the quest for wisdom was enjoined by King Alfred on his people at large, but specifically and principally on all office-holders, ecclesiastical and lay, and all those who served at his court.[53]

Each æstel was also a precious object. The value of each episcopal æstel as specified in the preface to the Pastoral Care would have been equivalent to some half a pound weight of gold. Only the Alfred Jewel itself comes close to that, but the analogues all contain significant amounts of gold that proclaim an association with royal and divine authority. If tiny fragments of a fragment of the True Cross were embedded in the larger and more elaborate æstels, that would have put them almost beyond price.[54] But what needs emphasis is less the differences than the structural similarity of these objects, and their shared function in enabling the reading of a book, corresponding to the shared obligation on Alfred's office-holders to learn to read, and to read books that the king deemed "most necessary for all men [a few words later modified to "free-born young men with means"] to know"[55].

Now the plot has thickened with the discovery of three more analogues, making seven æstels in all.[56] Two of the original four were found by metal-detectorists, as were two of the additional three.[57] This means that more are quite likely to turn up. There clearly was a concerted campaign to produce and distribute highly desirable symbolic objects to a select, but relatively large, number of people, in a way that recalls, in its combination of inclusivity and hierarchy, the modern U.K. Honours System, though Alfred's was a very much more serious ideological project than that reinvented tradition. The aspirational message was intended to spur future effort on the part of royal agents as well as rewarding past performance; the sign had a recognised moral and religious significance allied to a functional message – effective service entailed access to holy writings; and through the genuinely high value of

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fordshire) comes closest to the Alfred Jewel in value and artistry, while the smaller æstels belong in what Pratt, Persuasion 199, calls "humbler contexts".

50 Webster, Aedificia nova 83.

51 David R. Howlett, Alfred's aestel, in: English Philological Studies 14 (1985) 65–74.

52 Percy E. Schramm, The Alfred Jewel: eine Szepterbekrönung des angelsächsischen Königs Alfred (871–899), in: id., Herrschaftszeichen und Staatsymbolik. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte vom dritten bis zum sechzehnten Jahrhundert, 3 vols. (Stuttgart 1954–1956) 1, 370–375.

53 Pratt, Persuasion 198–199; id., Political Thought 189–192.

54 Bruce Harbert, King Alfred's æstel, in: Anglo-Saxon England 3 (1974) 103–110, noting at 108–109, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's mention a. 883 that Pope Marinus sent such a relic to Alfred.

55 Preface to the Old English Version of Gregory the Great's Pastoral Care, in: Alfred the Great, ed. Keynes/ Lapidge 126.

56 I am very grateful indeed to Barbara Yorke who told me and the other participants at the Vienna conference in 2007 about these further discoveries. I also wish to thank David Hinton for so kindly sending me a copy of id., The Alfred Jewel, and Other Late Anglo-Saxon Decorated Metalwork (Ashmolean Handbooks, Oxford 2008). These debts will be evident in the following note.

57 These are Bowleaze Cove (Dorset), found 1990, and Cley Hill (Wiltshire), found 1997, among the four known before 2002; Bidford-on-Avon (Warwickshire) and Aughton (Yorkshire) among the very recent finds (personal communication, Barbara Yorke). Barbara Yorke, Alfred the Great. Warfare, Wealth and Wisdom. A Book to Accompany the Exhibition of Winchester Discovery Centre (Winchester 2008) 15–20, illustrates and briefly discusses all seven æstels. See also Hinton, Alfred Jewel esp. 30–39: "Other possible æstels". Pratt, Political Thought 192, notes that Bowleaze Cove is very near Sutton Poyntz, the land exchanged by Alfred with a faithful ealdorman in Anglo-Saxon Charters 347, ed. Sawyer, see above n. 37.

the objects themselves, the gift of the sign constituted a lasting relationship between giver and recipient, and between giver and recipients collectively. Schramm was not wrong, after all, in diagnosing 'Staatssymbolik' at work in the Alfred Jewel, but he underestimated the scope and intent of Alfred's project. For what the æstels signified was literally the forming of a service-elite under direct royal lordship, with a penumbra of reliable clients and allies: a community of the willing with considerable potential for extension. In that regard, the seventh æstel is the most interesting: it turned up in an excavation, recently-published, at Borg in the Lofoten Islands in the far north of Norway. The excavators remembered that there was a connexion between this place and Alfred. The link was Ohthere, a Norwegian "foremost man" of his local community in the far north of Norway, perhaps on the Lofoten Islands themselves, a rich man, a landed man, a mighty taker of tribute from the Sami, and an enterprising trader who reached the court of Alfred. He brought the king "walrus-teeth of noble bone"[58] (adding that "the hide of walruses is very good for ship's ropes"). His report of the riches of the far north and the excitement of his voyages impressed this royal lover of wisdom who, like Solomon, received from God the *weal*, wealth, he had rejected in wisdom's favour.[59] Ohthere accepted Alfred as his lord; and someone at Alfred's court recorded the traveller's tale and incorporated it, where it seemed to belong, in the Old English version of Orosius' Seven Books of Histories against the Pagans, while Ohthere received an æstel which he carried home.[60] That did not make Ohthere part of a West Saxon state; but, as with an American ambassador receiving an honorary U.K. knighthood, the looser form of association worked by analogy, underlining the personal element operative at the heart of that state. Not all æstel-holders were officials – some, like Ohthere, were very temporary denizens, recipients of personal royal favour; but all officials, I surmise, were, really or potentially, æstel-holders.

With Alfred's æstels, Webster contrasted the traits evoked by the splendidly flamboyant art objects that Charles the Bald commissioned: ruthlessness, ostentation, grandeur, a sense of destiny. These objects were "unique marvels, which elevated and distanced the king in all his power and glory", thus contrasting with "the manuscripts which Alfred engineered [which] were intended for circulation, and to bring his court and clergy nearer to his personal thinking".[61] If the model of Solomon inspired both kings and underpinned all these artefacts, it did so in very different registers and to different effects – and, Webster might argue, it produced different kinds of state-building.[62] There may be more to be said for Charles' way with his courtiers, his pitch for their trust, his efforts to emulate the teaching role of his grandfather Charlemagne as a form of state-building, his self-representation as a Solomonic exemplar of wisdom and justice.[63] As for a wider constituency of *fideles*, Charles continued

[58] Borg in Lofoten. A Chieftain's Farm in North Norway, ed. Gerd Stamsø Munch/Olav Sverre Johansen/Else Roesdahl (Trondheim 2003) 241, with a photograph of the æstel, now in Tromsø University Museum, at 246, fig. 9H.8 (my thanks to Barbara Yorke for this reference); and Gerd Stamsø Munch, Borg in Lofoten, in: Ohthere's Voyages. A late 9th Century Account of Voyages along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and its Cultural Context, ed. Jane Bately/Anton Englert (Roskilde 2007) 200–205, with the æstel pictured in colour at 204, fig. 6; and at 44–47, Janet Bately's newly-edited text, with English translation, of Ohthere's account, with the walrus-teeth and walrus-hide ropes mentioned at 45. David Hinton points out, that the original excavation was made in the 1980s, see id., Alfred Jewel 32.

[59] Pratt, Political Thought 151–192.

[60] Yorke, Alfred the Great 17, suggests, imaginatively, that Ohthere passed his æstel on (perhaps to the chieftain of the settlement at Borg?): "maintaining his own network of contacts through the giving of gifts". It is equally possible, though there is no way of proving, that he kept it to his dying day. Hinton, Alfred Jewel 33, 36–39, adds several thought-provoking points to the discussion: "Ohthere ... was not a Christian" (but can we be sure of that, or of how baptism might have made a difference in terms of understanding "holy meaning"?); the Borg object, like those found in Yorkshire and Warwickshire, is rather different in design from the West Saxon four; but, qualifying the previous point, all were made of gold (with all its connotations of rarity and royalty); and finally, no æstel has yet been found in an ecclesiastical treasury. The debate will go on.

[61] Webster, Aedificia nova 95–96.

[62] The varieties of Solomon's appeal to earlier medieval kings, including Alfred and Charles the Bald, will be explored by Paul Kershaw in a forthcoming book based on his University of London PhD thesis id., Rex pacificus. Studies in Royal Peacemaking and the Image of the Peace-Making King in the Early Medieval West (London 1999).

[63] Janet L. Nelson, Charles le Chauve et les utilisations du savoir, in: L'école carolingienne d'Auxerre de Muretach à Remi (830–908), ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat/Colette Jeudy/GuyLobrichon (Paris 1991) 37–54, repr. in: ead., Rulers and Ruling Families in Early Medieval Europe: Alfred, Charles the Bald and Others (Variorum Collected Studies Series 657, Aldershot 1999) chapter 7.

his predecessors' practice of requiring oaths;[64] and in the 860s he had out reached to an even wider audience with rules about the currency which all were commanded to accept, even women "who are in the habit of trading", and, in 864, the issue of "new pennies", thoroughly revalued, that is, of near-pure silver, with a new legend, *Gratia Dei rex*: symbolic as well as economic currency, signs and stimulants of trust at the level of the market-place.[65]

But I want to turn to another small piece of evidence that brings us closer still to Charles the Bald as an innovative crafter of 'Staatlichkeit'. The evidence dates from what we know, as he did not know, was to be the last few months of his life.[66]

> "If any one of our fideles after our death and pierced by love for God and for us (*Dei et nostro amore compunctus*), wishes to renounce the world (*seculo renuntiare*), and has a son or kinsman who can be of service to the state (*qui reipublicae prodesse valeat*), let him be able to pass on his office(s) in a lawful assembly (*suos honores … ei valeat placitare*), as he thinks fit. And if he wants to live quietly on his own property (*si in alode suo quiete vivere voluerit*), let no-one [i.e. no state official] presume to put any obstacle in his way, nor require anything from him, except only this, that he go to the defence of the fatherland."[67]

This is Charles the Bald, king and emperor at a great assembly, about to set off from Francia for Italy in June 877, making arrangements for the welfare of the *res publica* in chapter 10 of the Capitulary of Quierzy. The text is famous not for the chapter just quoted, but for the one before it, chapter 9, which provides for succession to countships, allegedly symptomatic of the growing tendency towards the heritability of office that brought down the Carolingian Empire. In fact Charles was foreseeing special conditions that would arise from the death of a count, back in Francia, whose son had gone with the emperor to Italy (*si comes obierit cuius filius nobiscum sit*). Charles provided for interim measures to be taken by the officers of the county and the bishop acting together, reserving the right of the emperor himself, once informed of the situation, to give the county to whomsoever he pleased. Chapters 9 and 10 belong together in the fairly obvious sense that they are both concerned with the transmission of office from one generation to the next. That theme in fact hovered over the whole capitulary: Charles the Bald, aged 54, had the possibility of his own demise, and the succession to his own office, very much in mind as he embarked on a second journey to Italy, the land where so many Franks had fallen victim to mortal disease.[68] Whereas in Chapter 9, he dealt with the eventuality of the deaths in Francia of leading men of the older generation, in Chapter 10, he envisaged that his own death might impel other men of that same generation to withdraw from public life.[69] The new generation would replace them.

Charles's idea was, then, that such men of mature years, men who had made war with him, perhaps, and made policy with him at assemblies, in choosing to renounce the world, to live *quiete* (*quies* had become virtually a synonym for such religiously-motivated withdrawal), in private life, as it were, might continue to confer public benefit. The timing of the withdrawal from the world was to coincide with the availability of a son or kinsman – someone, that is, of the younger generation – to continue

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[64] Nelson, Charles the Bald 54, 91; and below n. 72.

[65] Constitutio Carisiacensis de moneta (861 July) (ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH LL Capitularia regum Francorum 2, Hannover 1890–1897/repr. 2001) 301–302, at 302, for the women traders; on the 864 *renovatio monetae*, see Philip Grierson, The Gratia Dei rex coinage of Charles the Bald, in: Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom, ed. Margaret T. Gibson/Janet L. Nelson (Aldershot ^{2}1990) 52–64; Coupland, Tribute payments 72–73; and now Ildar Garipzanov, The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World, c. 751–877 (Leiden 2008).

[66] Schramm, Kaiser 139, could not resist asking wistfully what might have been had Charles lived on for only another decade.

[67] Conventus Carisiacensis 10 (877 June 14–16) (ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH LL Capitularia regum Francorum 2, Hannover 1890–1897/repr. 2001) 355–361, at 358. For brief comment, see Nelson, Charles the Bald 248–251.

[68] On the deaths from disease of a large number of leading Franks (Lothar's followers) in Italy in 836, whereby Francia was "orphaned of nobility, and unmanned of strength", while the Emperor Louis wept, Astronomus, Vita Hludowici imperatoris (ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. [64], Hannover 1995) 53–155, 279–555, at 514; on the deaths in Lombardy in 869 of King Lothar II "and nearly all his great men", Annales Xantenses a. 869 (ed. Bernhard von Simson, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. [12], Hannover 1909) 1–33, 34–39, at 28.

[69] I considered this text in another context in Janet L. Nelson, Ninth-century vocations of persons of mature years, in: European Religious Cultures. Essays offered to Christopher Brooke on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, ed. Miri Rubin (London 2008) 37–47.

the senior man's full service to the *res publica*. Thus clause 10 of the capitulary of Quierzy, was organically linked with clause 9. Here, in other words, the emperor connected the transmission of high office across time with the *senior*'s withdrawal from the world: the problem of succession found a solution. Finally, Charles imagined the older man's choice to withdraw from the world as motivated by love for God and love for himself. A special bond between the king and the closest of his *fideles* was a theme deeply embedded in what Stuart Airlie has called "un monde quasi-idéologique", that embraced the ninth-century Carolingians and their aristocracies.[70] Serving the king was a major constituent of the aristocrat's sense of his identity. Now, in 877, Charles envisaged that his own liturgical commemoration of select favoured nobles[71] was to have its much more widely-significant *quid pro quo* in the prayers volunteered by *fideles* who were the kingdom's senior citizens, his own coevals. Those men, in withdrawing from their public offices, would take responsibility for, and ensure, the smooth transmission of public agency and responsibility across time. And they were still to be available as a sort of army reserve – if called to defend the fatherland.

Charles the Bald's approach was nothing if not instrumental: he intended to create a cadre of devoted intercessors. But it was also shot through with idealism: his faithful bedesmen would do it for love. The very fact that the emperor could entertain such hopes suggests something about the power his dynasty had acquired over aristocratic imaginations. It evokes a broader world too, of house-monasteries in which old men lived in quasi-monastic *quies,* analogous to the house-convents where high-born widows commemorated their dead husbands and kin. It was in such sites of liturgical memory that 'Staatlichkeit' took on a new depth of meaning by association with the most profound of bonds and obligations. Far from courtly grandeur and ostentation, in deep quietness in their rural residences, Charles trusted that his *oratores* would remember him. He contemplated his own dependence on their personal devotion: to them, if only in hope, he entrusted his soul's future, and at the same time something indispensable to the future of his state. For he had not forgotten his own broader responsibilities. Immediately before coming to Quierzy, Charles had made lavish endowment and elaborate arrangements for 100 *clerici* at Compiègne to pray continually for the Church, for his fathers and forefathers, for himself and his family, and for the stability of the whole realm.[72] These may sound like mere liturgical commonplaces; but for Charles and his contemporaries these acts of charity and fidelity, were worth the most serious attention and the heaviest investment.

How, finally, should Charles's arrangements be compared with Alfred's? In both cases, it has been worthwhile to personalise the discussion of comparative state-formation. Just as Charles' imperial title and Italian interests, not least his commitment to the protection of the papacy, burst the bounds of West Francia, so did Alfred's lordship over Anglo-Saxons and others extend far beyond Wessex. In both cases what was created was a grouping-together of bilateral personal bonds, yet at its core, territorialised, and institutionalised in palaces and assemblies, agents and agencies, lay a political community whose members identified themselves as such. This duality explains why it is possible to transcend historiographical debates of the 1980s and understand these kingdoms both as personal associations and as states.[73] The symbolisation of belonging worked, at first sight, differently in Wessex and West Francia. Alfred's distribution of very material *aedificia* looks centrally-directed, effective realm-wide (though the realm was small), a system for distributing symbolic capital.[74] Charles' appeal to *oratores* looks, instead, like highly personalised improvisation, hard to systematise, and essentially taking rather than giving symbolic capital. In both cases, though, reciprocity was the

[70] Stuart Airlie, Semper fideles? Loyauté envers les Carolingiens comme constituent de l'identité politique, in: La royauté et les élites dans l'Europe carolingienne (du début du IXe aux environs de 920), ed. Régine Le Jan (Collection Histoire et littérature régionales 17, Villeneuve-d'Ascq 1998) 129–144, at 131.

[71] Eugen Ewig, Remarques sur la stipulation de la prière dans les chartes de Charles le Chauve, in: Clio et son regard. Mélanges Jacques Stiennon, ed. Rita Lejeune/Joseph Deckers (1982) 221–233.

[72] Nelson, Charles the Bald 247.

[73] Hans-Werner Goetz, Moderne Mediävistik. Stand und Perspektiven der Mittelalterforschung (Darmstadt 1999) 174–224, esp. 180–185; cf. Pohl, Staat und Herrschaft 14–15; Hans-Werner Goetz, Die Wahrnehmung von 'Staat' und 'Herrschaft' im frühen Mittelalter, in: Staat im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Stuart Airlie/Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11, Wien 2006) 39–58, esp. 46, 56; De Jong, Ecclesia 113–115, 121.

[74] Pierre Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice, trans. Richard Nice (London 1990) 108–110, 112–121.

heart of the matter. In Francia, the *quid pro quo* for the senior generation's taking-on of regular prayer-duties was that the juniors succeeded, conditionally, to their *honores*, men at successive stages of the life-cycle accepting a different mix of obligations, yet younger and older generations alike serving the state both in (more, or less, time-consuming) prayer and in (defensive or offensive) war. The prayers Charles solicited were the signs of *mutual trust*, trust being an even higher priority for regimes then, as now, than resource-allocation. In Wessex, Alfred distributed æstels that were at once badges of office and gifts, and at the same time aides-mémoire for producing the prayers that maintained the wealth and wisdom of the kingdom. Thus, in West Francia and Wessex alike, rulers called for duties linking court and country, palace and home, that represented different aspects of composite royal styles rather than consistently different styles.[75]

The common factor was kingship. Emperor though he had become, Charles gained little from that title in terms of additional ideological ballast in Francia. His request to his *fideles* invoked the bond between the faithful king (Charles had coined that phrase)[76] and the faithful man, a bond embedded in mutual oaths in Charles' reign but already prefigured in Charlemagne's, and before that in Merovingian times. Alfred in the fitting of each æstel riveted together official sign and devotion-aid. In both cases, obligatory public service and voluntary private piety connected; and in that connexion, on both sides of the Channel, was fixed a vital part of 'Staatlichkeit'.

[75] For kingship as style, and also as a social construct, "the result of political market forces", see Timothy Reuter, *Regemque, quem in Francia pene perdidit, in patria magnifice recepit*: Ottonian ruler representation in synchronic and diachronic comparison, in: id., Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities, ed. Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge 2006) 127–146, esp. 128–129; and id., The medieval German 'Sonderweg'? The Empire and its rulers in the high Middle Ages, in: ibid. 388–412, esp. 406–407.

[76] Sacramenta Carisiaci praestita (858 March 21) (ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH LL Capitularia regum Francorum 2, Hannover 1890–1897/repr. 2001) 295–297, at 296: Charles swears: *sicut rex fidelis suos fideles per rectum honorare et salvare… debet*. The circumstances were exceptional (see Nelson, Charles the Bald 185–186) but the underlying sense of mutual obligation was not, see Nelson, Kingship and Empire, in: The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350–c. 1450, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge 1988) 211–251, at 222–229.

THE ÆSTELS ASSOCIATED WITH KING ALFRED OF WESSEX (871–899)

The Alfred Jewel – found 1693 at Athelney, Somerset, 64 mm. long, reproduced by kind permission of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

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