

# ALFRED THE WISE

Studies in honour of Janet Bately  
on the occasion of her sixty-fifth birthday

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98/1255



## ‘... sicut olim gens Francorum . . . nunc gens Anglorum’: Fulk’s Letter to Alfred Revisited

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For many historians of Anglo-Saxon England, the letter of Archbishop Fulk of Rheims to Alfred has seemed a significant piece of evidence for the king’s contacts and aspirations.<sup>1</sup> From time to time, however, the letter’s authenticity has been impugned; and even those who do not doubt the letter’s genuineness have found something faintly offensive in its ‘arrogant and patronising tone’.<sup>2</sup> While the letter’s ‘tone’ may help explain its relative neglect by English historians, its most suspicious feature also explains its near-total neglect by Continental scholars: rather than having been transmitted, like nearly all the rest of Archbishop Fulk’s extant correspondence, uniquely in the form of excerpts and ‘analyses’ in Flodoard’s *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*,<sup>3</sup> this letter survives as a whole, in English manuscripts and *only* in those: an addition copied into an eleventh-century Winchester gospel-book, and, copied from that, in the probably fifteenth-century *Liber Monasterii de Hyda*.<sup>4</sup> The letter purports to have accompanied the Frankish

<sup>1</sup> To take but two examples: D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, vol. I, 2nd edn (London, 1979), no. 223, pp. 883–5; S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 182–6, 331–3 (notes). I am very grateful to Simon Keynes for his comments on a draft of the present paper, and for directing me to his splendid just-published edition of *The Liber Vitae of New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester* (Copenhagen, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, vol. I, p. 883.

<sup>3</sup> Flodoard, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, ed. I. Heller and G. Waitz, MGH SS XIII, pp. 405–599. For the single case of additional transmission outside Flodoard’s work, see below, n. 24. For Fulk’s correspondence, and his career at Rheims, see now the fine study of M. Sot, *Un historien et son Eglise: Flodoard de Reims* (Paris, 1993); and for the broader genre, *idem*, *Gesta episcoporum. Gesta abbatum*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 37 (Turnhout, 1981), and also R. Kaiser, ‘Die *Gesta episcoporum* als Genus der Geschichtsschreibung’, in G. Scheibelreiter and A. Scharer (eds), *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna, 1994), pp. 459–80. For Fulk’s career, see also G. Schneider, *Erzbischof Fulco von Reims (883–900) und das Frankenreich* (Munich, 1975). For Fulk’s work methods, see further H. Zimmermann, ‘Zu Flodoards Historiographie und Regestentechnik’, in K.-U. Jäschke and R. Wenskus (eds), *Festschrift für H. Beumann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen, 1977), pp. 200–14.

<sup>4</sup> See the edition by D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C. N. L. Brooke, *Councils and Synods with other Documents relating to the English Church, I. AD 871–1204*, part 1: 871–1066 (Oxford, 1981), pp. 8–11, at p. 8, n. 1, and the comments of Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 331. See

scholar Grimbald to Wessex, and its main purpose was to commend Grimbald to Alfred's patronage: hence, given Grimbald's well-known connexions with Winchester, the provenance of the letter's manuscript credentials has been thought to raise the possibility of Winchester fabrication.<sup>5</sup> A brief review of the question may be timely: especially so in a *Festschrift* for Janet Bately, who devoted one of her earliest publications to Grimbald.<sup>6</sup>

The problem has been mainly approached from the Anglo-Saxon side. In a study that remains fundamental, Philip Grierson argued that 'there could have been no conceivable motive for forging [the letter], since Fulk played no part in the tradition of Grimbald's life that was current at New Minster [Winchester]'.<sup>7</sup> This seems the strongest argument against suggestions of Winchester forgery. It is an argument not addressed by A. P. Smyth in his recent reiteration of the case against the letter. In so far as that case involves points made by me, this may be the place to state clearly that I now think that 'the possibility' (no more) of forgery, which

also below, n. 7. For the likely date of the New Minster *Liber Vitae*, see now Keynes, *The Liber Vitae*, pp. 44–5.

<sup>5</sup> As suggested, tentatively, by me in "'A king across the sea": Alfred in Continental perspective', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 36 (1986), 45–68, at 48–9; and now, forthrightly, by A. P. Smyth, *King Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 257–9.

<sup>6</sup> 'Grimbald of St Bertin's', *Medium Aevum* 35 (1966), 1–10.

<sup>7</sup> P. Grierson, 'Grimbald of St Bertin's', *English Historical Review* 55 (1940), 529–61. This study totally supersedes the brief remarks of C. Plummer, *The Life and Times of Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1902), pp. 138–9, and W. Stevenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford, 1904), pp. 308–9. Grierson showed that New Minster tradition on the one hand linked Grimbald directly with St-Bertin, and on the other made nothing of the Rheims connexion. Fulk's letter, on the contrary, does not mention St-Bertin and is emphatically concerned with Rheims. For the Rheims-St-Bertin connexion, see below, p. 138. But Grierson's suggestion, 'Grimbald', pp. 547–8, that the gospel-book, MS BL Addit. 34890, was of tenth-century date, and that Fulk's letter 'or at least the tenth-century copy of it' had been preserved, not at Winchester but 'at some abbey in the west of England and only became known at Winchester during the twelfth century' must now be abandoned. The scribe who wrote the gospel-book was Eadui Basan, who worked at Christ Church, Canterbury, from c. 1015 to the 1030s. For other manuscripts written by him, see M. Brown, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (London, 1991), pp. 26–7. Since he sometimes worked to commission, MS Addit. 34890 may have got to Winchester quickly; or it may have got there after the Conquest. Fulk's letter, at ff. 158–160v, was copied into the manuscript late in the eleventh century, perhaps even as late as c. 1100: the hand may not be identical with, but is similar to, the hand(s) that made additions in the late eleventh century to the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster, Winchester (Stowe 944), and to the Arundel Psalter (BL MS Arundel 60), both securely provenanced to New Minster Winchester. That Addit. 34890 was at Winchester when Fulk's letter was copied into it is further suggested by the fact that Grimbald's name at f. 159v (like Alfred's at f. 158r) is written in capitals. A little error in E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (London 1976), no. 68, has given rise to the notion that the hand that wrote out Fulk's letter is a pre-Conquest one. This is certainly wrong. See now Keynes, *The Liber Vitae*, pp. 101–2. I am very grateful to Michelle Brown for looking at these manuscripts with me and clarifying the problems of date and provenance.

I seriously considered a decade ago, ought to be rejected.<sup>8</sup> My change of mind is the result of more careful thinking about the Frankish side of the matter.

That Flodoard's Register of Fulk's correspondence preserves no trace of this particular letter should not necessarily arouse suspicion of forgery. Evidence for only nine letters from Fulk to secular rulers survives, compared with thirty-six to popes: the suspicion that *should* come to mind is that Flodoard has been selective, and/or that what survived in the Rheims archive in the mid-tenth century was only part of the original archiepiscopal output. This can be checked in the case of Fulk's predecessor Hincmar: of 572 letters sent, Flodoard preserves evidence of only some 450. Amongst items preserved outside Flodoard's Register are letters of Hincmar to several Frankish kings. In Fulk's case, Flodoard preserved longer 'analyses'<sup>9</sup> of many fewer letters: perhaps he made a more restricted selection, or perhaps the archive was less complete anyway.<sup>10</sup>

Fulk's correspondence as preserved by Flodoard does, however, include the résumé of one letter to Alfred. The identifying of Alfred as *rex transmarinus* here was surely not the address-form of the original but Flodoard's own label.<sup>11</sup> The content of this letter shows concerns that are similar in two respects to those of the letter of recommendation for Grimbald: the appointment of a worthy archbishop of Canterbury, and clerical misconduct, against which Fulk cites texts from *sancti patres*. The certainty that Fulk wrote to Alfred in c. 890, and the apparent familiarity of this letter's tone, makes earlier correspondence plausible. It is the more so, given the evidence in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for close acquaintance with West Frankish affairs in the later 880s. There is no doubt that Grimbald came to Alfred's kingdom sometime in those years, and that his arrival belonged in a context of cross-Channel contacts.

Grimbald's presence at the monastery of St-Bertin can be documented in charters from 867 to 885.<sup>12</sup> By 877, Fulk, a palace cleric of Charles the Bald,

<sup>8</sup> Even the letter's initial addressing of Alfred as *gloriosissimus et christianissimus rex anglorum* which I suggested was an eleventh-century 'improvement', ' "A king across the sea" ', p. 49, could well have been in Fulk's original. It is true that Hincmar preferred less elaborate forms of address for royalty, but a more thorough trawl through ninth-century letters shows good precedents for Frankish bishops addressing rulers in just such superlatives: e.g. MGH Epp. IV, pp. 537, 539, 540, 542, etc.

<sup>9</sup> The term is that of Sot, *Un historien*, p. 173. Some of Flodoard's résumés are very brief, others quite long. In the one case where comparison can be made (see below, n. 24), Flodoard's 'résumé' is actually longer than the original version! It remains true to the essentials of the letter, however.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the thoughtful remarks of M. Stratmann, *Hinkmar von Rheims als Verwalter von Bistum und Kirchenprovinz* (Sigmaringen, 1991), p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> Plegmund is termed *archiepiscopus transmarinus* in Flodoard's résumé of a letter from Fulk to him, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* IV, c. 6, p. 568 (Whitelock *et al.*, *Councils*, no. 6, p. 13, and Sot, Register of Fulk no. 53, *Un historien*, p. 166).

<sup>12</sup> Grierson, 'Grimbald', pp. 542-3, 545 (the reference of Whitelock *et al.*, p. 6, n. 2, to pp. 544-7 of Grierson's paper is not quite right). Grimbald witnessed a charter for one of St-Bertin's dependent churches as *Grimbaldus senior*: Grierson, 'Grimbald', p. 544, sug-

‘educated almost from the cradle in canonical disciplines’, as Fulk himself later put it,<sup>13</sup> had been given the abbacy of St-Bertin. This was at once a reward for loyal service, and a political responsibility: Fulk’s first extant appearance in this role was as one of the leading men left behind in Francia to keep the young king Louis the Stammerer under surveillance when Charles set off for Italy in June 877.<sup>14</sup> Fulk’s responsibilities at St-Bertin did not prevent him from keeping his position at court – a position he retained through the brief reigns of Louis the Stammerer and Carloman, before becoming archbishop of Rheims, as Fulk recalled in a letter to Pope Stephen VI (896–7).<sup>15</sup> The consecration took place on 7 March 883.<sup>16</sup> But Fulk did not cease to be abbot of St-Bertin, hence to call on the services, scholarly and otherwise, of Grimbald. There can be no doubt of Grimbald’s close contacts with, and likely frequent visits to, Rheims from 883.<sup>17</sup> Grimbald’s arrival in Wessex is not easy to date precisely, but must be somewhat before c. 890, when Alfred himself named Grimbald as one of his scholar-help-ers.<sup>18</sup> Grimbald is a likely candidate as agent of transmission for the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’s information about Scandinavian movements in north-eastern Gaul during the 880s. Close contacts with Rheims no doubt continued after Grimbald’s move to Wessex. The Chronicle’s account of events in West Francia in 887–8 adopts Fulk’s perspective, both in mentioning Guy as a contender for the throne in that year (Fulk was in fact Guy’s main supporter during what proved a short-lived bid) and in stressing Arnulf’s persisting authority over the whole empire after its division in 888 (Fulk, after abandoning Guy for Odo, stressed

gests that the epithet indicates that Grimbald was in charge of the dependent church. Alternatively, the epithet could have been used to distinguish this Grimbald from any junior homonym(s).

- <sup>13</sup> *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* IV, 4, p. 562 (Sot, Register no. 36, *Un historien*, p. 162). This letter can be dated to 896.
- <sup>14</sup> MGH Capit. II, ed. A. Boretius (Hannover, 1897), no. 281, c. 15, p. 359. Gifts of abbacies to palatine clerics were usual in ninth-century Francia: see Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), p. 62, and Index s.v. ‘cleric-abbots’ for examples. Fulk had already accompanied Charles on an earlier visit to Rome in 875, recalled by Fulk in a letter to Pope Marinus I (882–4), *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* IV, 1, p. 555 (Sot, Register no. 2, *Un historien*, p. 157): he had made this pope’s acquaintance ‘tempore Johannis papae quando cum Karolo imperatore . . . fuerat Romae’.
- <sup>15</sup> ‘. . . a rege Karolo . . . in palatinis ac domesticis eius . . . assumptus obsequiis, sicque in aula palatii perseverans usque ad tempora Karlomani regis . . . nepotis eiusdem Karoli, quando a sanctis provinciae Rememnsis episcopis necnon a clero et plebe huius urbis electus sit et ordinatus episcopus’, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* IV, 4, p. 562 (Sot, Register no. 36).
- <sup>16</sup> *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* IV, 10, p. 575.
- <sup>17</sup> There is no need, therefore, to assume a brief period of residence at Rheims between 885 and 886. Nothing in the way Fulk speaks of Grimbald’s services to his church’s administration need imply permanent residence at Rheims rather than St-Bertin.
- <sup>18</sup> Alfred’s Preface to the OE Version of Gregory the Great’s *Pastoral Care*, transl. Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 126. Smyth, *King Alfred*, pp. 527–602, seems disinclined to date the Alfredian translations: cf. below, n. 22.

Arnulf's approval for Odo's kingship).<sup>19</sup> It has even been suggested, with some plausibility, that Grimbald conveyed to Wessex the idea of writing up a dynastic and *gens*-centred chronicle.<sup>20</sup> Still more telling are the indications of Frankish scholarship being transmitted via Rheims to Alfred's court to find its way into his translations. In Alfred's version of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, the idea of the three orders reflects the influence of exegetes working at Auxerre in the reign of Charles the Bald.<sup>21</sup> Grimbald will hardly have been the *only* West Frank to purvey these influences and this learning. But we have Alfred's own word for it that Grimbald mattered.<sup>22</sup> Even without the evidence of Fulk's letter of recommendation, we could guess that Grimbald mattered to Fulk as well.

Fulk's early years as archbishop saw a series of efforts to mobilise successive popes against the appropriator of a monastery belonging to Fulk's family.<sup>23</sup> Two other traits emerge strongly from Fulk's correspondence. The first is his assertion of Rheims' primatial claims. Writing to Pope Stephen V in 885/6, Fulk expressed his devotion to the *sedes romana*:

I and my fellow-bishops persist even unto death in our devotion to the Roman see (*in cultu romanae sedis*) . . . as befits the see of Rheims which your

<sup>19</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition. 3: MS A* (Cambridge, 1986), s.a. 887, p. 53: 'hi [i.e. the other four kings] cuędon þæt hie þæt [i.e. each kingdom] to his honda healdan sceoldon', literally, 'they declared that they should hold it at his hand'; cf. transl. G. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1953), p. 80. See my remarks in 'The Franks and the English in the Ninth Century Reconsidered', in P. Szarmach and J. Rosenthal (eds), *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture* (forthcoming, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Franks and the English in the ninth century: some common historical interests', *History* 35 (1950), 202–18, repr. in his collected papers, *Early Medieval History* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 201–16; M. B. Parkes, 'The palaeography of the Parker manuscript of the *Chronicle*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976), 149–71, at 163–6.

<sup>21</sup> Nelson, 'The Political Ideas of Alfred of Wessex', in A. Duggan (ed.), *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe*, King's College London Medieval Studies X (London, 1993), pp. 125–68, at 141–4; and T. E. Powell, 'The "Three Orders" of Society in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994), 103–32.

<sup>22</sup> Given the recent attack of Smyth, *King Alfred*, on Asser's *Life of Alfred* as a forgery, I have decided to rest my case on sources other than Asser. Nevertheless, since Fulk's letter to Alfred has been the victim of a stray bullet, and the whole issue of Frankish influence on Alfredian culture a more serious casualty, it is impossible wholly to bypass Smyth's work in what follows.

<sup>23</sup> Fulk's brother Rampo in his will had requested the refoundation of the monastery at Bonneval (départ. Eure-et-Loire, prov. Sens), founded by a *miles* also named Fulk (the uncle of these brothers?), but then appropriated by Rampo; a man from the Rouennais named Ermanfrid had married Rampo's widow and seized control of the Bonneval property, and Fulk urged that papal orders be sent to the archbishops of Rouen and Sens to discipline Erminfrid and force the return of Bonneval. See Sot, *Un historien*, pp. 157–8 (Register nos. 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8), and also pp. 125, 129, 190. The story can be pieced together from *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* IV, 1, pp. 555–6, and *Petite chronique de l'abbaye de Bonneval*, ed. R. Merlet, *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique d'Eure-et-Loire* 10 (1896), 14–35. Cf. R. Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VIIe–Xe siècle)* (Paris, 1995), pp. 236–7.

predecessors, valuing it above all those of Gaul, endowed with the primacy, as when the Blessed Peter Prince of the apostles sent Sixtus here to be bishop of this whole region, and Pope Hormisdas willed that Remigius be obeyed as his deputy throughout all the Gauls.<sup>24</sup>

This elevation of Remigius to apostolic rank had been going on before Fulk's time, notably under Archbishop Hincmar.<sup>25</sup> In 869, masterminding the consecration of Charles the Bald at Metz, Hincmar declared:

Louis [the Pious, Charles' father] was descended from Clovis, famous king of the Franks, who was converted through the catholic preaching of St Remigius the apostle of Franks, and baptised along with 3,000 of the Franks, not counting children and women, on the vigil of holy Easter at the metropolis of Rheims, and anointed and consecrated king with chrism got from heaven, of which we still have some . . .<sup>26</sup>

Fulk took this ball and ran with it – so successfully that the pope joined the game. Granting Fulk's request for recognition of his see's apostolic status, Pope Formosus (891–6) recalled that 'the blessed Remigius had been established as apostle of the Franks by the authority of the Holy See of Rome and by the grace of God'. Apostolicity carried with it the requirement of preserving true doctrine: a job for which Grimbald's scholarship, whether practised at Rheims itself or at St-Bertin, would have been invaluable. It also carried a further connotation, of responsibility for converting pagans. Fulk informed the dowager empress Richildis, in a letter severely chastising her wicked way of life ('It is the Devil, not God, who is with you!'), that he had assumed the role of St Paul: 'Quamdiu apostolus sum gentium, ministerium meum honorificabo'.<sup>27</sup> Missionary endeavour was already a tradition at Rheims, mission to the Franks having been followed up in 820s by mission to the Danes.<sup>28</sup>

This leads into Fulk's second theme: concern over Scandinavian attacks. So severe had been their infestation of the realm for the past eight years, Fulk told Pope Stephen V (885–91), that 'there seems to be no free passage for anyone far

<sup>24</sup> T. Gousset (ed.), *Les actes de la province ecclésiastique de Reims*, vol. I (Rheims, 1842), p. 520. This is the only one of Fulk's letters to survive independently of Flodoard. See Sot, *Un historien*, pp. 172–3, for a comparison of the original with the *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* version, demonstrating Flodoard's essential accuracy.

<sup>25</sup> P. Depreux, 'La dévotion à saint Rémi de Reims aux IXe et Xe siècles', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 35 (1992), 111–29.

<sup>26</sup> *Annales de Saint Bertin*, ed. F. Grat, J. Vielliard and S. Clémencet (Paris, 1965), s.a. 869, pp. 162–3, transl. Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin* (Manchester, 1991), p. 161. Though Charles was acquiring Lotharingia, Hincmar depicted this as a *Frankish* consecration.

<sup>27</sup> *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* IV, 5, p. 566, citing Rom. xi, 13.

<sup>28</sup> Depreux, 'La dévotion', p. 126 asks whether Fulk was not consciously evoking the tradition of Archbishop Ebbo in Louis the Pious's reign.

beyond [their] castles'.<sup>29</sup> The emperor Charles the Fat was reminded forcefully of his responsibility for 'the defence and protection of the *regnum Francorum*, protected, by God's help, until now, while it was ruled by your uncle and your namesake and his sons, but since the magnates committed the realm's protection to you, everything has gone from bad to worse'.<sup>30</sup> 885–6 saw the year-long siege of Paris by Scandinavian attackers who raided ever more persistently in the surrounding countryside. These were indeed anxious times for custodians of the *castra Dei*.

In the light of Fulk's self-representation in the correspondence of the early years of his pontificate, then, and also against this background of pagan onslaughts, his purported letter of recommendation for Grimbold can be properly assessed. A lost letter from Alfred to which it responds can be reconstructed in entirely plausible terms. Alfred had reported his effective defence of his realm against Viking attacks, and Fulk begins by warm commendation of this king who 'attend[s] to the good of the kingdom divinely entrusted to you, seeking or safeguarding peace with warlike weapons and divine support', at the same time, 'taking care to increase the dignity of the ecclesiastical order with spiritual weapons'. The reasons for the low state of 'the ecclesiastical order' had evidently been rehearsed by Alfred himself. Fulk responds, 'you say [the reasons are]: frequent irruptions and attacks of pagans,<sup>31</sup> the passage of time, the neglect of bishops, and the ignorance of subjects'. Alfred, it seems, determined to improve the situation, had requested 'advice and support' from Rheims. What has sounded 'patronising' in modern ears may have simply represented the rhetoric of respectable, and respectful, *patrocinium* – rhetoric that may well echo Alfred's own. Fulk was not only able but obliged to help: just as God sent Remigius to the Franks of old, so too the English were now seeking a man from Remigius' see, imbued with his teaching. Evils deep-rooted through old custom and barbaric practices must be stamped out.<sup>32</sup> Rheims, 'the church over all the churches of Gaul', had the right standards and the learning to accomplish the task. But Remigius was not the only role-model invoked here: Fulk also recalled Augustine of Canterbury, 'sent by *your* apostle the Blessed Gregory'. Fulk praised Gregory's missionary strategy and emphasised its success, referring specifically to the role of papal letters in the early days in confirming the Faith, and the subsequent role of councils in strengthening it. Was it through natural

<sup>29</sup> '... ut nemini extra castella procul liber aditus potere videtur': *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* IV, 1, p. 555 (Sot, Register no. 6, *Un historien*, pp. 157–8, dating to 885/886).

<sup>30</sup> *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* IV, 9, p. 563 (Sot, Register no. 37, *Un historien*, p. 162, dating to 885).

<sup>31</sup> Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 182, translate 'Vikings', which half-misses the point.

<sup>32</sup> These topoi in reference to English kingdoms also had a prehistory going back to Boniface and beyond: see Nelson, '“A king across the sea”', pp. 61–2. Fulk's idea of church councils as a means of securing the progress of the faithful, Keynes and Lapidge, p. 184, both looks back to Boniface, and prefigures a similar notion in the preface to Alfred's Laws, Keynes and Lapidge, p. 163.

tact that Fulk evoked the achievements of the English Church? It seems more likely that here again he was responding to points made in Alfred's letter.

No request could be made without a counter-gift, and Alfred's to Fulk was strikingly apt: aware, whether through his own experience or through reports from English travellers, of the prevalence of wolves in Francia (which Fulk naturally called *patria nostra*), the West Saxon king had sent specially bred dogs to ward off those that threatened Fulk's 'flocks'. Fulk's neat response may also have been adumbrated in Alfred's letter: in return for the corporeal dogs, spiritual dogs must be sent – 'and especially one, Grimbald, to take charge of the administration of pastoral care' (another evocation, here, of the apostle of the English). Alfred had specifically asked for Grimbald, then, because his 'true faith and holy religion',<sup>33</sup> and perhaps too his political assistance to the archbishop of Rheims (Fulk said he had been *consors ministerii nostri et in omni utilitate ecclesiastica fidissimus adiutor*<sup>34</sup>), were known in Wessex. That speaks volumes for prior cross-Channel contacts. West Frankish scholarship, and Carolingian example, had impressed a king conscious of 'an urgent necessity . . . to direct our minds to divine and spiritual law'.<sup>35</sup> Alfred sent a prestigious entourage of magnates (*proceres vel optimates tam episcopi . . . quam et religiosi laici*) to fetch Grimbald back to Wessex.

'The administration of pastoral care' implies episcopal office, and that surely is what Fulk inferred was Alfred's plan for Grimbald, whom Fulk considered 'most worthy of *pontificalis honor*'. Solemn undertakings were to be given (the letter presents this in the subjunctive mood, suggesting the promises were still to be made at the time of writing) by the members of the prestigious entourage, 'aloud to me in the presence of all my church', in order to guarantee Grimbald's security and long-term well-being in *propria sedes*.<sup>36</sup> But which bishopric could have been

<sup>33</sup> Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 185. Smyth, *King Alfred*, pp. 257–8, distinguishes sharply between scholarly work and pastoral responsibilities, insisting that the letter's 'exaggerated' emphasis exclusively on the latter 'gives this spurious document away'. I think this distinction is overstated: as the examples of Plegmund and Waerferth (and for that matter Hincmar) show, the reformer-bishop and the scholar could be one and the same man.

<sup>34</sup> Transl. Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 185: 'a companion in my administration and . . . a most reliable assistant in every ecclesiastical concern'. Grierson, 'Grimbald', p. 551, assumed that this meant Grimbald had been on Fulk's staff at Rheims; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 332, n. 7, suggest that Grimbald never left St-Bertin until he went to Wessex, and that Fulk was here expressing an unfulfilled hope for Grimbald's becoming a suffragan in his province. I think St-Bertin and Rheims would have operated in tandem under Fulk's regime, and that Grimbald's *ministerium* would have entailed, *inter alia*, holding St-Bertin securely against predatory local rivals. Fulk's 'distinguished career' (so, Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 331, n. 1) needs to be understood in the late ninth-century West Frankish context revealed so vividly in his letters.

<sup>35</sup> Preface to Werferth's translation of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 123. For Carolingian influence in Alfred's Laws, see P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law* (Oxford, forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> 'Viva voce in praesentia totius ecclesiae nostrae', Whitelock *et al.*, *Councils*, p. 11, Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 185. I am unconvinced by the argument of Keynes and Lapidge, pp. 186, 332, n. 10, that *ad propriam sedem* should be translated 'to their [i.e. the envoys'] own

in Alfred's mind? Canterbury was not vacant in the relevant time-frame, that is, c.886, and neither was Winchester.<sup>37</sup> Could London have been in Alfred's sights? 886 was the year in which, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 'gesette Elfred cyning Lundenburg'<sup>38</sup> that is, refortified the old Roman walled city. Certainly by the 890s, when the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was compiled, 886 had come to seem, in retrospect, the key moment in the reconstruction of the realm of the English, the moment when 'all Englishkind', Mercians and West Saxons together, acknowledged his rule, though it is clear that Alfred had had control of London rather earlier. Had Alfred just received back the envoys he had sent to Pope Marinus in 884? Had he acquired papal agreement for an old project, the shifting of the metropolitan see to London?<sup>39</sup> Were Grimbold's *electores* the assembled leaders of the Angelcyn at Lundenburg? Speculation aside, Fulk sent Grimbold with *some* bishopric in mind. Perhaps some delay was expected until an appropriate see became available.

In its setting within Fulk's letter-collection, this particular letter does not seem to me out of place. On the contrary: the letter's substance has the hallmarks of late ninth-century Rheims origin, and should therefore be accepted as genuine. The alleged 'arrogant and patronising tone' of the letter is considerably less striking when read in full context: Fulk, proud primate though he was, saw the *Angli* in their need as deserving his church's support, not least because the *Franci* had been there before: '. . . sicut olim gens Francorum . . . nunc gens anglorum'. This was also Alfred's point. Apostolic foundations had Faith and doctrine in common, and must collaborate. Fulk was willing to make a considerable personal sacrifice to this end. This paper has approached the issue of his letter's authenticity from the Continental side, and could not have been written without the benefit of recent Continental scholarship on Fulk's career and correspondence. Yet, frustratingly, this scholarship has ignored Fulk's letter to Alfred.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, it has to be said that we *transmarini* have not always made the most of what is available on the Continent. . . . *sicut gens francorum*, . . . [et !] *gens anglorum* . . . So, a

home'. Cf. 'A king across the sea', p. 48. I agree with Grierson, 'Grimbold', p. 549, that Fulk understood that Grimbold was to receive a bishopric, but I cannot see any reason to suppose that Fulk himself was to consecrate Grimbold as bishop. Smyth, *King Alfred*, pp. 257–8, while rejecting the letter as a forgery, insists, rightly I think, that the 'future responsibilities' it indicates for Grimbold were those of a bishop, and that the 'minders' were taking him back to his see. The final section of the letter reveals Fulk's anxieties about Grimbold's safety in the face of any (unidentified) person who 'guided by some devilish impulse with jealousy of malice and ill-will, should occasion a quarrel or incite dissension', Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred*, p. 186.

<sup>37</sup> As noted by Nelson, 'A king across the sea', p. 48.

<sup>38</sup> Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* . . . *MS A*, p. 53, transl. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 80.

<sup>39</sup> I ventured these speculations in 'The Political Ideas of Alfred', pp. 155–6.

<sup>40</sup> It is unmentioned by Schneider, *Erzbischof Fulco*, and by Sot, *Un historien*. M. Depreux courteously acknowledges in an additional note his having been directed to it, though he had not cited it in the unpublished *Mémoire de Maitrise* (Paris, 1989), on which his article draws.

further conclusion (which will surely commend itself to the expositor of Alfred's work in the Paris Psalter<sup>41</sup>) must be that the sooner the old fog in the Channel is dispelled, the better for the cultural heirs of both Carolingian and Alfredian Renaissances in the here and now.

<sup>41</sup> Bately, 'Lexical evidence for the authorship of the Prose Psalms in the Paris Psalter', *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982), 69–95; *idem*, 'Old English prose before and during the reign of Alfred', *Anglo-Saxon England* 17 (1988), 93–138, at 130–1. I take this opportunity to thank Janet for many years of colleagueship and inspiration.