Why not to marry a foreign woman: Stephen III's letter to Charlemagne

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In 770, Pope Stephen III wrote a letter to the young Frankish kings Charles and Carloman to dissuade them from marrying a daughter of the Lombard king Desiderius.[1] The letter is a key to our understanding of the shifting alliances both within Rome and between the 'Republic of St. Peter' and the Lombard and Frankish kingdoms in the years before Charlemagne's intervention in Italy in 774. It is in this context that it has often been studied. It has helped to overcome the simplistic view of a stable alliance between the popes and the Franks against the Lombard expansion, so that the complexity and volatility of the situation has become increasingly clear.[2] This contribution will concentrate on another, rather neglected aspect. Arguably, the letter contains some of the most xenophobic rhetoric transmitted to us from the Early Middle Ages. This has often been noted. Thomas Noble has called it "one of the most exquisitely intemperate letters ever written".[3] Others have stressed that it is "by our standards taste- and measureless" and "uses a language that is even more violent than the most vehement letters

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[2] Thomas F.X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State 680–825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 120–26; Ottorino Bertolini, *Roma di fronte a Bisanzio e ai Longobardi* (Roma: L. Capelli, 1942), 644; id., "La caduta del primicerio Cristoforo (771) nella versione dei contemporanei, e le correnti anti-longobarde e filolongobarde in Roma alla fine del pontificato di Stefano III (771-72)", in *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 1 (1947) 227-62 o in id., *Scritti scelti di storia medioevale* vol. 2 (Livorno: Il telegrafo, 1968) 613-77; Jörg Jarnut, "Ein Bruderkampf und seine Folgen: Die Krise des Frankenreiches," in Jörg Jarnut, *Herrschaft und Ethnogenese im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Matthias Becher, Stefanie Dick and Nicola Karthaus (Münster: Scriptorium, 2002), 240; Janet L. Nelson, "Making a Difference in Eighth-Century Politics: the Daughters of Desiderius," in *After Rome's Fall. Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History. Essays presented to Walter Goffart*, ed. Alexander C. Murray (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Walter Pohl, "Das Papsttum und die Langobarden, " in *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751. Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung*, ed. Matthias Becher and Jörg Jarnut (Münster: Scriptorium, 2004); Rudolf Schieffer, *Die Karolinger* (Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Kohlhammer, [4]2006), 70–74; Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 84–87. See also the forthcoming book by Clemens Gantner about perceptions of foreigners in papal Rome in the 8th and 9th centuries.

[3] Noble, *Republic,* 121.

against Aistulf." [4] The intention and political context that explain its ferocious rhetoric have been diligently analyzed. But the way in which the letter builds its argument merits further consideration. Therefore, I would like to explore the implicit references to the Old Testament, and trace the context and impact of its main contention: that it should be illicit to marry foreign-born women.

The letter opens on a strong note of moral exhortation with an extensive passage that associates the weakness of women with the workings of the devil. It then clearly states its objective: to dissuade both kings from the planned union with a daughter of Desiderius and an alliance with the Lombards, about which the pope has heard. This would be an "instigation by the devil" and a "union of most wicked trickery". Obviously, the letter had been written on the basis of rather vague intelligence from the Lombard court, before any more detailed information had reached Rome. Then comes the main argument: "For we hear of many, as we learn from the history in Holy Scripture, who departing from the divine mandates through the unjust association with an alien nation have fallen into great sin." [5] This is as explicit as the letter gets in its reference to the Old Testament. All the worse it would be, the text continues, if the *praeclara Francorum gens*, "which is conspicuous among all peoples", would be "polluted by the perfidious and extremely fetid people of the Lombards, which is not even counted among the number of peoples, and from whom the race of the lepers certainly originate." [6] Intemperate, indeed. Christian scholars, based on the Old Testament, thought that the number of peoples was limited, and several attempts were made to enumerate the 70 or 72 gentes descended from the sons of Noah – it was difficult to fit in all known biblical, ancient and contemporary peoples here. [7] These speculations had little pragmatic significance. But as the Gospel of Mark had called all *gentes* to

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[4] "Das für unsere Begriffe geschmack- und maßlose Schreiben": Jarnut, "Bruderkampf ," 240; "linguaggio ancor più violente delle lettere più impetuose contro Aistolfo": Bertolini, *Roma,* 645.
[5] *Codex Carolinus* ep. 45, 561, ll. 6–10: Quod certe si ita est, haec propriae diabolica est immissio et non tam matrimonii coniunctio, sed consortium nequissimae adinventionis esse videtur, quoniam plures conperimus, sicut divinae scripturae historia instruimur, per aliene nationis iniustam copulam a mandatis Dei deviare et in magno devolutos facinore.
[6] *Codex Carolinus* ep. 45, 561, ll. 10–15: Quae est enim, praecellentissimi filii, magni reges, talis desipientia, ut penitus vel dici liceat, quod vestra praeclara Francorum gens, quae super omnes gentes enitet [other versions have: eminet], et tam splendiflua ac nobilissima regalis vestrae potentiae proles perfidae, quod absit, ac foetentissimae Langobardorum genti polluatur, quae in numero gentium nequaquam conputatur, de cuius natione et leprosorum genus oriri certum est.
[7] See Arno Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel: Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1957–63). Isidor lists both Lombards and Franks: Etymologiae IX, 2, 95 and 101, ed. Wallace M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911; repr. 1966; [9]1991).

salvation, exclusion from their number might imply that the Lombards' way to salvation was barred. They were doomed to stay with the lepers, which is not only a powerful image of exclusion but also a reference to heresy, a point that is developed further in another passage.[8]

Then, the letter turns to another argument: both kings have already been married to beautiful Frankish women by their parents. A century or so later, this would have been the decisive point, but not so in the eighth century when the legitimacy of a princely marriage was malleable. That Charles's (and probably also Carloman's) son from this union was called Pippin seems to indicate that these marriages were regarded as dynastic at the time. Later sources, Einhard for instance, insist that Pippin the Hunchback's mother was a concubine.[9] Stephen's letter seems to anticipate this problem, for after admonishing both kings that they should love their wives, it returns to the familiar motif, warning them: "And certainly you are not allowed, having dismissed them, to marry others or to join yourself in consanguinity with another nation".[10] Quite clearly, marrying a foreigner adds to the sin of princely polygamy here. And the letter follows that line of argument by reminding the young Carolingians that none of their family have ever had a wife from "another kingdom or a foreign nation", and even less polluted themselves by a contamination with the horrible Lombard people. "For nobody", it goes on, "who has taken a wife from a foreign people, has remained unharmed; realise, please, how many and which powerful men strayed from the precepts of God by marriages with foreign-born women (*alienigena coniugia*) and followed the will of their wives from a foreign people (*aligenae gentis*)", running an immense risk.[11] The ethnic rhetoric reaches a peak here, using the unclassical adjective *aligena* to overdetermine the phrase. This line of argument ends with a precedent, an offer by the Byzantine emperor Constantine V to marry Pippin III's

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[8] Saul N. Brody, *The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974).

[9] Einhard, *Vita Karoli* c. 20, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, *MGH SS rer Germ 25* (Hannover: Hahn, 1911), 25f.

[10] *Codex Carolinus* ep. 45, 561 ll. 23–24: et certae non vobis licet, eis dimissis, alias ducaere uxores vel extranae nationis consanguinitate immisci.

[11] *Codex Carolinus* ep. 45, 561, ll. 25–32: Etenim nullus ex vestris parentibus, scilicet neque avus vester neque proavus, sed nec vester genitor ex alio regno vel extranea natione coniugem accepit; et quis de vestro nobilissimo genere se contaminare aut commiscere cum horrida Langobardorum gente dignatum est, ut nunc vos suademini, quod avertat Dominus, eidem horribili gente pollui? Itaque nullus, exterrae gentis assumta coniuge, innoxius perseveravit; advertite, queso, quanti qualesque potentes, per aligenigena coniugia a praeceptis Dei declinantes et suarum sequentes uxorum aligene gentis voluntatem, validis lnrepti excessibus immensa pertulere discrimina.

daughter Gisela that had been refused. Unfortunately, the text is not quite clear here, but it continues with the already familiar conclusion: "and neither are you allowed to ally yourself in marriage with another nation, and nor should you dare to do this against the will of the bishop of the Apostolical See".[12] This may be taken to imply that Pippin had also followed papal advice in the case of Gisela.

The letter goes on for another 70 lines, revolving around its three main arguments: warning the royal brothers not to marry a foreign-born woman (and not to let their sister Gisela marry Desiderius' son), exhorting them to stay with the wives that both brothers already have, and reminding them of their sworn alliance with the popes, which was mainly directed against their Lombard enemies. At the end, it culminates in a massive threat of anathema: "Should either of you, which we do not wish, presume to disregard the thrust of our entreaty and exhortation, then know that by authority of my Lord St. Peter Prince of the Apostles you will be placed under the ban of the anathema, will become an alien from the kingdom of God, and will be doomed, with the devil and his most wicked ministers, and all impious men to eternal flames."[13]

The 'intemperate' rhetoric of the letter makes ample use of the classical art of political invective, and its key passages artfully juxtapose slander (against the *perfida ac foetentissima Langobardorum gens*) and praise (for the *praeclara Francorum gens*).[14] Late antique *invectio* could also be directed against peoples, and the letter explicitly or implicitly contains some of the typical *loci* of Christian invective rhetoric: Lombard barbarianism, paganism/heresy, perfidy, tyranny, impurity, and sexual misconduct, and their respective opposites on the Frankish

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[12] *Codex Carolinus* ep. 45, 562, ll. 10–14: Itaque et hoc, peto, ad vestri referre studete memoriam: eo quod, dum Constantinus imperator nitebatur persuadere sanctae memoriae mitissimum vestrum genitorem ad accipiendum coniugio filii sui germanam vestram nobilissimam Ghisylam neque vos aliae nationi licere copulari, sed nec contra voluntatem apostolicae sedis pontificum quoquo modo vos audere peragere. The lacuna that Gundlach has printed in his edition only appears in the early modern copy in CVP 449 and in its derivates, whereas the medieval manuscript does not have it. (I owe this information to Clemens Gantner).

[13] *Codex Carolinus* ep. 45, 563, ll. 35–39: Et si quis, quod non optamus, contra huiusmodi nostrae adiurationis atque exhortationis seriem agere praesumserit, sciat se auctoritate domini mei, beati Petri apostolorum principis, anathematis vinculo esse innodatum et a regno Dei alienum atque cum diabolo et eius atrocissimis pompis et ceteris impiis aeternis incendiis concremandum deputatum.

[14] Jaqueline Long, *Claudian's In Eutropium, Or, How, When and Why to Slander A Eunuch* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 65-146; Christopher P. Craig, "Self-Restraint, Invective, and Credibility in Cicero's First Catilinarian Oration," in *American Journal of Philology*, Volume 128, Number 3 (Whole Number 511), Fall 2007, 335-339. I owe these references to Mayke de Jong; see also her forthcoming book on Paschasius Radbertus and the Epitaphium Arsenii.

side. Some of this is achieved through allusions to the Old Testament (for instance, to the number of *gentes*). But the letter also refers to the New Testament, for instance to 2 Cor. 6, 14-15: "*Quae enim societas luci ad tenebras*", what is the connection between light and darkness, that is, between the Franks and the Lombards.[15] Such offensive language should not deceive us; the letter was written by a highly-trained specialist. However, unlike several other letters sent to the Franks in the period, it does not limit itself to slandering the Lombards and praising the Franks. There is a pressing political issue behind it, and that is preventing a marriage alliance between Franks and Lombards.

The background of the letter is relatively well known, as far as our patchy sources for the events of those years allow. Thomas Noble has masterfully narrated it in his 'Republic of St. Peter'.[16] It represents one specific stage in the fast-moving caleidoscope of Roman Church politics before 774. At the death of Pope Paul, one aristocratic faction had put the layman Constantine II on the see of Rome. The *primicerius* Christophorus, the ablest and perhaps most ruthless political actor of the period, had relied on the support of the Lombard king Desiderius to oust Constantine. But then he turned against the Lombards and had Desiderius's chief representative in Rome, the priest Waldipert, blinded, to raise his own candidate, Stephen III, to the pontificate in 768. When it transpired in 770 that Charlemagne planned to marry the daughter of Desiderius, Christophorus therefore had an extra reason to fear Lombard revenge. The Liber Pontificalis makes it quite likely that Christophorus was in fact the author of Stephen's letter.[17] Soon after, Charlemagne's mother Bertrada came to Rome, obviously with an offer to join Charles's alliance with Desiderius and promised that some cities would be restituted. Now the pope turned against his powerful *primicerius*, and after some resistance it was Christophorus's turn to be blinded, in spite of the support of Carloman's envoy Dodo.[18] But alliances were reversed once again when

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[15] Cf. T.F.X. Noble, "The Bible in the Codex Carolinus," in *Biblical Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Claudio Leonardi and Giovanni Orlandi (Firenze: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005) 61-74.

[16] Noble, *Republic,* 116–27.

[17] "This blessed pontiff [i.e. Stephen III] took great care to send his envoys and letters of advice to his Excellency Charles king of the Franks and his brother Carloman, also king – Christophorus the primicerius and Sergius the secundicerius were involved and engaged in this – about exacting from Desiderius king of the Lombards St. Peter's lawful rights." *Liber Pontificalis* 96, Stephen III, trans. Raymond Davies, *The Eighth-Century Popes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), 102–3. Sergius was Christophorus' son. Cf. Noble, *Republic*, who also sees the hand of Christophorus behind the letter.

[18] Bertolini, „La caduta".

Carloman and Stephen III both died in late 771 and early 772. Charles did not need allies against his brother any more, and Pope Hadrian soon returned to the anti-Lombard line. Stephen's rather detailed biography in the Liber Pontificalis, written shortly after 774, is markedly pro-Christophorus again.

So far, the historical narrative is clear, although it rests on time-honoured conjectures in some parts. We do not even know the name of the bride, whom modern scholars have variously named Desiderata, Ermengarda (a name invented for her in Alessandro Manzoni's popular drama Adelchi and later adopted by Italian scholars) or, as Janet Nelson suggests, Gerberga.[19] As Desiderius's other daughters were called Adelperga and Liutperga, we would expect such consistency in naming. Moreover, it is unclear whether Charles actually married his Lombard bride.[20] Some annals state that Bertrada brought her back from Italy, probably in the autumn of 770.[21] Only later sources speak of an actual marriage, chiefly Einhard who says that Charles sent her back after a year, a cause for the only quarrel he ever had with his mother Bertrada: "There was never any disagreement between them except when he divorced the daughter of King Desiderius, whom he had married at her advice".[22] The Vita of Adalhard claims that Charles's repudiation of his bride, in spite of the oaths given by several Frankish nobles, had motivated Adalhard's conversion to monastic life.[23] Both sources show that opinions about Charles's Lombard marriage differed fundamentally, and that his later conquest of Desiderius's kingdom had not erased the deep-rooted memories of heated debates in a situation obviously regarded by many as embarrassing.

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[19] Ermengarda: Bertolini, *Roma,* 648. Desiderata: Carolus Desideratam, Desiderii regis Italorum filiam, repudiaret – Vita Adalhardi, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, *MGH SS 2* (Hannover: Hahn, 1829), 525, while Migne (PL 120, Paris: Migne, 1864, col. 1511) reads desideratam … filiam. Gerberga: Nelson, "Making a difference," 183f.

[20] McKitterick, *Charlemagne,* 86.

[21] *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 770, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, *MGH SS 1* (Hannover: Hahn, 1826), 30; *Annales Petaviani* a. 770, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, *MGH SS 1* (Hannover: Hahn, 1826), 13: hoc anno domna Berta fuit in Italia propter filiam Desiderii regis, et redditae sunt civitates plurimae sancto Petro; *Annales Nazariani* a. 770, ed. Walter Lendi, *Untersuchungen zur frühalemannischen Annalistik: Die Murbacher Annalen mit Edition* (Freiburg i. Ü.: Editions Universitarie, 1971), 155: Berta duxit filiam Desiderii regis Langobardorum in Franciam; *Annales Mosellani* a. 770, ed. Johann M. Lappenberg, *MGH SS XVI* (Hannover: Hahn, 1859), 496; *Annales Fuldenses* a. 770, ed. Friedrich Kurze, *MGH SS rer Germ 7* (Hannover: Hahn, 1891), 8. For Bertrada see Janet L. Nelson, "Bertrada," in *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751. Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung*, ed. Matthias Becher and Jörg Jarnut (Münster: Scriptorium, 2004) 93-108.

[22] Einhard, *Vita Karoli* c. 18, 23. Trans. Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization,* 34.

[23] Paschasius Radbertus, *Vita Adalhardi*, PL 120 (Paris: Migne, 1879), col. 1511. See Brigitte Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie – die Biographie eines karolingischen Politikers und Klostervorstehers* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1985), at 19–27.

We do not know whether the arguments in Stephen's letter played any part in these debates. We can easily assume that those at court who were very disappointed with Charles's decision to send his bride back did not agree with them. After all, it was Bertrada who had been instrumental in the downfall of Christophorus, and it is not unlikely that young Adalhard had accompanied her. Was the letter more than an isolated and exaggerated statement by a desperate papal official who repeatedly overstepped the mark and finally paid for that with his eyesight? Most scholars think that the letter had little influence, and that Charlemagne did in fact marry the daughter of Desiderius. Yet, we may ask ourselves whether the argument had some impact in the end, when politics had changed and reasons had to be found for their reversal. It is not unlikely that those who argued in favour of breaking the marriage alliance with Desiderius complemented the obvious arguments of political expediency with the moral authority of Stephen's letter. In any case, the letter, so full of threats and insults, was included in the Codex Carolinus, although one might have regarded it as an unwelcome reminder of unpleasant conflict and political manoeuvering.

However that may be, more importantly: for a long time, the Carolingians did in fact refrain from marrying wives from outside their kingdom. This is usually explained by political expediency – avoid foreign influence or rights of inheritance by external princes, and integrate the realm by marriage alliances with powerful families within it.[24] That is of course very reasonable. But most of these good reasons are just as valid for any other dynasty that did not avoid marriages with foreign women. For instance, Merovingian queens came from the Burgundians (Chlothild), Thuringians (Radegund), Lombards (Wisigarda), Visigoths (Brunhild) and Anglosaxons (Balthild).[25] Intermarriage with the Byzantine court might have enhanced the status of the Carolingians both when they took on the royal and the imperial title. But, as the letter implies, Pippin III was dissuaded by the pope to give his daughter to the emperor (although the text is not quite clear here). If the goal of a marriage was prestige and status, papal

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[24] Silvia Konecny, *Die Frauen des karolingischen Königshauses. Die politische Bedeutung der Ehe und die Stellung der Frau in der fränkischen Herrscherfamilie vom 7. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert* (Wien: Verband der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1976); ead., "Eherecht und Ehepolitik unter Ludwig dem Frommen", in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 85 (1977) 1-21.
[25] Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London and New York: Longman, 1994) 120-39.

rhetoric could have an impact by challenging this improvement of status on the symbolical level.

But what could lend authority to the letter, apart from the fact that it came from the shifting ground of papal exhortations which Frankish recipients did not always take too serious? No doubt the argument against foreign-born wives in the letter is ultimately based on the Old Testament. It is indicative that the reference "how many and which powerful men strayed from the precepts of God by marriages with foreign-born women" remains so general: obviously, there was no need to explain. Therefore, regardless of the exact circumstances, the letter allows to study not only a specific, historically placed argument, but also the underlying discourse in the sense of Foucault, that is: what could be said (and said with the presumption of supreme moral authority).[26]

The Hebrew Bible is famously ambiguous in its attitude towards strangers. Mixed marriages do occur, and some of them receive a positive treatment; most famously, Ruth as David's (and in Christian belief, also Jesus Christ's) progenitor. But the condemnation of marrying foreign wives is much more insistent. The strongest statements come in three contexts: first, the occupation of the Holy Land, when the Israelites are repeatedly called upon not to marry any women of the former inhabitants, but rather, as the Deuteronomium requests, eradicate subdued peoples completely (Ex. 34, 15-16; Dt. 7, 1-4). Second, Kings, where Salomon strays from the right path (1 Kg. 11, 1-4): "King Solomon loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been." Similar things happened to King Ahab when he married the Sidonian princess Jezebel (1 Kg. 16, 31-34). Jezebel became a convenient comparison for bad queens of foreign origin – Brunhild, the 6th-century

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[26] Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).

Merovingian queen of Visigothic stock was criticized as a second Jezebel. It is reamarkable that Judith, the second wife of Louis the Pious, who was of noble Bavarian origin, could also be slandered as a foreigner in this manner.[27] It is interesting that But such slander was not directed against foreign marriages as such, it just sought to mobilize ancient prejudice against individuals. The third Old Testament context is the return from Babylon when the prophets Esra and Nehemiah preach against mixed marriages. It is in this post-exilian context that biblical scholars locate the preoccupation of the deuteronomian redaction against foreign-born wives, and the introduction of this whole chain of strong statements against them.[28]

For Christian exegesis, these passages constituted a problem; should not all *gentes* have access to salvation? Christian writers of the patristic period follow no clear line here. There are relatively few statements in late antiquity that take them at face value, for instance in the chronicle of Sulpicius Severus, written around 400 AD. In summing up the setbacks of the Israelites after the death of Josuah, he blamed them to the foreign wives that they had taken (which are not even mentioned in the relevant passages in Jud. 2-4): "Contract marriages with the defeated, and soon you take on foreign habits". He concludes: "All association with foreigners is pernicious".[29] Sulpicius even argued that the barbarians of his time, *permixtas barbaras nationes*, should have been eradicated instead of settled on Roman territory, as suggested in the Old Testament.[30] Sometimes, marriages

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[27] Ionas, *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 18, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS rer. Germ 37 (Hannover: Hahn, 1905), 187 (without explicitly mentioning that she was of Gothic origin); Agobard, *Liber Apologeticus*, 2, 3-4, ed. Lieven Van Acker (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981) 316-17; Janet Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian history," in: ead., *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambleton Press, 1986) 1-48; Brigitte Merta, "Helenae conparanda regina – secunda Isebel. Darstellungen von Frauen des merowingischen Hauses in frühmittelalterlichen Quellen," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 96 (1988) 1-32; Mayke de Jong, "Bride Shows Revisited: Praise, Slander and Exegesis in the Reign of the Empress Judith," in: *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 257-77, at 269.
[28] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra – Nehemiah: A Commentary* (London: The Westminster Press, 1988); Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation and Inclusion of the 'Foreigner' in Post-Exilic Biblical Theology," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden and New York: Brill, 2002), 120: "There is a clear aversion to foreign women as marriage partners in later texts".
[29] *Matrimonia ex victis assumere paulatimque externos mores trahere.* (…) *cuncta cum externis societas perniciosa est* . Sulpicius Severus, *Chroniques* I, 24, 2, ed. Ghislaine de Senneville-Grave (Paris : Editions du CERF, 1999) 152; cf. ibid. II, 10, 4; I, 2, 7–8; 246 and 94. See Stefan Weber, *Die Chronik des Sulpicius Severus. Charakteristika und Intentionen* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1995), 49 and 54; Veronika Wieser, "Die Weltchronik des Sulpicius Severus. Fragmente einer Sprache der Endzeit im ausgehenden 4. Jahrhundert," in *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie des Untergangs im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Veronika Wieser (Berlin: Akademieverlag, forthcoming).
[30] Sulpicius Severus, *Chroniques* II, 3, 5–6, 228.

between Christians and pagans were forbidden, but others saw them as an opportunity for conversion. Augustine, for instance, commenting on the passage in Esra, insisted that God had neither commanded nor forbidden that a man or a woman who became Christian should leave their pagan partner.[31] But Isidore of Seville realized that this could create a problem. It was not Salomon who had converted his foreign wives; on the contrary, he had been weakened in his faith by them, so this was not a fitting model for Christian missions.[32]

In general, patristic exegesis tended to avoid understanding the Old-Testament refutations of mixed marriages literally.[33] For instance, Ambrose posed the question of how Ruth, *cum esset alienigena,* could marry a Jew. Had Jesus Christ ultimately come from an illegitimate marriage?[34] Anti-Christian polenics resound in this argument. But Ambrose argued with Paul's words that (Mosaic) law was not valid for the just (1 Tim. 1, 9). Ruth had surpassed the law through her sanctity, and thus had become a fitting model for all Christians, "because in her all of us, who are collected from the *gentes*, enterinmg the Church of God have been prefigured." The foreign-born wives could therefore be seen as an allegory of the *ecclesia in gentibus*.[35] Bede found a rather different solution; for him, the *alienigenae uxores* could represent heresy.[36] Allegorical interpretations defused the prohibitions of the Old Testament, but at the same time kept them present.

Stephen's letter, therefore, is not in line with most of the exegesis of the passages he implicitly refers to, and the author may have realized that. That could explain the extensive use of the rhetoric of invective against the Lombards. The insinuation that they were in fact pagans and/or heretics was totally unfounded in

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[31] Augustinus, *De adulterinis coniugiis,* 1,18, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL 41 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1900), 367.

[32] Isidor, *Mysticorum expositiones sacramentorum seu quaestiones in vetus Testamentum* 11, 6, ed. Jacques P. Migne, PL 83 (Paris: Migne, 1850), col. 400f. I owe this passage to Gerda Heydemann, Vienna.

[33] Pohl, „Alienigena coniugia".

[34] *Quia in illa nostrum omnium qui collecti ex gentibus sumus, ingrediendi in Ecclesiam Domini figura praecessit.* Ambrosius, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam 3*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 15 (Paris: Migne, 1845), col. 1684f.

[35] See, for instance, Rufinus' translation of Origenes, *Homiliae in librum iudicum* 5, ed. Wilhelm A. Baehrens (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs' sche Buchhandlung, 1921), 495: Iahel mulier ista alienigena (…) figuram tenet ecclesiae, quae ex alienigenis gentibus congregata est; Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL 25 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichisches Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1891), 693.

[36] Beda Venerabilis, *In Esra et Nehemiam* c. 12, ed. David Hurst, CCSL II 9A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 235–392; engl. Scott De Gregorio, *On Esra and Nehemiah, Translated Texts for Historians* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 136–53, 225–6.

his day, but could rely on perceptions from the past, not least, Gregory the Great's complaints about the *nefandissimi Longobardi*.[37] One implication of addressing the Franks as a most noble, privileged people may also have been that they were under a covenant with the see of St. Peter and had to meet higher moral standards than other peoples.[38]

Although it is the most forceful polemic against *alienigenae uxores*, letter 45 of the Codex Carolinus is not quite isolated as a statement to that end in the Carolingian period. There are further examples. The first seems quite remote at first glance, a document from two Anglo-Saxon synods. The relevant source is a letter by bishop George of Ostia to Pope Hadrian from Britain, where he had travelled as a papal legate in 786.[39] It includes the chapters discussed at two synods in Northumbria and in Mercia. It seems that they had been drafted by George, with the help of Alcuin, according to local needs. Chapter 15 deals with proper marriage, and interestingly does not only condemn incest but also marriage *cum alienigenis uxoribus*.[40] A possible context is indicated by chapter 19, which warns Christians not to assume the pagan practices of their recently-converted Pictish neighbours. The connection between foreign wives and relapse into paganism is strongly suggested by the Old Testament. George of Ostia was a die-hard papal diplomat who had worked together with Christophorus, so that both documents were contrived by the same restricted circle of papal bureaucrats; Joanna Story has detected a number of "Carolingian affinities" in George's chapters, and Carl Hammer has drawn attention to Wigbod who had been dispatched by Charlemagne to accompany George's

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[37] Gregorius Magnus, *Registrum epistolarum*, V, 38, ed. Paul Ewald/Ludwig M. Hartmann, *MGH Epistolae* I–II, Berlin [2]1957) 325. Walter Pohl, "Gregorio Magno e il regno dei longobardi," in *Gregorio Magno, l'impero e i regna*, ed. Claudio Azzara (Firenze: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2008) 15-28.

[38] For the notion of the Franks as a chosen people, see Mary Garrison, "The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an identity from Pippin to Charlemagne," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge: University Press, 2000) 114-61; Walter Pohl, "Introduction: Strategies of identification. A methodological profile," in *Strategies of Identification. Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe*, ed.Walter Pohl/Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

[39] Published in *MGH Epistolae* 4 among the letters of Alcuin, n. 3, ed. Ernst Dümmler (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 20–29. Cf. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* a. 786, ed. Michael Swanton (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 54f. For the context, see Catherine Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils, c. 650 – c. 850* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 153–91; Joanna Story*, Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750–870* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 55–92, with an extensive account of George's mission. See also Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [3]1971), 215–17; Edward James, *Britain in the First Millennium* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000) 192f. For Charlemagne's relations with England see Joanna Story, "Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxons," in *Charlemagne – Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005) 195-210.

[40] Interdicuntur omnibus iniusta connubia, et incaestuosa, tam cum ancillis Dei vel aliis illicitis personis, quam cum propinquis et consanguineis vel alienigenis uxoribus: et omnino anathematis mucrone perfoditur, qui talia agit. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils,* 183, translates this as "wives of others", which the word *alienigena* does not really suggest.

mission.[41] Of course, no direct link with the marriage project between the Carolingians and King Offa of Mercia that Charlemagne stopped a few years later can be established.[42] However, one of the protagonists in both was Alcuin, who must have been involved in the diplomatic tensions between his new lord and his old homeland. In a letter, he refers to criticisms from his old homeland to have been disloyal to the *gens Anglorum* and to the king; it is usually placed in the context of the marriage crisis, although Rosamond McKitterick would rather link it with Northumbria.[43] Later, in 796, Alcuin wrote a letter to Pippin of Italy in which he advised him to keep the woman of his adolescence, and not to turn to foreign ones: "Be happy with the woman of your adolescence, and strange ones (*alienae*) should not be your company, so that God's blessing on you will go forth in a long series of offspring."[44] The letter sounds like a friendlier echo of Stephen's exhortations. *Alienae (mulieres)* might of course simply mean 'wives of others' or 'other women', as it often does, although some eminent French scholars have translated it as "etrangères".[45] Alcuin did use *alienus* in this sense: he remembered that he had come to Francia as a stranger, *alienus*, and underlined the example of Moses, who had relied on the advice of an *alienigena*, his Midianite father-in-law Jethro (Ex. 18, 17-27).[46]

A clearer example for the political relevance of the argument is a passage from the Ordinatio Imperii of 817. The 13th chapter regulates the marriages of Louis the Pious' sons after his death and states: *ut de exteris gentibus nullus illorum uxorem accipere presumat*.[47] Explicitly,

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[41] Story*, Carolingian Connections,* 78-87; Carl I. Hammer, "Christmas Day 800: Charles the Younger, Alcuin and the Frankish Royal Succession," *English Historical Review* CXXVII (524) (2012) 1–23, at 8-9.

[42] *Gesta Abbatum Fontanellensium,* ed. Samuel Löwenfeld, *MGH SS rer. Germ.* 28 (Hannover: Hahn, 1886), 46f. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England, 220*; Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 111–13; Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Leicester University Press, 1983), 47; Story*, Carolingian Connections*, 184-88; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 282-84. Hammer, "Christmas Day 800", argues that he may have been entrusted with finding an Anglo-Saxon bride for Charles the Younger, which seems unlikely, not least in the light of chapter 15 of the document.

[43] Alcuin, Ep. 82, ed. Ernst Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae* 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 125; Story*, Carolingian Connections*, 187; McKitterick, *Charlemagn*e, 283.

[44] Laetare cum muliere adoliscentiae tuae; et non sint alienae participes tui; ut benedictio tibi a Deo data in longam nepotum procedat posteritatem. Alcuin, Ep. 119, ed. Ernst Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae* 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 174.

[45] Heinrich Fichtenau, *Das Karolingische Imperium: Soziale und geistige Problematik eines Großreiches* (Zürich: Fretz + Wasmuth, 1949), 46, understands the letter as a warning against polygamy. The French translation has "aucune étrangère", in: id., *L'Empire Carolingien* (Paris: Payot, 1958), 63. Correspondingly, Jean Devisse, *Hincmar, Archevêque de Reims, 845–82*, 3 vols. (Genf: Librairie Droz, 1975), in vol. 1, 373, and Pierre Riché, "La Bible et la vie politique dans le haut Moyen Âge," in *Le Moyen Âge et la Bible*, ed. Pierre Riché and Guy Lobrichon (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1984) 385–400, interpret *aliena* as a foreigner.

[46] Alcuin, *Epistolae* 69, 113.

[47] *Ordinatio Imperii* a. 817, c. 13, ed. Alfred Boretius, *MGH Capitularia* I (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 272: Illud tamen propter discordias evitandas et occasiones noxias auferendas cavendum decernimus, ut de exteris gentibus nullus illorum uxorem accipere praesumat. Omnium vero homines propter pacem artius conligandam,

the clause should *prevent* the princes from seeking external support against each other, and encourages them to find wives from other parts of the realm to strengthen the unity of the empire. It is the only division document from the period that contains such a clause. Still, it attests to at least one instance in which the hesitation in the Carolingian family to enter into marriage alliances with dynasties from outside their realm is officially stated. Perhaps there was a strand of deliberate policy in Carolingian attitudes to mixed marriages after all? The marriage projects with Byzantium, with the Lombards and with Mercia had all come to nothing, and Charlemagne had also stubbornly kept his daughters unmarried; his "negative attitude to foreign marriages" was coinsistent, as Rosamond McKitterick underlines.[48]

The development of the papal position is harder to trace; papal letters are lacking for most of the 9th century. No further attempt to influence Carolingian marriage policies is attested. But there is one example in a letter by John VIII written in 872 to Sophonesta, a widow of Urbino whom he chastized because she "longed for foreign relationships with alien peoples".[49] Obviously, the citizens of Urbino had intervened lest the considerable estates owned by the widow would pass to an outsider. The pope explained to her that as a widow she was not even supposed to remarry at all, but it was even worse to choose a foreigner. Thus, the letter allowed her to marry a local (*ex nostratibus*), giving her 20 days to pick one; otherwise she would have to retire to a monastery.[50] In spite of the over-determined rhetoric, *alienarum gentium alienigenas copulas*, what seems to have mattered here was that the estates remained in the hand of the powerful families of the city.

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ubicumque inter partes elegerint, uxores ducant. Cf. Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Divisio legitima und unitas imperii. Teilungspraxis und Einheitsstreben bei der Thronfolge im Frankenreich," *Deutsches Archiv* 52 (1996) 423-85; Sören Kaschke, *Die karolingischen Reichsteilungen bis 831. Herrschaftspraxis und Normvorstellungen in zeitgenössischer Sicht* (Hamburg: Dr. Kovac, 2006) 324-53, at 332.

[48] McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 284; for Charlemagne's unmarried daughters, see Janet L. Nelson, "Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regiment?" In *Medieval Queenship*, edited by John Carmi Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 43-61.

[49] *Fragmenta registri Johannis VIII. Papae* ep. 10, ed. Erich Caspar, *MGH EE 7* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1928), 278 (871/72): Multorum relatione didicimus te ad discidium patriae alienigenas viros appetere et, cum debuisses utpote post discessum benivoli tibi viri sub sacro velamine castimoniam profiteri, tu (…) in eisdem domibus ac prediis alienarum diceris gentium alienigenas copulas anhelare.

[50] A different interpretation in *J.F. Böhmer, Regesta Imperii* I,4, *Papstregesten 800-911, Teil 3: 872-82*, ed. Veronika Unger (Wien, Köln and Weimar: Böhlau, 2013), n. 82, p. 45, where the *nostrates* are translated as "päpstliche Hörige", papal serfs. This is not only unlikely from the context – why should a woman who had inherited a fortune marry a serf? – but also unlikely in the light of other occurences of the term. A search in the entire series of the *MGH Epistolae* shows that *nostrates* are usually juxtaposed with *exteri* or *peregrini* (e.g. *MGH Briefe der Deutsche Kaiserzeit* 1, 18; *MGH Epp. Saec. XIII*, 1, 28, which reflects papal usage). The general message of the letter to Sophonesta is: *alienigenis nostratum copulas non permittimus*, and the emperor is entitled to divorce such marriages: *a domino serenissimo imperatore ... continuo dissociandas esse iure sancimus*. This is not a procedure likely to be used for papal serfs.

At the end of the 9th century, the Eastern Frankish council of Tribur (895) had to rule on the issue of foreign-born wives.[51] Obviously, the assembly was confronted with a number of divorce cases in which the husband had argued that the marriage was void because it had been concluded between partners from different peoples, who also lived according to different laws. One of these cases (highlighted in a variant version) is explicitly mentioned and concerned a Frank who had married a Saxon woman and lived with her for 15 years. But then he suddenly declared that he had been deceived and that he had not married her under Frankish law, divorced her and married another.[52] A similar case involved a Bavarian woman. The decision was simple: "If someone marries a foreign-born, he will have to keep her."[53] The only condition was that the two partners had to be united by "one faith, one baptism". The multiplicity and personality of the law in the Carolingian realm had created similar problems in other fields, from the misuse of the judicial duel of the Burgundian code which Agobard of Lyon had criticized, to Gottschalk's contention that his oblation as a child to the monastery of Fulda had been unlawful because the formalities of Saxon law had been neglected.[54] But we may also see the impact of the Old Testament examples behind the logic of the husbands seeking divorce.

In comparison with the heated debates of the 9th century about incest, divorce and polygamy,[55] these examples are peripheral, and have not even earned as much as a footnote in

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[51] Rudolf Pokorny, "Die drei Versionen der Triburer Synodalakten von 895. Eine Neubewertung," *Deutsches Archiv* 48,2 (1992) 429-511; Christopher Carroll, "The last great Carolingian church council: the Tribur synod of 895," *Annuarium historiae conciliorum 33* (2001) 9-25.

[52] *Additamenta ad capitularia regum Franciae orientale* Nr. 252. Concilium Triburiense, 895, Mai 5, ed. Alfred Boretius and Victor Krause, *MGH Capit. 2* (Hannover: Hahn, 1897), at Cap. 39a, 235f.: Pervenit ad notitiam nostram quendam Franchum genere Saxonicae gentis mulierem communi propinquorum consultu duxisse uxorem et ad subolis procreationem publice plus quam XV annis sibi commansisse; quamvis enim 'una fides et unum baptisma' utramque nationem regat, legem tamen inter se, quantum ad seculum, sortiuntur diversam. Unde contigit, ut antiqui hostis calliditate praefatus homo deceptus diceret non suam, quae tunc credebatur, iure Franchorum ullo modo sibi desponsasse uxorem. Dimissa igitur legitima coniuge aliam sibi sociavit.

[53] *Additamenta ad capitularia regum Franciae orientale. Concilium Triburiense*, at Cap. 39, 235f.: Si quis alienigenam in matrimonium duxerit, habere debebit. Quicunque alienigenam, hoc est alienae gentis feminam, verbi gratia Francus mulierem Baioaricam, utrorumque consultu propinquorum legitime vel sua vel mulieris lege adquisitam in coniugium duxerit, velit nolit, tenenda erit nec ultra ab eo separanda, excepta fornicationis causa. Quamvis enim, ut apostolus ait, 'unus Dominus, una fides, unum baptisma' utrique communis sit nationi, legem tamen habent diversam et, quantum ad saeculum, interdum longe disiunctam.

[54] Agobard, *Adversus legem Gundobadi*, ed. Lieven Van Acker, *Agobardi Lugdunensis Opera Omnia, CCCM* 52 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981), 19–28; Ian Wood, "Ethnicity and Ethnogenesis of the Burgundians, " in *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, vol. 1, ed. Herwig Wolfram and Walter Pohl (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990); Matthew Gillis, "Noble and Saxon: The Meaning of Gottschalk of Orbais' Ethnicity at the Synod of Mainz, 829," in *Ego Trouble: Authors and their Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini et al. (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010).

[55] Karl Ubl, *Inzestverbot und Gesetzgebung: die Konstruktion eines Verbrechens (300 - 1100)* (Berlin et al.: de Gruyter, 2008).

histories of early medieval marriage.[56] The thrust of catholic teaching on rightful marriage concentrated more and more on incest, which crystallized in Lothar's marriage crisis and in Hincmar's polemic against it.[57] Unlike the outspoken critics of incest, those who opted for a prohibition of foreign marriages in certain cases have not even left a general statement or programme. Carolingian exegesis did address the problem, but not as a key issue. Hrabanus Maurus is a telling case. He uses a passage in Deuteronomy (Dt. 17, 16) that forbids choosing foreign-born kings to discuss Salomon's foreign wives – the biblical text does not mention foreign women here, so Hrabanus' digression indicates that the problem must have been on his mind. But what really mattered to him was not so much the foreignness but the polygamy, *multiplicatio,* of the wives. This was, according to Hrabanus, what had made Salomon turn away from God. But surely, the foreignness had made it worse: *Hoc magis videtur praecepisse, ne multiplicando perveniat ad alienigenas feminas, per quas factum est in Salomone, ut discederet cor eius a Deo*.[58] Once again, the issue of foreignness became conflated with problems of polygamy, political rule and of difference of religion. Foreign wives appear more as a moral hazard than as something totally inacceptable in principle.

This corresponds with the impression from the examples in which, as we have seen, foreignness became an issue. Even though the arguments, and the Old-Testament cases that provided a frame of reference for them, seem similar at first glance, the issues are in fact rather different. In the case of Pope Stephen's letter, the intention was to prevent a 'renversement des alliances' regarded as harmful. The Northumbrian synod seems to have worried about pagan influences from recently-converted Pictish neighbours. In the Ordinatio imperii, the issue was avoiding possible discord in the Carolingian family and strengthening the unity of the empire. In Urbino, the leading families wanted to maintain control over their properties. And a few late-ninth century Frankish husbands sought a pretext to get rid of their wives. In none of these cases was any consistent practice established. That would have required a more elaborate discourse and pragmatic rules. But we have no trace of that. It was difficult enough to decide what incest was. But who exactly was an *alienigena*? Was it simply

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[56] Paul Mikat, *Dotierte Ehe – rechte Ehe. Zur Entwicklung des Eheschließungsrechtes in fränkischer Zeit* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1978).

[57] Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London/New York: Longman, 1992), 215–18; Devisse, *Hincmar*; Karl Heidecker, *The Divorce of Lothar II: Christian Marriage and Political Power in the Carolingian World* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2010); Stuart Airlie, "Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce Case of Lothar II.", *Past and Present* 161 (1998) 3-38; Pierre Toubert, "La théorie du mariage chez les moralistes carolingiens", *Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo* 24 (1977) 233-82.

[58] Hrabanus Maurus, *Enarratio super Deuteronomium* II, 17, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 108 (Paris: Migne, 1852) col. 903f. Hraban's commentary to Dt. 7, 1–26, a passage directly dealing with foreign women, relies on Isidore, *Mysticorum expositiones*, col. 366ff.

a woman from another *gens*, whatever that meant? Anyone not from Urbino, as John VIII's letter seems to indicate? Or only those who were not subjects of the Carolingians? After all, when Charlemagne sent home the daughter of Desiderius, he married a Suabian woman instead. By the standards of the time, she was an *alienigena* (as were the Saxon or Bavarian wives on the agenda at the council of Tribur); but she came from a people that had lived under Frankish rule for a while.

Thus, the issue raised in Stephen's letter 45 is an example of a road not taken in the Carolingian attempts to construct a truly Christian society. The popes as 'cultural brokers'[59] could create influential models for Carolingian reform, but not all of their suggestions had a lasting impact. In the controversial discussion about proper Christian marriage, and above all, about the marriage of princes, the argument did not catch on, although it seems to have been in the air for a while. What is instructive about the issue is the role of Old-Testament models for the reform efforts and political struggles of the Carolingian period. The Old Testament could serve, under certain circumstances, to stigmatize women, to propagate notions of ethnic 'purity', and to reinforce distinctions between *nostrati* and *alienigenae* within the Christian world. The issue of foreign wives is not the only case in which an attempt at drawing sharper lines between 'us' and the 'foreigners' had only limited success. The inclusive concept of the *populus Christianus – una fides et unum baptisma –* prevailed. But the example also demonstrates how much the *gentes*, and their kingdoms, had become part of the Christian world. Christianity provided ample space for propagating an ethnic basis for political rule.[60] Therefore, it is not a coincidence that a papal letter should offer a particularly strong statement for the significance of ethnic ties in the power politics of the period. By the 8th century, the popes had adapted to living in a world of *gentes*, which gave them more room to move than a dominant empire.

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[59] Clemens Gantner, "The eighth century papacy as cultural broker between east and west", in: *Cultural Memory and the Resources of the Past, 400-1200*, edited by Rosamond McKitterick, Sven Meeder and Clemens Gantner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[60] Pohl, "Introduction: Strategies of Identification," forthcoming; id., "Introduction: Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West," in *Post-Roman Transitions: Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

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