The resources of the past in early medieval Europe. By Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick and Sven Meeder. Pp. xvi + 354. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. $99.00 978 1 107 09171 9
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For the past two decades, cultural memory has retained an intellectual purchase as a useful category of historical analysis and its currency betrays no hint of debasement. The Carolingian period (*c.* 750–900 CE) in particular is fertile ground for the evaluation of the ways in which premodern Europeans appropriated and restructured narratives of the distant past to express their understanding of themselves and their societies. While the so-called Carolingian Renaissance has long been associated with a resurgence of interest in the Roman past, the volume under review widens this purview by reminding us that early medieval thinkers also took a keen interest in biblical and patristic literature in general and early church histories in particular. A lucid introduction by Walter Pohl and Ian Wood situates the contents of this volume in a theoretical framework that ranges from Patrick Geary's seminal *Phantoms of remembrance: memory and oblivion at the end of the first millenium* (1994) to Aleida Assman's *Cultural memory and western civilization: functions, media, archives* (2011). Over the course of four thematic sections ('Learning Empire', 'The Biblical Past', 'Changing Senses of the Other from the Fourth to the Eleventh Century' and 'The Migration of Cultural Traditions in Early Medieval Europe'), the fifteen essays in this collection provide case studies of the ways in which early medieval authors drew upon the textual resources of the past to inform the present. These authors articulate their understanding of Carolingian rulership in light of historical sources for Rome's imperial and Christian legacies. They also employ examples and typologies from the biblical past not only as tools in contemporary political discourse but also as categories to define the outsiders on their real and imagined peripheries, whether pagans or rebels or even the Merovingians, who troubled the collective memory of their Carolingian usurpers. Essays by Rosamond McKitterick and Helmut Reimitz – on Carolingian appropriations of the *Liber pontificalis* and late antique historians respectively – engage directly with manuscript evidence that illuminates very clearly how creative and dynamic early medieval authors could be as they wove new meanings from the many-hued threads of biblical and early Christian histories.

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The introduction of Christianity into the early medieval insular world. Converting the Isles. Edited by Roy Flechner and Máire Ní Mhaonaigh. (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 19.) Pp. xx + 510 incl. 9 figs and 2 maps. Turnhout: Brepols, 2016. €120. 978 2 503 55462 4
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From 2012 until 2014 an International Research Network, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, worked on the theme 'Converting the Isles: The Study of Conversion to Christianity in the Insular World'. Many of its discussions and talks are available as podcasts at http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk. This is the first published volume; a second, *Transforming landscapes of belief in the early medieval world and beyond*, will follow. The group deliberately widened focus beyond the