Robert L. Benson (center right) in Poznań, Poland on 22 July 1993, with Giles Constable (left), Alexander Patschovsky (center left), and Jerzy Strzelczyk (right), inspecting the Trzemeszno chalices (see “Images of Rulership on a Romanesque Chalice from Trzemeszno” in this volume). Photo courtesy of Giles Constable.
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Robert Louis Benson had a special connection to German historical scholarship. At Berkeley in the late 1940s, Ernst H. Kantorowicz (1895–1963), a German immigrant, was Benson’s teacher and left his mark on Benson’s choice of research topics and especially his working style. The extreme precision and faithfulness to the original sources which characterize Kantorowicz’s works are found in Benson’s as well; this was a time-consuming way of working which did not allow for assembly-line production. Benson accompanied Kantorowicz when he left Berkeley for the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and received his M. A. in 1953 and his Ph. D. in 1958 from Princeton University.

Between these two degrees Benson spent two years, 1954 and 1955, as a Fulbright scholar in Germany, more specifically in Munich, at the Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH). To the staff at the institute, Benson might as well have been one of the Three Wise Men. German students—especially those in the physical sciences but also, albeit to a lesser extent, those in the humanities—strived to make their way to the United States. The future was there; so it appeared to us.

And now an American student had come in the opposite direction, to us in Germany: athletic in appearance, wiry and muscular, the way a German from the provinces imagined a football star, full of zest for life, with a loud, infectious laugh. His features and lightly mestizo complexion gave rise to Robert’s legend of an ancestor who had settled in the American West and taken a Native American bride. This “splendid fellow,” this “great guy” from the Golden West even spoke German, hesitantly but with an unflinching determination to put the right word in the right place. Later, as one saw Robert at home in the United States, one realized that the pauses in his speech did not come from a lack of ability, or from the fact that a suitable word was not at hand; Robert endeavored in every language—whether in German, or English, or even Italian—to use the precisely appropriate word, which often came only after a long, reflective pause. American friends
reflecting on the loss caused by Robert’s death all remembered that silence in search of precision: Think carefully about what you want to say or write before you commit yourself.

During those years in Munich, Robert Benson moved among the institute staff as if one of them. The MGH, evacuated from Berlin due to the aerial bombardments, moved on to Munich from its way station in the remote village of Pommersfelden near Bamberg. In Munich it found temporary quarters in the so-called Führer buildings on the Königsplatz: all the staff in a single room; all the guests in another one; the library four floors below, in the cellar and on shelves that had previously housed the card file of the entire membership of the Nazi Party. The cellar was not accessible by means of a staircase but only with a giant freight elevator, which, besides being unbearably slow, from time to time was so malicious as to stop between the floors, for which reason it was advisable not to use it on weekends.

The close proximity in emergency quarters, and the life in a city that at the end of the war was 80 percent destroyed by bombs and still only partially rebuilt, allowed the staff and the American visitor to close ranks and do a lot of things together, from daily visits to the canteen to the adventure of Oktoberfest to outings to the “holy mountain” at Andechs, famous for its beer.

At that time Robert was working on the question of how the emperor—the German king as Roman emperor—took up the reins of office. His main sources were the decretists, his focus the twelfth century. The classic collection of Sergio Mochi Onory had just been published,1 and shortly thereafter appeared Percy Ernst Schramm’s survey, produced under the auspices of the MGH.2 Not a week passed in which Robert did not surprise us with new sources related to this question, excerpted in his meticulous script on great stiff, lined, index cards. These individual pieces grew together, and a clear picture emerged.

At that time, as the MGH was settling down in Munich, Friedrich Baethgen (1890–1972) was its president. In 1947 the reestablished board of directors elected him, the cosmopolitan professor from Berlin who had come to the capital of the Reich from Heidelberg by way of Rome and Königsberg, after the previous director, Theodor Mayer (1883–1972), who had been appointed during the National Socialist era by the Reichs minister for Science, Education, and National Culture, was held to be no longer acceptable. Friedrich Baethgen was a typical Prussian who answered to the Bavarian “Grüß Gott” with “Guten Tag” in a cool northern German voice. The son of a professor of Old Testament studies who did not deign to mingle with the masses, he already had in his towering form something stiff and aristocratic. But while he may have given off a certain air of coldness, he was also distinguished by an unusual clarity of thought and speech, which sounded perhaps somewhat sober and dispassionate but left an indisputably elegant and melodious impression.

Baethgen had kept his distance from National Socialism. He was not active in the resistance, but he did have a number of connections to representatives of the opposi-
tion. He was a member of the famous Berlin “Wednesday Society,” founded in 1863, a
circle of friends that met regularly on Wednesdays: one of the group made a short pre-
sentation, and discussion followed. Among the members were men of the 20 July plot of
1944 like General Ludwig Beck, Johannes Popitz, the former Prussian finance minister,
and Ulrich von Hassell, the Roman ambassador who had been relieved of his duties, all
of whom paid for their convictions with their lives. One of the last papers read before
this group, on 23 February 1944, was written by Friedrich Baethgen (only five more
meetings followed; the 1,056th meeting held that July was the last).

Baethgen spoke about Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250) and the question of his
ethnic identity. This topic makes it immediately clear why Robert would feel a special
bond with Baethgen and the MGH. The name Ernst Kantorowicz was indissolubly
bound to the biography of the Hohenstaufen emperor, even if later, when the cruel Na-
tional Socialist mob rose to power, the author would distance himself from this work
which, sadly, received the approval of the Nazi leadership. Baethgen and Kantorowicz
were friends. They worked in the same field and knew each other from their time to-
gether in Heidelberg, when one was completing his habilitation and the other was writ-
ing his Frederick II.3 When Albert Brackmann and almost the entire community of his-
torians attacked Kantorowicz and his “mythologizing” work, it was Baethgen who wrote
an exceptionally balanced discussion of the issue in support of Kantorowicz’s posi-
tion.4 Baethgen said that alongside the traditional critical-positivist historiography one
must make room for the idea that an author can bring himself and his experience of
the world into his historical understanding. Baethgen closed his ten-page review with
the words of the great philologist Wilamowitz-Moellendorff: “Without study, it is true,
one attains nothing in scholarship; however, the best things have to be experienced.”
Also from Baethgen’s pen came a beautiful and dignified tribute to his friend Kantoro-
wicz who died in 1963.5 By this time, though, Robert Benson had long since left Mu-
 nich and the MGH. But he left behind something which serves as evidence of his close
affiliation with the institute.

In 1955 Friedrich Baethgen celebrated his sixty-fifth birthday and the MGH staff
put together a Festschrift in his honor.6 It contained a lot about the Hohenstaufen pe-
riod, contributed by Hans Martin Schaller and Rudolf M. Kloos, among others. I my-
self wrote about medieval and humanist criticism of the pseudo-Isidorean decretales.
That Robert Benson was offered the opportunity to contribute something to the Fest-
schrift is a testimony to his inclusion in the company of the institute’s staff. Robert made
good use of this opportunity. His article is the most extensive of the entire volume,
and the topic was central to his interests at that time: the imperial office in relationship
to the papal, as well as the question, similar to that raised concerning the papal eleva-
tion, of when the emperor received the plenitudo potestatis. During a party in the presi-
dent’s office the Festschrift was presented, and Baethgen was so moved by Robert’s
participation that, in contrast to his usual distant manner, Baethgen addressed him as
“Dear Bob.”
And the rest of the story? Robert left Munich in 1956, to take a post as instructor at Barnard College in New York. In 1959 he transferred to Wesleyan University, where he rose to full professor, turned down an offer from the Free University of Berlin, and, finally, in 1974, went to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), as Gerhart B. Ladner’s (1905–93) successor. He taught there for two decades. I wandered by way of Rome, Kiel, and Tübingen to Munich, to the president’s chair, which Friedrich Baethgen had held. Meeting Robert was always a pleasure; he was always present with every fiber of his being, and one found oneself immediately in a serious conversation. Upon later reflection it was remarkable how much one had learned from him about medieval studies and about his friends, and how little one had learned about his family.

In 1968 his great monograph *The Bishop-Elect* was published. Along with our former colleagues in Munich I was perplexed. I had expected a book with a title more like *The Emperor-Elect*. As he was working, his viewpoint had shifted, but there are indications in the book of his earlier angle of approach to the problem (one need only look in the index under “emperor” or “oeconomus”). Robert continued to work on his earlier topic, and there is no question that one day the companion work would have appeared, with the density and precision which we have grown accustomed to expect from him. What is reproduced herein is Robert’s article as it appeared in the Festschrift for Friedrich Baethgen in 1955.7

It is amazing how much material Robert had already worked through in his Munich days, and the conclusions he had already drawn from his observations. Indeed, from time to time newer editions of the sources have been made available, and a great pile of scholarly work has been produced over the intervening years, but Robert still has something to say to us. The publication of this volume is not only an act of piety, but it is also a service to the discipline. *Requiescat in pace* may be an appropriate sentiment to extend to our friend Robert but not to his still-fresh work.

Notes

4. [See Baethgen’s review of Kantorowicz’s Kaiser Freidrich der Zweite in Deutsche Literaturzeitung 51 (1930) 75–85 – Ed.]
6. [See Festschrift Friedrich Baethgen in Abbreviations. – Ed.]
7. [See “Imperator oeconomus Ecclesiae: Notes on a Decretistic Theory of the Imperial Office,” chapter 12 in this volume. – Ed.]
Editor’s Preface

Robert Benson was one of the most learned and original medievalists of his generation. While his published oeuvre was not as extensive as that of many other scholars of his rank and importance, this reflected Benson’s meticulous working style and relentless pursuit of perfection (which, as Horst Fuhrmann notes in the foreword, Benson inherited from his Doktorvater, Ernst Kantorowicz) rather than any lack of interest in publishing the fruits of the extensive and wide-ranging research he conducted right up until the incapacitating heart attack that eventually took his life. Benson was in fact an indefatigable writer and editor and at his untimely death left behind a considerable body of unpublished writings, many of which he had revised and refined (and in some cases presented in lectures and at conferences) over many years, with the express or implied intention of publishing them in the fullness of time. These writings form the basis of the present volume.

Following his death, Benson’s friends and colleagues Giles Constable and Richard Rouse proposed the collection and analysis of his Nachlass to determine the viability of assembling a volume of his unpublished papers. They asked me, as one of Benson’s last students, to assist in this effort and to lead the preparation of the volume if one should in fact prove feasible.

Our first task was the collection and review of Benson’s papers to determine what was publishable in terms both of the originality and interest of the contents and of the completeness of the presentation, including notes. A number of issues complicated this task considerably. First—and vital to emphasize at the outset—Benson remained vigorous and active, with a busy travel schedule, until his sudden and unexpected cardiac event, and he had naturally not made any special preparations that might have facilitated the project. Moreover, he had recently moved across the country to take up a visiting professorship at Yale, and his personal effects happened to be in a particular state of disorganization at that time for this reason. Finally, and not least, Benson had very recently become a Macintosh enthusiast, and all the computer files we had access to had been converted from DOS utilizing unsophisticated off-the-shelf programs, often with
disastrous consequences for both content and formatting; Benson presumably intended to work through and clean up his computer files at his leisure. It is not certain, but very possible, that some or even many works were lost completely in this process of transition to the new computer system, or otherwise in connection with Benson’s many travels and activities in his final years.

In particular, our hopes of finding among Benson’s papers a reasonably complete draft of his Carlyle lectures on Frederick Barbarossa, delivered at Oxford in 1989, were disappointed. The article published here under the title “The Clash at Besançon (October 1157)” is the only one which may resemble the lecture given at Oxford, but it is itself a revision of a lecture given many years before at the University of Frankfurt. The other two articles on Frederick Barbarossa published in Part IV were given as lectures in 1988 and 1990. They doubtless formed part of the Oxford lectures and would have been incorporated, in revised form, in the planned book based upon them. The other lectures—assuming that the complete versions have not simply been lost for the reasons discussed above—were presumably made up of fragments which Benson put together (often late at night, as those familiar with his working habits know) shortly before the lecture was to be delivered. Some of these, often handwritten fragments appear among his papers: they are learned and insightful and show Benson’s mind at work, and his sense of humor, but they cannot be subsequently joined into a meaningful narrative and are not suitable for publication, by themselves. The articles in Part IV will have to stand in as the sole tantalizing fragments of Benson’s planned comprehensive volume on Frederick Barbarossa and the twelfth-century empire.

In addition, in a number of cases—as will be apparent from the editor’s notes in certain of the works—Benson had begun (but not completed) the extensive reworking of an article for which all earlier versions had disappeared, such that the available recension, while a self-contained work in some earlier form, had been converted into a fragment of an incomplete larger work (such as the planned Barbarossa book).

Notwithstanding these considerations and the various editorial issues discussed below, once we had assembled and reviewed a set of the recoverable articles and papers, the editorial team easily concluded that the obvious value to medieval scholarship of the collected ideas and insights of the present articles justified their publication in a posthumous volume. Admittedly, we asked ourselves on many occasions what Benson would have said about the undertaking. We are acutely aware that he would quite possibly have disapproved of it—posthumous publications rarely do full credit to their authors, and after all he had not proposed to publish any of the pieces himself in their present forms without further revision and perfecting—but the fundamental quality of the materials continually heartened us in the project. Indeed, we believe that the works contained herein, despite their occasionally unfinished nature, will reveal the true breadth and profundity of Benson’s scholarship, and further burnish his reputation for vast learning and original insight. We trust the readers of this volume will agree with our overall
assessment of the value of the following works while offering the appropriate indulgence for their inevitable and unavoidable shortcomings in finish and polish (shortcomings which Benson would never have tolerated in his own publications).

The most difficult decision we had to make centered on the inclusion of the first three historiographical articles in Part V, which are concerned primarily with Ernst Kantorowicz, though they touch on the work of other scholars, including Andreas Alföldi and André Grabar. These are occasional pieces, almost book reviews, in the sense that they were written in response to the appearance of specific publications, and they share (in particular the first two) a polemical tone. The article on “Norman Cantor and ‘The Nazi Twins’” was inspired, as Benson himself put it, by his feelings of pietas and the anger at the charges brought against Kantorowicz by Norman Cantor in his book Inventing the Middle Ages. The editorial team recognized that this and the following two articles arguably possess less scholarly merit and permanent value than the other pieces in this volume. Moreover, the articles were composed toward the end of Benson’s life, without the benefit of long gestation and revision that many of the other works herein enjoyed, and thus may represent views and modes of expression that Benson himself would have eschewed over the course of time and extended reflection. On the other hand, the subject was a major preoccupation of Benson’s final years and, given that Cantor’s volume remains in print to this day, has not ceased to be relevant. In fact, of all the articles in this volume these may be the ones that Benson himself would have most wanted to be published. At least two of them contain explicit references to revisions after their original presentation as lectures, which suggest that he intended to publish them eventually. Whether or not these articles are fully up to the scholarly standards of Benson’s other writings is a different question, but they show an important aspect not only of Benson’s scholarly work but also of his character, including his ferocious sense of loyalty to the dearly departed.

It is with this same sense of pietas and affection for our departed friend and counselor that we offer this volume.

* * *

The following brief notes on specific issues raised in the editing process may be of use and interest to the reader. Editor’s notes concerning known information about provenance and dating, among other matters, have been included at the end of the individual articles.

Almost all the articles containing footnotes lacked at least some—and in a few cases, many—of the notes themselves, generally with a notation that the text was to be supplied at a later time and sometimes, for Benson’s own mnemonic purposes, with a brief indication of the relevant content or relied-upon source materials. Where Benson’s intent for the note (e.g., the provision of supporting citations) was unambiguous and the text could be seamlessly supplied based upon reference works known to be available to
Benson, this has been done. In some cases, Benson’s ultimate intent for the text was not possible to divine, and such “notes” have simply been omitted.

In addition, many of the notes that appeared on their face to be complete proved on closer inspection simply to be fuller versions of the aforementioned mnemonic aids for future revision and perfecting (Benson’s ability to cite supporting works at memory was often astounding, and he apparently used this facility while drafting in order to ease the later revision process). As such, all the notes throughout the volume have had to be thoroughly reviewed and revised as appropriate. The form of citation in the notes has also been standardized for readers’ convenience, as Benson’s style of citation naturally changed considerably over the four decades represented by the articles contained in the volume. Benson spent endless hours considering and refining proper citation methods, and the editor believes the form used herein is consistent with the clean and simple style Benson favored in his later years.

In this connection, it is important to point out that no attempt has been made to update the text or notes based on sources or later materials (such as subsequent editions of books or primary sources) that were not available to and used by Benson; nor has any attempt been made systematically to add supporting notes where no indication thereof existed, even where Benson no doubt would have eventually added supporting citations prior to publication. In all respects the articles are published here as much as possible in the form that Benson left them, except where the editor had a clear indication of Benson’s intentions for completing or improving the text (and other than changes for formal consistency, as noted above).

We realize that some readers and reviewers will wish that we had updated the articles or cited later scholarship where relevant, or taken a more aggressive editorial hand in order to lend the contents of certain unfinished papers a greater level of polish and more definitive appearance. The editorial team considered and—rightly or wrongly—rejected these approaches to the texts. Practical considerations played some part in this decision: given the considerable time elapsed since Benson last worked on the articles (in one case, more than a half century) and the exceedingly broad span of disciplines encompassed by the collected essays, we had no doubt that an updating approach, once commenced, would complicate and inflate an already large and complex multiyear project beyond the point of no return. Moreover, on a more philosophical note, we questioned the appropriateness of citing scholarship and literature not known to Benson at the time of the composition of the essays (much of which has in fact appeared since his death) and our ability to do so without ultimately usurping or obfuscating Benson’s original scholarship and intellectual work product, and even (no small consideration) lessening readers’ enjoyment of Benson’s wit and clarity of expression. The editors have provided chronological notes to the extent possible and trust that interested readers will judge Benson’s papers, and scholarship, in the context of their own respective times.

Because Benson revised many of his works over a number of years, either on the basis of new research or ideas or to adapt them to a specific purpose such as inclusion
in a planned book or for an oral presentation, in a few cases we were faced with multiple recensions of a specific text, often without clear indication of the relative dates of creation or last editing of the various versions. In these circumstances, we selected a version based on the apparent completeness and authority of its content and supplemented this text (invariably in fairly minor ways) after cross-checking with other versions. In no case were the various versions sufficiently different or unique that this “collaborative” (or conflating) approach caused us concerns that essential emphases or perspectives of specific versions were being obscured.

* * *

We have incurred many debts in the preparation of this volume. In particular, the editor and editorial team are deeply indebted to Jack Bernhardt of San Jose State University for his counsel on complex matters related to Benson’s work and dogged assistance in helping to run down obscure references, as well as his continual encouragement over the course of years. Current and former personnel of the MGH, especially former president Horst Fuhrmann, as well as Markus Wesche and Christian Lohmer, provided invaluable assistance and materials, including a copy of Benson’s article in the Baethgen Festschrift. The English translation of Horst Fuhrmann’s foreword contained herein benefited greatly from a preliminary translation by Mary Sommar. The team has also received invaluable assistance from personnel of the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, including the director, Brian P. Copenhaver; assistant director, Karen Burgess; and Webmaster/project assistant, Brett Landenberger. Last but certainly not least, the editors are particularly indebted to the University of Notre Dame Press, and especially to Stephen Little, Rebecca DeBoer, Wendy McMillen, Elizabeth Sain, and Shiela Berg for their guidance and patience. Needless to say, any errors that remain despite such generous help and assistance are the editors’ alone.

LOREN J. WEBER
Dana Point, California

Notes

1. On Benson, who was born in 1925 and died in 1996 and held positions at Barnard College, Wesleyan University, and the University of California, Los Angeles, see the memoir published in *Speculum* 71 (1996) 798–99. For an appreciation of Benson’s contributions to medieval scholarship together with a complete bibliography of his published works, as well as the works contained in the present volume, see the article by his student John W. Bernhardt, “I Study Power: The Scholarly Legacy of Robert Louis Benson with a Bibliography of His Published and Unpublished Works,” in *Plenitude of Power: The Doctrines and Exercise of Authority in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Robert Louis Benson*, ed. Robert C. Figueira (Aldershot, U. K. 2006) 171–94.

2. The creation of new files in this way also had the unfortunate effect of deleting information like original creation dates and other helpful metadata (which Benson would not likely have needed for his own purposes).
3. The disappearance in many cases of earlier stand-alone versions that we know from internal evidence formerly existed adds to our suspicion that others of Benson's substantial unpublished works were lost in the transition to the new computer system.

4. Also informing our conclusion was the opportunity to publish Benson's important article “Imperator oeconomicus Ecclesiae: Notes on a Decretistic Theory of the Imperial Office,” which has heretofore been available only in typescript in the unpublished Festschrift for Friedrich Baethgen in the library of the MGH. In addition to the articles contained in this volume, Benson's Nachlass included a few minor items (mostly copies of brief papers presented at scholarly meetings, such as responses to or comments on other scholars’ papers) that the editorial team judged to be too slight or fragmentary for inclusion in the volume, notwithstanding the wit and learning invariably on display even in such modest pieces.

5. The articles also incidentally provide further proof of Benson's command of languages, especially German (he sometimes referred to himself as a “crypto-kraut,” and even dreamed in German; and though perhaps not as well attested in the present works, Benson was also extremely proud of his equally profound command of both French and Italian). Also on display are Benson's use of many types of sources and ability to combine (as Benson said of his own master, Ernst Kantorowicz) "visual and textual evidence in an exemplary manner” (see his “Kantorowicz on Continuity and Change in the History of Medieval Rulership,” in Ernst Kantorowicz. Erträge der Doppeltagung: Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton; Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt, ed. Robert L. Benson (†) and Johannes Fried, Frankfurter historische Abh 39 [Stuttgart 1997] 202–10 at 206).

6. See Cantor, Inventing, in Abbreviations.

7. A set of abbreviations similar to those Benson used in his final years has also been used here, and abbreviations that occur in several articles in this volume are provided in the next pages.