

the enemy, and afterward peopled it with Galicians. He subjected many more fortresses to his rule. In his time the church grew and his kingdom increased in size. The cities of Braga, Oporto, Orense, Emino, Viseo, and Lamego were populated with Christians.” Alfonso and his successors built churches, encouraged monastic foundations, collected relics, patronized literary efforts, and welcomed Mozarabs from the south. As they did so they looked to Christian models still farther north—to Francia, where Charlemagne and his heirs ruled as kings “by grace of God.”

## AN EMPIRE IN SPITE OF ITSELF

Between Byzantium and the Islamic world was Francia. While the other two were politically centralized, subject to sophisticated tax systems, and served by salaried armies and officials, Francia inherited the centralizing traditions of the Roman Empire without its order and efficiency. Francia’s kings could not collect a land tax, the backbone of the old Roman and the more recent Byzantine and Islamic fiscal systems. There were no salaried officials or soldiers in Francia. Yet the new dynasty of kings there, the Carolingians, managed to muster armies, expand their kingdom, encourage a revival of scholarship and learning, command the respect of emperors and caliphs, and forge an identity for themselves as leaders of the Christian people. Their successes bore striking resemblance to contemporary achievements at Constantinople and Baghdad. How was this possible? The answer is at least threefold: the Carolingians took advantage of the same gentle economic upturn that seems to have taken place generally; they exploited to the full the institutions of Roman culture and political life that remained to them; and at the same time, they were willing to experiment with new institutions and take advantage of unexpected opportunities.

## The Making of the Carolingians

The Carolingian take-over was a “palace coup.” After a battle (at Tertry, in 687) between Neustrian and Austrasian noble factions, one powerful family with vast estates in Austrasia came to monopolize the high office of mayor for the Merovingian kings in both places. In the first half of the eighth century these mayors took over much of the power and most of the responsibilities of the kings.

Charles Martel (mayor 714–741) gave the name Carolingian (from *Carolus*, Latin for Charles) to the dynasty. In 732 he won a battle near Poitiers against an army led by the Muslim governor of al-Andalus, ending raids from al-Andalus. But Charles had other enemies: he spent most of his time fighting vigorously against regional Frankish aristocrats intent on carving out independent lordships for themselves. Playing powerful factions against one another, rewarding supporters, defeating enemies, and dominating whole

regions by commissioning monasteries and bishoprics that served as local points for both religious piety and land donations, the Carolingians created a tight network of supporters.

Moreover, they chose their allies well, reaching beyond Francia to the popes and to Anglo-Saxon churchmen, who (as we have seen) were closely tied to Rome. When the Anglo-Saxon missionary Boniface (d.754) wanted to preach in Frisia (today the Netherlands) and Germany, the Carolingians readily supported him as a prelude to their own conquests. Although many of the areas where Boniface missionized had long been Christian, their practices were local rather than tied to Rome. By contrast, Boniface's newly appointed bishops were loyal to Rome and the Carolingians, not to regional aristocracies. They knew that their power came from papal and royal fiat rather than from local power centers.

Men like Boniface opened the way to a more direct alliance between the Carolingians and the pope. Historians used to think that Pippin III (d.768), the son of Charles Martel, obtained approval from Pope Zacharias (741–752) to depose the reigning Merovingian king. Recent research suggests that such an early liaison between the pope and the Carolingians was manufactured by later writers. But it is certain that after Pippin took the throne in 751, Pope Stephen II (752–757) traveled to Francia. He anointed Pippin, blessed him, and begged him to send an army against the encircling Lombards: "Hasten, hasten, I urge and protest by the living and true God, hasten and assist! ... Do not suffer this Roman city to perish in which the Lord laid my body [i.e., the body of Saint Peter] and which he commended to me and established as the foundation of the faith. Free it and its Roman people, your brothers, and in no way permit it to be invaded by the people of the Lombards."<sup>10</sup>

In the so-called Donation of Pippin (756), the new king forced the Lombards to give some cities back to the pope. The arrangement recognized that the papacy was now ruler in central Italy of a territory that had once belonged to Byzantium. Before the 750s, the papacy had been part of the Byzantine Empire; by the middle of that decade, it had become part of the West. It was probably soon thereafter that members of the papal chancery (writing office) forged a document, the *Donation of Constantine*, which had the fourth-century Emperor Constantine declare that he was handing the western half of the Roman Empire to Pope Sylvester.

The chronicler of Charles Martel had already tied his hero's victories to Christ. The Carolingian partnership with Rome and Romanizing churchmen added to the dynasty's Christian aura. Anointment—daubing the kings with holy oil—provided the finishing touch. It reminded contemporaries of David, king of the Israelites: "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. [or Vulgate 1 Kings] 16:13).

## Charlemagne

The most famous Carolingian king was Charles (r.768–814), called "the Great" ("le Magne" in Old French). Large, tough, wily, and devout, he was everyone's model king. Einhard (d.840), his courtier and scholar, saw him as a Roman emperor: he patterned his *Life*

stand religion

of Charlemagne on the *Lives of the Caesars*, written in the second century by the Roman biographer Suetonius. Alcuin (d.804), also the king's courtier and an even more famous scholar, emphasized Charlemagne's religious side, nicknaming him "David," the putative author of the psalms, victor over the giant Goliath, and king of Israel. Empress Irene at Constantinople saw Charlemagne as a suitable husband for herself (though the arrangement eventually fell through).

Charlemagne's fame was largely achieved through warfare. While the Byzantine and Islamic rulers clung tightly to what they had, Charlemagne waged wars of plunder and conquest. He invaded Italy, seizing the Lombard crown and annexing northern Italy in 774. He moved his armies northward, fighting the Saxons for more than thirty years, forcibly converting them to Christianity, and annexing their territory. To the southeast, he sent his forces against the Avars, capturing their strongholds, forcing them to submit to his overlordship, and making off with cartloads of plunder. His expedition to al-Andalus gained Charlemagne a band of territory north of the Ebro River, a buffer between Francia and the Islamic world called the "Spanish March." Even his failures were the stuff of myth: a Basque attack on Charlemagne's army as it returned from Spain became the core of the epic poem *The Song of Roland*.

Ventures like these depended on a good army. Charlemagne's was led by his *fideles*, faithful aristocrats, and manned by free men, many the "vassals" (clients) of the aristocrats. The king had the *bannum*, the right to call his subjects to arms (and, more generally, to command, prohibit, punish, and collect fines when his ban was not obeyed). Soldiers provided their own equipment; the richest went to war on horseback, the poorest had to have at least a lance, shield, and bow. There was no standing army; men had to be mobilized for each expedition. No *tagmata*, themes, or Turkish slaves were to be found here! Yet, while the empire was expanding, it was a very successful system; men were glad to go off to war when they could expect to return enriched with booty.

By 800, Charlemagne's kingdom stretched 800 miles from east to west, even more from north to south when Italy is counted. (See Map 3.3.) On its eastern edge was a strip of "buffer regions" extending from the Baltic to the Adriatic; they were under Carolingian overlordship. Such hegemony was reminiscent of an empire, and Charlemagne began to act according to the model of Roman emperors, sponsoring building programs to symbolize his authority, standardizing weights and measures, and acting as a patron of intellectual and artistic enterprises. He built a capital "city"—a palace complex, in fact—at Aachen, complete with a chapel patterned on San Vitale, the church built by Justinian at Ravenna (see p. 29). So keen was Charlemagne on Byzantine models that he had columns, mosaics, and marbles from Rome and Ravenna carted up north to use in his own buildings.

Further drawing on imperial traditions, Charlemagne issued laws in the form of "capitularies," summaries of decisions made at assemblies held with the chief men of the realm. He appointed regional governors, called "counts," to carry out his laws, muster his armies, and collect his taxes. Chosen from Charlemagne's aristocratic supporters, they were compensated for their work by temporary grants of land rather than with salaries. This was not Roman; but Charlemagne lacked the fiscal apparatus of the Roman emperors (and

of his contemporary Byzantine emperors and Islamic caliphs), so he made land substitute for money. To discourage corruption, he appointed officials called *missi dominici* ("those sent out by the lord king") to oversee the counts on the king's behalf. The *missi*, chosen from the same aristocratic class as bishops and counts, traveled in pairs across Francia. They were to look into the affairs—large and small—of the church and laity.

In this way, Charlemagne set up institutions meant to echo those of the Roman Empire. It was a brilliant move on the part of Pope Leo III (795–816) to harness the king's imperial pretensions to papal ambitions. In 799, accused of adultery and perjury by a hostile faction at Rome, Leo narrowly escaped blinding and having his tongue cut out. Fleeing northward to seek Charlemagne's protection, he returned home under escort, the king close behind. Charlemagne arrived in late November 800 to an imperial welcome orchestrated by Leo. On Christmas Day of that year, Leo put an imperial crown on Charlemagne's head, and the clergy and nobles who were present acclaimed the king "Augustus," the title of the first Roman emperor. In one stroke the pope managed to exalt the king of the Franks, downgrade Irene at Byzantium, and enjoy the role of "emperor maker" himself.

About twenty years later, when Einhard wrote about this coronation, he said that the imperial titles at first so displeased Charlemagne "that he stated that, if he had known in advance of the pope's plan, he would not have entered the church that day, even though it was a great feast day."<sup>11</sup> In fact, Charlemagne continued to use the title "king" for about a year; then he adopted a new one that was both long and revealing: "Charles, the most serene Augustus, crowned by God, great and peaceful emperor who governs the Roman Empire and who is, by the mercy of God, king of the Franks and the Lombards." According to this title, Charlemagne was not the Roman emperor crowned by the pope but rather God's emperor, who governed the Roman Empire along with his many other duties.

## Charlemagne's Heirs

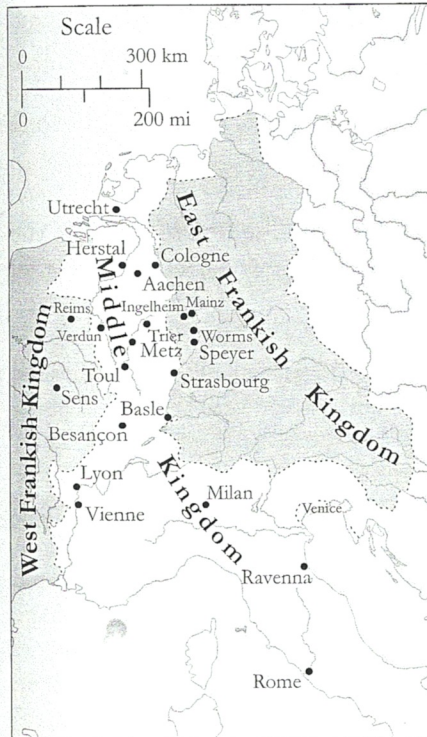
When Charlemagne died, only one of his sons remained alive: Louis, nicknamed "the Pious." (See Genealogy 3.1: The Carolingians.) Emperor he was (from 814 to 840), but over an empire that was a conglomeration of territories with little unity. He had to contend with the revolts of his sons, the depredations of outside invaders, the regional interests of counts and bishops, and above all an enormous variety of languages, laws, customs, and traditions, all of which tended to pull his empire apart. He contended with gusto, his chief unifying tool being Christianity. Calling on the help of the monastic reformer Benedict of Aniane (d.821), Louis imposed the Benedictine Rule on all the monasteries in Francia. Monks and abbots served as his chief advisors. Louis's imperial model was Theodosius I, who had made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire (see p. 7). Organizing inquests by the *missi*, Louis looked into allegations of exploitation of the poor, standardized the procedures of his chancery, and put all Frankish bishops and monasteries under his control.

Charlemagne had employed his sons as “sub-kings,” but Louis politicized his family still more. Early in his reign he had his wife crowned empress; named his first-born son, Lothar, emperor and co-ruler; and had his other sons, Pippin and Louis (later called “the German”), agree to be sub-kings under their older brother. It was neatly planned. But when Louis’s first wife died he married Judith, daughter of a relatively obscure kindred (the Welfs) that would later become enormously powerful in Saxony and Bavaria. In 823 she and Louis had a son, Charles (later “the Bald”), and this upset the earlier division of the empire. A family feud turned into bitter civil war as brothers fought one another and their father for titles and kingdoms. In 833 matters came to a head when Louis, effectively taken prisoner by Lothar, was forced to do public penance. Lothar expected the ritual to get his father off the throne for life. But Louis played one son against the other and made a swift comeback. The episode showed how Carolingian rulers could portray themselves as accountable to God and yet, in that very act of subservience, make themselves even more sacred and authoritative in the eyes of their subjects.

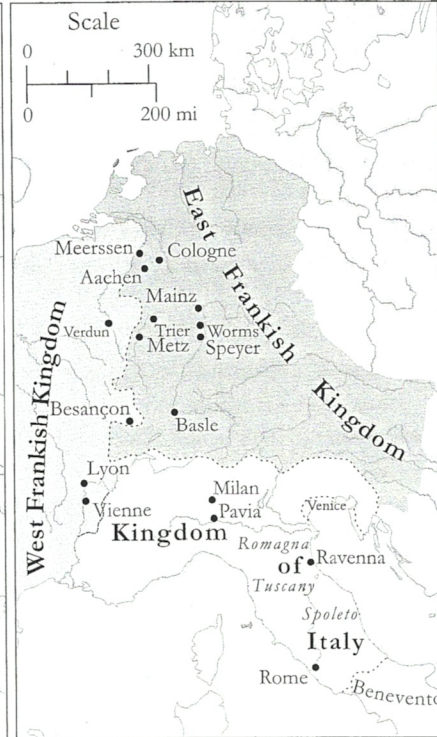
Genealogy 3.1 (faci  
The Carolingians’

After Louis’s death a period of war and uncertainty (840–843) among the three remaining brothers (Pippin had died in 838) ended with the Treaty of Verdun (843). (See Map 3.4a.) The empire was divided into three parts, an arrangement that would roughly define the future political contours of Western Europe. The western third, bequeathed to Charles

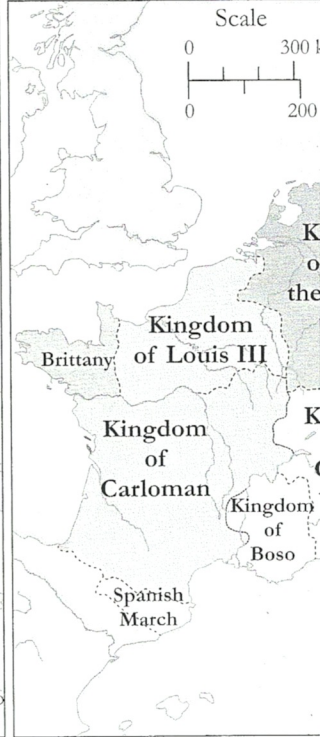
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Map 3.4a: Partition of 843  
(Treaty of Verdun)



Map 3.4b: Partition of 870  
(Treaty of Meerssen)



Map 3.4c: Partition of 880

86)

the Bald (r.843–877), would eventually become France, and the eastern third, given to Louis the German (r.843–876), would become Germany. The “Middle Kingdom,” which became Lothar’s portion (r. as co-emperor 817; as emperor 840–855), had a different fate: parts of it were absorbed by France and Germany, while the rest eventually coalesced into the modern states of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—the so-called Benelux countries—as well as Switzerland and Italy. All this was far in the future. As the brothers had their own children, new divisions were tried: one in 870 (the Treaty of Meerssen), for example, and another in 880. (See Maps 3.4b and 3.4c.) After the death of Emperor Charles the Fat (888), various kings and lesser rulers, many of them non-Carolingians, came to the fore in the irrevocably splintered empire.

Dynastic problems were not the primary cause of the breakup of the Carolingian Empire, however. Nor were the invasions by outsiders—Vikings, Muslims, and, starting in 899, Magyars (Hungarians)—which harassed the Frankish Kingdom throughout the ninth century. These certainly weakened the kings: without a standing army, they were unable to respond to lightning raids, and what regional defense there was fell into the hands of local leaders, such as counts. The Carolingians lost prestige and money as they paid out tribute to stave off further attacks. But the invasions were not all bad; to some degree they even helped fortify the king. The Carolingian Empire atomized because linguistic and other differences between regions—and familial and other ties within regions—were simply too strong to be overcome by directives from a central court. Even today a unified Europe is only a distant ideal. Anyway, as we shall see, fragmentation had its own strengths and possibilities.

## The Wealth of a Local Economy

The Carolingian economy was based on plunder, trade, and agriculture. After the Carolingians could push no further and the raids of Charlemagne’s day came to an end, trade and land became the chief resources of the kingdom. To the north, in Viking trading stations such as Haithabu (see Map 3.3), archaeologists have found Carolingian glass and pots alongside Islamic coins and cloth, showing that the Carolingian economy meshed with that of the Abbasid caliphate. Silver from the Islamic world probably came north from the Caspian Sea, up the Volga River to the Baltic Sea. (You can figure out the likely route from the map at the front of this book.) There the coins were melted down and the silver traded to the Carolingians in return for wine, jugs, glasses, and other manufactured goods. The Carolingians turned the silver into coins of their own, to be used throughout the empire for small-scale local trade. Baltic Sea emporia such as Haithabu supplemented those—Quentovic and Dorestad, for example (see Map 2.3 on p. 59)—that served the North Sea trade.

Nevertheless, the backbone of the Carolingian economy was land. A few written records, called *polyptyques*, document the output of the Carolingian great estates—“villae,” as they were called in Latin, “manors,” as we term them. On the far-flung and widely scattered manors of rich landowners—churches, monasteries, kings, and aristocrats—a

major reorganization and rationalization was taking place. The most enterprising landlords instituted a three-field rather than a two-field cultivation system. It meant that two-thirds of the land rather than one-half was sown with crops each year, yielding a tidy surplus.

Consider Lambesc, near Aix-en Provence, one of the many manors belonging to the cathedral of Saint Mary of Marseille. It was not a compact farm but rather a conglomeration of essential parts, with its lands, woods, meadows, and vineyards scattered about the countryside. All were worked by peasant families, some legally free, some unfree, each settled on its own holding—here called a *colonica*; elsewhere often called a *mansus*, or “manse”—usually including a house, a garden, small bits of several fields, and so on. The peasants farmed the land that belonged to them and paid yearly dues to their lord—in this case the Church of Saint Mary, which, in its *polyptyque*, kept careful track of what was owed:

[There is a] holding [*colonica*] in Siverianis [a place-name within the manor of Lambesc]. Valerius, colonus [tenant]. Wife [is named] Dominica. Ducšana, a daughter 5 years old. An infant at the breast. It pays in tax: 1 pig; 1 suckling [pig]; 2 fattened hens; 10 chickens; 20 eggs.<sup>12</sup>

Valerius and his wife apparently did not work the *demesne*—the land, woods, meadows, and vineyards directly held by Saint Mary—but other tenants had that duty. At Nidis, in the region of Grasse, Bernarius owed daily service, probably farming the *demesne*, and also paid a penny (1 denarius) in yearly dues. On many manors women were required to feed the lord’s chickens or busy themselves in the *gynecaeum*, the women’s workshop, where they made and dyed cloth and sewed garments.

Clearly the labor was onerous and the accounting system complex and unwieldy; but manors organized on the model of Saint Mary made a profit. Like the Church of Saint Mary and other lords, the Carolingian kings benefited from their own extensive manors. Nevertheless, farming did not return great surpluses, and as the lands belonging to the king were divided up in the wake of the partitioning of the empire, Carolingian dependence on manors scattered throughout their kingdom proved to be a source of weakness.

## The Carolingian Renaissance

With the profits from their manors, some monasteries and churches invested in books. These were not made of paper—a product that, although used in the Islamic world, did not reach the West until the eleventh century—but rather of parchment: animal skins soaked, scraped, and cut into sheets. Nor were Carolingian books printed, since the printing press was not invented until around 1450. Rather, they were manuscripts, written by hand in scribal workshops (*scriptoria*; sing. *scriptorium*). Consider the monastery of Saint-Amand (today in northern France), which made books both for its own use and for the needs of many other institutions: its *scriptorium* produced Gospels, works of the Church Fathers, grammars, and above all liturgical books for the Mass and other church services.

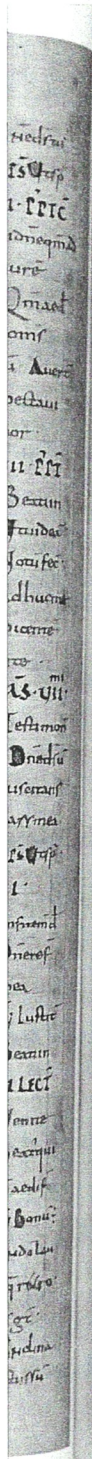


Plate 3.5 shows a page from a Sacramentary (a liturgical book) that was produced at Saint-Amand for the Parisian monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. For the most part, it provided only the texts of mass chants. But in one instance the scribe added some “dots and dashes” above a word. They illustrate one early form of musical notation. These “notes” did not indicate pitches to the monks who sang the melodies. Nor did they suggest rhythms. But they did remind the monks of the melody associated with one chant beginning with the word *Exaudi*.

The development of written music was a response to royal policy. Before the Carolingians came to power, the music at churches and monasteries had been determined by local oral traditions. But the special relationship that the Carolingians had with Rome included importing Roman chant melodies to Francia. This reform—the imposition of the so-called “Gregorian chant”—posed great practical difficulties. It meant that every monk and priest had to learn a year’s worth of Roman music; but how? A few cantors were imported from Rome; but without a system of notation, it was easy to forget new tunes. The monks of Saint-Amand were part of a revolution in musical technology.

The same Sacramentary reveals another key development of the era: the use of minuscule writing. As at Byzantium, and at about the same time, the Carolingians experimented with letterforms that were quick to write and easy to read. “Caroline minuscule” lasted into the eleventh century, when it gave way to a more angular script, today called “Gothic.” But the Carolingian letter forms were rediscovered in the fifteenth century—by scholars who thought that they represented ancient Roman writing!—and they became the model for modern lower-case printed fonts.

The Carolingian court was behind much of this activity. Most of the centers of learning, scholarship, and book production began under men and women who at one time or another were part of the royal court. Alcuin, perhaps the most famous of the Carolingian intellectuals, was “imported” by Charlemagne from England—where, as we have seen (p. 66), monastic scholarship flourished—to head up the king’s palace school. Chief advisor to Charlemagne and tutor to the entire royal family, Alcuin eventually became abbot of Saint-Martin of Tours, grooming a new generation of teachers. More unusual but equally telling was the experience of Gisela, Charlemagne’s sister. She too was a key royal advisor, the one who alerted the others at home about Charlemagne’s imperial coronation at Rome in 800. She was also abbess of Chelles, a center of manuscript production in its own right. Chelles had a library, and its nuns were well educated. They wrote learned letters and composed a history (the “Prior Metz Annals”) that treated the rise of the Carolingians as a tale of struggle between brothers, sons, and fathers eased by the wise counsel of mothers, aunts, and sisters.

Women and the poor make up the largely invisible half of the Carolingian Renaissance. But without doubt some were part of it. One of Charlemagne’s capitularies ordered that the cathedrals and monasteries of his kingdom should teach reading and writing to all who could learn. There were enough complaints (by rich people) about upstart peasants who found a place at court that we may be sure that some talented sons of the poor were getting an education. A few churchmen expressed the hope that schools for



“children” would be established even in small villages and hamlets. Were they thinking of girls as well as boys? Certainly one woman—admittedly noble—in the mid-ninth century in the south of France proves that education was available even to laywomen. We would never know about Dhuoda had she not worried enough about her absent son to write a *Handbook for Her Son* full of advice. Only incidentally does it become clear in the course of her deeply felt moral text that Dhuoda was drawing on an excellent education: she clearly knew the Bible, writings of the Church Fathers, Gregory the Great, and “moderns,” like Alcuin. Her Latin was fluent and sophisticated. And she understood the value of the written word:

My great concern, my son William, is to offer you helpful words. My burning, watchful heart especially desires that you may have in this little volume what I have longed to be written down for you, about how you were born through God’s grace.<sup>13</sup>

**Plate 3.6 (facing page):** The Pleiades (2nd quarter, 10th cent.). In this Carolingian manuscript from the region between France and Germany (today), an artist painted nearly forty miniatures of constellations named in a poem by Aratos.

The original manuscript of Dhuoda’s text is not extant. Had it survived, it would no doubt have looked like other “practical texts” of the time: the “folios” (pages) would have been written in Caroline minuscule, each carefully designed to set off the poetry—Dhuoda’s own and quotes from others—from the prose; the titles of each chapter (there are nearly a hundred, each very short) would have been enlivened with delicately colored capital letters. The manuscript would probably not have been illuminated; fancy books were generally made for royalty, for prestigious ceremonial occasions, or for books that were especially esteemed, such as the Gospels.

There were, however, many such lavish productions. In fact, Carolingian art and architecture mark a turning point. For all its richness, Merovingian culture had not stressed artistic expression, though some of the monasteries inspired by Saint Columbanus produced a few illuminated manuscripts. By contrast, the Carolingians, admirers and imitators of Christian Rome, vigorously promoted a vast, eclectic, and ideologically motivated program of artistic work. They were reviving the Roman Empire. We have already seen how Charlemagne brought the very marble of Rome and Ravenna home to Aachen to build his new palace complex. A similar impulse inspired Carolingian art.

As with texts, so with pictures: the Carolingians revered and imitated the past while building on and changing it. Their manuscript illuminations were inspired by a vast repertory of models: from the British Isles (where, as we have seen, a rich synthesis of decorative and representational styles had a long tradition), from late-antique Italy (which yielded its models in old manuscripts), and from Byzantium (which may have inadvertently provided some artists, fleeing iconoclasm, as well as manuscripts).

In Plate 3.6, the heads of seven beautiful women emerge from cloud-banks in a ninth-century manuscript on the heavenly constellations. The book was a copy of the *Phainomena* by the classical Greek poet Aratos (fl. 3rd cent. BCE) in the later Latin version by Germanicus Caesar (fl. 1st cent. CE). The women represent the Pleiades, the seven daughters of Atlas who were turned into stars. Their hair styles and even the modeling of their heads were inspired by art that harks back to the classical style of the Venus in Plate 1.1. The woman

in the center wears a veil; she was Merope, who hid herself out of shame for loving a mortal. In this manuscript ancient models inspired both text and illustration.

An entirely different tradition lies behind the grand letters on the opening page of a Psalter (Plate 3.7). Painted at the same time as Plate 3.6, the only “classical” element here is the Latin language. Rather, the page owes much to the decorative style of the British Isles, as illustrated (for example) by Plate 2.7 (on p. 69). “Beatus vir,” (“Blessed is the man”), the first words of the first psalm, are here given luminous treatment with the use of gold leaf and a restrained palette. The page is then framed with designs of the same colors, with interlaced birds and dragon heads at the corners.

Combining the two traditions in a startlingly original manner, an artist at Saint-Amand (where Plate 3.5 was also produced) created a classically inspired scene framed by columns sporting the stylized birds and interlace designs of the Insular style. (See Plate 3.8.) Much as in a Pompeian wall painting, the figure—the evangelist John—has volume and weight. As at Pompeii, he seems to live in a world of his own, separate from the viewer. But unlike at Pompeii (see, for example, Plate 1.2), the atmosphere of that world has become three well-defined zones: at the bottom, earth of brushy brown; in the middle, a huge swathe of blue broken by ornamental trees; above, clouds of bright yellow and orange. The figure, too, has an unclassical twist, its pleated drapery giving it a somewhat frenetic urgency. By mixing various styles, the artist found a new mode of expressing the transcendent.

In this portrait, Saint John seems to be caught in the act of listening to a voice, ready to write down the words. The artist is almost telling us a story about John. But the narrative impulse is given its fullest expression in the Utrecht Psalter, a manuscript containing all 150 psalms and 16 other songs known as canticles. Here each poem is accompanied by drawings that depict its important elements in unified composition. In Plate 3.9, the illustration for Psalm 8, the artist sketched sheep and oxen on the bottom left, birds flying and fish swimming on the bottom right, to render literally verses 8 and 9:

Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen: moreover the beasts also of the fields. / The birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, that pass through the paths of the sea.

It may plausibly be said that the various artistic styles elaborated during the Carolingian Renaissance—fed by classical, decorative, abstract traditions but combined in new and original ways—formed the basis of all subsequent Western art.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the course of the eighth and ninth centuries, the three heirs of Rome established clearly separate identities, each largely bound up with its religious affiliation. Byzantium saw itself as the radiating center of Orthodox faith; the caliphate asserted itself as the guarantor of Islam; and Francia and the papacy cooperated and vied for the leadership of Christian Europe. From this perspective, there were few commonalities. Yet today we are struck

**Plate 3.7 (facing page):** Psalter Page (2nd quarter, 9th cent.).

In this sumptuous manuscript dedicated to King Louis the German (r.843–876) the artist (a monk at the monastery of Saint Omer, today in northern France) drew on the decorative, abstract traditions of the British Isles. Nevertheless, following the principle of “less is more,” he pared down the colors and the “busyness” of his model, as a quick comparison with Plate 2.7, p. 69, illustrates.

**Following pages:**

**Plate 3.8:** Saint John (2nd half, 9th cent.). Neither classically naturalistic nor entirely decorative in inspiration, this painting of the evangelist Saint John evokes a heavenly reality that is only vaguely anchored in earthly things. The book that John is writing (note the ink horn in his left hand) gives the opening line of his Gospel: “In principio erat verbum” (“In the beginning was the Word”).

**Plate 3.9:** Utrecht Psalter (c.820–835). Never completed, the Utrecht Psalter was commissioned by Archbishop Ebbo of Reims and executed at a nearby monastery. Providing a visual “running commentary” on every psalm, it may have been meant for Emperor Louis the Pious and his wife Queen Judith.

more by the similarities than by the differences. All were centralizing monarchies shored up by military might. All had a bit of wealth, though the eastern half certainly had more than the western. All had pretensions to God-given power. And all used culture and scholarship to give luster and expression to their political regimes. All may also have known, without explicitly admitting it, how strong the forces of dissolution were.

### CHAPTER THREE KEY EVENTS

- 732 Charles Martel's victory over Muslim-led army near Poitiers
- 750 Abbasid caliphate begins
- 751 Deposition of last Merovingian king; Pippin III (the first Carolingian king) elevated to kingship
- 756 "Donation of Pippin"
- 756 Emirate of Córdoba established
- 762 Baghdad founded as the Abbasid capital city
- 768–814 Reign of Charlemagne (Charles the Great)
- 800 Charlemagne crowned emperor
- 814–840 Reign of Louis the Pious
- 843 End of iconoclasm in Byzantine Empire
- 843 Treaty of Verdun
- c.860 Arab invasions of Byzantium end
- 863 Missionary expedition of Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius begins
- c.864 Bulgarian Khan Boris-Michael converts to Christianity

### NOTES

- 1 Constantine/Cyril, *Prologue to the Gospel*, in *Reading the Middle Ages: Sources from Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic World*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), p. 159.
- 2 For one such seal, see *Reading the Middle Ages*, Plate II, p. 247.
- 3 Pope Nicholas I, *Letter to Answer the Bulgarians' Questions*, in *Reading the Middle Ages*, p. 163.
- 4 *The Life of Constantine-Cyril*, quoted in *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes*, ed. Deno John Geanakoplos (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 409.
- 5 "Imports of Iraq," in *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World: Illustrative Documents*, trans. Robert S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 28.