THE VIKINGS IN ANGLO-SAXON AND WEST FRANKISH LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOURCE MATERIAL FROM NINTH- AND TENTH-CENTURY ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND AND CAROLINGIAN FRANCE

BY

KATHLEEN L. OLEKSIUK

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
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BY

KATHLEEN L. OLEKSIUK

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

In the last one hundred years, a great deal of study has been devoted to the effects of the ninth- and tenth-century Viking incursions on western civilization, especially in western Europe. However, despite the sizable literature produced by interested scholars, no work has been written that examines the use of contemporary sources in documenting the movement and impact of the Scandinavian raiders across western Europe. Certainly there is no reference work on the subject for a newcomer to this field of historical research.

It is impossible to survey here the entirety of ninth- and tenth-century western European literature. Therefore, this thesis will confine itself to the pertinent material extant from the period between 800 and 940 from Anglo-Saxon England and the area of Carolingian France situated between the north-western and western coasts and the Loire and Seine rivers. Certain later sources are also included.

The thesis summarizes the political and cultural backgrounds and discusses the chosen sources for each realm in turn. Not only does this result in a list of Anglo-Saxon and West Frankish sources, but it reveals in the final analysis how the different cultural and political heritages of the two societies affected the impact that the Vikings made on their literature. These differences directly affected the usefulness of the material as historical sources on the Viking invasions.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the help of my advisor, Professor L. Desmond, as well as the valuable aid of the staff of the Department of History. I would also like to thank my fellow students and medievalists for their greatly appreciated support when my work encountered frustrating stumbling blocks.

Lastly and most importantly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. They were patient enough to listen to lectures and progress reports that had little interest to them. I thank them for putting up with my trials, tribulations and inopportune use of the family computer during the writing of this work.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE STATE OF ANGLO-SAXON LEARNING AND LITERATURE</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. ANGLO-SAXON SOURCE MATERIAL</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CAROLINGIAN FRANCE 800-954</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE STATE OF CAROLINGIAN LEARNING AND LITERATURE</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. WEST FRANKISH SOURCE MATERIAL</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX: MAPS</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EETS</td>
<td>Early English Texts Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHR</td>
<td>English Historical Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH SS.</td>
<td>MGH Scriptores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHST</td>
<td>Royal Historical Society Transactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRGS</td>
<td>Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. INTRODUCTION

The Vikings have long been considered one of the great scourges of medieval western civilization. Modern scholarship has not been able to erase this belief despite renewed study of their actions. It cannot be denied that the Scandinavian raiders made their presence felt from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, and across most of the land between. With the seemingly indelible and violent imprint those ninth- and tenth-century raids made on western folklore and history, one would expect the literature of the period to provide invaluable historical sources. Certainly, ninth- and tenth-century sources are the most logical place to begin research on the Vikings, particularly for areas such as England and the northern half of France where the Northmen had enormous impact.

The purpose of this work is to examine contemporary source material on the Vikings from Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian West Francia between the years 800 and 940. It was begun with the assumption that there was indeed a substantial quantity of information about the Vikings hidden in Anglo-Saxon and West Frankish literature. This was proven false as the research progressed. A curious picture emerged, which showed that in fact surprisingly little data remained regarding the marauders.

That was not a peculiar development in connection with Anglo-Saxon literature. For a variety of reasons -- the
Viking invasions among them -- only a very small corpus of literature remains extant. What material that does survive is generally of high quality. More disappointingly, only a fraction of a much larger body of Carolingian literature is of use. For some reason, despite the chaos generated by the Vikings during this period, the contemporary writers grant them minimal attention. That development explains why we are so dependent on works of the later tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries for knowledge about the Northmen.

Ironically, this dearth of West Frankish material occurred in a time when the territories once ruled by Charlemagne were undergoing a cultural renaissance that peaked in the middle to late ninth century. The Carolingian renaissance itself was aided by the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic scholars who crossed the English Channel in the eighth century as missionaries, church reformers, teachers and pilgrims. As the English Church suffered from its own corruption and weakness during the late eighth and ninth centuries, and later from Viking depredations, even larger numbers of Anglo-Saxon scholars fled to safer houses on the continent. This served to strengthen Frankish learning, which later provided England with scholars to aid in the revitalization of its church and cultural development. It was from this renewed cultural vigor that most of the Anglo-Saxon sources about the Vikings were produced.

This odd little cultural cycle characterized
Anglo-Frankish relations. Centuries earlier, the Gallo-Frankish people had helped to supply part of the teaching and missionaries that eventually Christianized the Anglo-Saxons. The Anglo-Saxons later returned the favor through their missionary and reformatory efforts on the continent. To a lesser or greater degree, a continuous intellectual exchange passed between the Anglo-Saxons and the West Frankish people until the Norman Conquest. That is one reason why examining the two bodies of literature is so interesting -- despite these ties, their literary treatment of the Vikings betrays the very distinct differences between the two cultures.
II. THE FIRST VIKING INVASIONS OF ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle\(^1\), the first noted Viking attack on English soil occurred in 789, when three Danish ships entered the harbor at Portland. The first recorded English casualties of the Vikings were the reeve of Dorchester and his men, who were killed when they went to discover the business of the 'strange traders'. The second incident reported in the Chronicle is the destruction of the church establishment on Lindisfarne by heathens in 793, a common term used to describe the still pagan Scandinavian raiders. The third and last of the eighth-century Viking attacks noted in the Chronicle is a raid carried out further up the coast in Northumbria in 794. A Viking attempt to plunder Ecgfrith's monastery at the mouth of the Don (believed to have been the monastery of Jarrow) ended in failure as they were driven off by the Northumbrian defenders, to suffer additional misfortune when stormy weather wrecked many Viking ships and drowned many men. The Chronicle mentions nothing more of the Vikings until 835, after which they became a growing threat to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms as an increasingly heavy growth of raiding developed into full-scale invasion and colonization.

Between 789 and 835, the political situation in England was in a state of change. The Mercian ruler Offa had gained

\(^1\) The best edition of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is Dorothy Whitelock's 1961 publication. For further information, refer to chapter 3.
overlordship over Kent and Sussex, and was secure enough in East Anglia to arrange the decapitation of one of its kings, Aethelberht. In Wessex, united as a kingdom for nearly a century and with a strong set of royal traditions, Offa's control was less certain. Until his death in 786, the West Saxon ruler Cynewulf managed to retain his independence from Mercian overlordship. However, the turmoil following his death in a sudden battle between Cynewulf and an usurper allowed Offa to extend his power over West Saxon affairs. He supported Cynewulf's successor Beohtric (Bihtric) against another contender, Egbert. The result was the marriage of Offa's daughter to Beohtric, and Egbert's exile from England. Beohtric ruled until 802, a protected under-king of Offa and Offa's successor Cenwulf.

Evidence indicates that by his death in 796, Offa was the effective overlord of nearly all of southern England. The extent of his power in Northumbria, if any, is unknown -- other than the tie provided by the marriage of one of Offa's daughters to a Northumbrian king in 792. However, during the last twelve years of Offa's reign, his power was secure enough to allow the construction of a major earthwork boundary (Offa's Dyke) between the Anglo-Saxon western border and the western British territories. Between 784

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(2) She married King Aethelred of Northumbria.

and 796, Offa was also the only western European ruler capable of addressing Charlemagne as an equal. At one point, Charlemagne attempted to arrange a marriage between his son Charles and one of Offa's daughters. While little information remains outside of letters and charters to form a complete analysis of Offa and his achievements, what evidence there is portrays Offa as perhaps the greatest ruler Anglo-Saxon England produced.

Unfortunately for Mercia, none of Offa's successors matched his abilities. His son Ecgfrith died not quite five months after his father, and before the end of 796 the rule of Mercia had passed into the hands of a distant relative named Cenwulf. Cenwulf first spent two years subduing a revolt in Kent. In 802, Beohtric of Wessex died, and his rival Egbert was immediately appointed king. While Egbert had little voice outside of Wessex, he nevertheless had little reason to support Mercian policy, and there is no indication of his becoming Cenwulf's man. With the murder of Aethelred of Northumbria in 796, Mercia lost any influence beyond the Humber. Cenwulf's authority eventually extended over only Sussex, Essex, East Anglia, Kent and the parts of Wessex annexed from Cynewulf years earlier -- although Canterbury was a source of trouble for most of his reign.

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Cenwulf died in 821, leaving the Mercian throne in a weakened position. His successors ruled only briefly -- Ceolwulf was deposed in 823 and Beornwulf died in battle against the East Anglians in 825 -- before the West Saxons replaced the Mercians as the ascendant figures in the south of England. In 825, Beornwulf and Egbert met in battle at a place called Ellendun, where the Mercian king and his forces were defeated. By the end of the year, Kent, Essex, Surrey and Sussex had submitted to Egbert, the East Anglians had placed themselves under West Saxon protection, and Beornwulf was slain trying to subdue another East Anglian revolt. His successor, Ludeca, inherited a greatly reduced territory. Four years later, Mercia had fallen to Egbert, and the Northumbrians had acknowledged the overlordship of the king of Wessex.

While Egbert held the rule of Mercia only until 830, when the Mercian king Wiglaf managed to regain his throne, the territories of Kent, Surrey and Sussex remained a part of the West Saxon domain. Mercia remained a strong power, albeit in greatly reduced circumstances, forced to share the power once solely accorded to Offa with the kingdom of Wessex. At his death in 839, four years after the resumption of Viking raids, Egbert held the above three territories, and had finally brought the Celts of south-west England completely under West Saxon rule. His last recorded act in the Chronicle was the defeat of an allied invasion
force of Danes and Cornish Celts at Hingston Down, crushing not only an attempted invasion of Wessex, but the last real Celtic rebellion against Anglo-Saxon rule.

In the north of England, the political situation of the eighth century was even more complex and confusing. Since the many-branched royal family did not consider any particular line to be a direct continuation of the trunk in regard to passing along the crown, there was constant contention over the kingship. The eighth century saw a progression of poor kings and good, of gains and losses in Northumbria. One of the better rulers of this period, Aelfwald, was murdered in 788, and his successor Osred was driven from Northumbria. Aethelred, who replaced Osred, was not liked, and married Offa's daughter to gain the Mercian king's protection. This protection did not save him from assassination in 796. With Aethelred's death, Northumbria dissolved into anarchy. This state of confusion lasted until the reinstatement of Eardwulf as king of Northumbria in 808, through the good agencies of Charlemagne and Pope Leo III. With Eardwulf's death in 810, his son and successor Eanred (the same Eanred who submitted to Egbert of Wessex in 829) managed to keep his aristocracy in line for the next thirty years.

(5) The battle was fought in 838.

(6) Unlike West Saxon custom, which tended to select new kings from the nearest direct male heir of the last ruler that the witan found most suitable for the position.
Despite the tumult experienced by Northumbria during the late eighth and early ninth centuries, the northern part of England remained a place of cultural development. Outside the cathedral school of York, much of Northumbrian learning rested on a number of monastic schools, the most notable of which were Jarrow, Lindisfarne and Wearmouth. It was from York that Alcuin learned his skills as a teacher of the arts before joining Charlemagne's service, and at Jarrow and Wearmouth that Bede practiced his scholarship. These centres of learning (particularly those such as Jarrow and Wearmouth that had been founded in the seventh century by Benedict Biscop) housed some of the finest libraries in Western Europe, apart from Italy, and trained competent scholars. Of the many kings that sat upon the Northumbrian throne during this period, the better ones tended to support the work of the monasteries at home and English missionary work abroad. Even during the reign of Eanred, Northumbrian scholars still played a respected role on the continent in spite of a half century of political upheaval at home.

The Viking attack on the island of Sheppey in 835 signalled the start of the first of two waves of Scandinavian expansion that would wash over England's shores. The first wave encompassed the period between 835 and 940, with a few ripples before and after. The second wave covered from 980 and the reign of Aethelred (the

(7) F.M. Stenton, p. 90.
Unready) to the death of Canute in 1035. The first wave of Scandinavian activity escalated from seasonal piratical raids to the establishment of winter camps for large Viking parties, to full-scale invasion and settlement by a mixture composed largely of Danes. This particular onslaught is generally divided into two parts -- the First Great Army, led by the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok and the Second Great Army, led by the chieftain/king Guthrum. The two forces conquered Northumbria, East Anglia and parts of Mercia. At approximately the same time, invaders primarily of Norse extraction began crossing from Ireland to the north-western districts of England to establish their own colonies.

In Western Europe, the Vikings of the first wave were usually of Danish or Norse extraction. The Swedish people tended to move down the riverways of Eastern Europe rather than westwards. While the raiders of the late eighth century tended to be Norse, whose interests lay primarily in Ireland, Scotland, the rich and easily accessible monastic centres of northern England, and the islands off the coasts of Ireland and Scotland, the Vikings that hit England from 835 onwards were generally Danish. The types of Viking raids can be roughly divided into four categories that were often combined in a single expedition. There were raids for plunder led by individuals, as shown by the example of Lindisfarne. There were political expeditions, usually aimed at Carolingian holdings. Later there were attempts at
colonization outside of Scandinavia. Lastly, there were raids, such as those of the Swedes to the east, aimed at commercial penetration.

The Viking attacks on England between 835 and 850 were mainly for plunder and slaves. There are encounters between southern Anglo-Saxon and Viking forces listed in the Chronicle for the years 836, 838, 840, 841, 843, and 845, plus mention of a slaughter in London in 842 and in Rochester by an unknown force that might possibly have been Viking. The Anglo-Saxon forces tended to hold their own against the raiders during this period. East Anglia, Kent and parts of Mercia were favorite targets -- Canterbury and London were both plundered in 850 -- but Wessex under Egbert and Aethelwulf proved more difficult to victimize.

Aethelwulf effectively ruled Wessex from 839 until 855, when he went on a pilgrimage to Rome. From Rome, he passed on to the court of Charles the Bald in 856, where he contracted a diplomatic marriage to Charles' young daughter Judith, and thence homeward. During Aethelwulf's absence from Wessex his eldest son Aethelbald had acted as regent, later refusing to relinquish the throne upon his father's return. To prevent civil war, Aethelwulf agreed to a division of the kingdom that placed him as king over Kent and the other south-eastern lands taken by Egbert in 825.

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When he died in 858, the lands were passed on to Aethelwulf's next eldest son, Aethelberht. When Aethelbald died in 860, both territories were reunited under Aethelberht, who died in 865. The kingdom then passed on to the second last brother, Aethelred, since neither of the elder brothers seem to have produced viable heirs.

During his reign, Aethelwulf managed to hold his own against the Viking raiders. In 851, a Viking force led by Rorik (who had attacked Canterbury and London) was not only soundly routed by Aethelwulf and his son Aethelbald in Surrey, but also lost to Aethelstan the under-king of Kent and the ealdorman Ealhere at Sandwich off Kent in the first recorded English naval battle. The year 851 also saw the first use by the Vikings of a winter camp on English soil, at Thanet, which was ideally suited as a base for attacks on the south-eastern coast of England. Attempts by the people of Kent in 853 to clear Thanet of Danish fortifications proved a hard-lost failure. In 855, the Danes wintered for the first time at Sheppey, and by the next decade a new phase of Viking activity had begun, prompted by troubles in their homelands.

The middle of the ninth century saw a growing need for new land among the Scandinavian peoples. This was especially true in Denmark and Norway, where the amount of arable land was limited by territorial size and hostile

(9) Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, year 851. Stenton, p. 244.
terrain, and the political struggles between rival would-be kings made it expedient for the losers to join the younger sons and other landless men in their search for land of their own. Naturally, these seekers were not adverse to combining looting with exploration and settlement. Nor were they against seizing the land of somebody else.

Just as the different Scandinavians had preferred areas of raiding, so did they have specific areas of colonization. The Norse settled in Ireland, parts of Scotland and later in parts of Northumbria, on the Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland islands, on Iceland and on Greenland. They even went as far as the north-eastern coasts of North America. The Swedes, as usual, bent most of their attention eastwards, establishing settlements along the East European trade routes and eventually ruling various Slavic territories. The Danes concentrated on Frisia and England, specifically the northern parts. The colonization of Normandy in the early tenth century was a collaborative effort between Danish and Norse colonists.

The first great push for conquest and colonization in England coincided with the reign of Aethelred. In the autumn of 865, a great army -- the so-called First Great Army -- landed in East Anglia. Instead of smash-and-grab Viking raiders led by individuals, the army was composed of many bands led by Danish kings or chieftains whose rank was acknowledged both in their land of birth and by their
English counterparts. They came ready to spend years, if necessary, milking all the value they could out of England. The effective leaders of this combined force were Ivar the Boneless, his brother Halfdan and possibly another brother named Ubbe or Ubbi -- all sons of the famous Viking Ragnar Lodbrok. The combined reputation of their family commanded the respect and compliance of the other chieftains within the army.

The army spent a year in East Anglia preparing itself for full-scale activity, although it does not seem as if the leaders had a clear-cut campaign plan. In East Anglia they were able to obtain the horses and supplies needed for a major overland campaign through various means. In the autumn of 866, the Viking army started its campaign, moving northwards into Northumbria since Wessex appeared to be the more difficult target.

Conditions in Northumbria were perfect for a campaign of conquest. King Osberht had been dethroned by an usurper named Ælla, and both factions were in the midst of a civil war even as the Viking army marched on York, laying waste the countryside as it came. On November 1, the Vikings occupied the city, which had been left poorly defended because of the civil war. The loss of York prompted Ælla and Osberht to put aside their differences and join forces against the invaders in 867. The Northumbrians and the Vikings met in battle on March 21 -- the Northumbrians lost
the battle, their two kings, and the two territories of Deira and Bernicia to the Vikings. Deira and the city of York apparently underwent an interregnum until the return of Halfdan as its first Viking king in 875, while nominal Bernician rule passed through the hands of a succession of Anglo-Saxon under-kings between 867 and 877.

After their conquests in Northumbria, the army took Nottingham in Mercia. It then went south-east to Peterborough and Ely. When King Edmund of East Anglia attempted to stand against the Viking movement back southwards in 870, he was killed and his land put under Viking rule. According to later, not all too reliable sources, Edmund was captured and executed by the Viking leaders, thus earning him a martyr's crown. After the fall of East Anglia, the way lay clear to Wessex.

The Viking force that moved itself from Thetford in East Anglia to Reading in Wessex late in the year of 870 had lost the most famous of its leaders -- Ivar the Boneless -- leaving his brother Halfdan as the most prominent of the chieftains assembled. Three days after the Viking army settled into its new camp, a raiding party led by two Danish earls lost in an encounter with the ealdorman Aethelwulf of Berkshire. Four days after that initial skirmish, King

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(10) The source in question is the *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* written by Abbo of Fleury in the late tenth century. On the other hand, the Chronicle barely makes note of the battle. The problem is discussed more fully below in chapter three.
Aethelred and his brother Alfred made an unsuccessful attack on the Viking camp. This failure allowed the Danish army to move from Reading to a great ridge of chalk called Ashdown, where it decided to await the West Saxon forces and make use of the advantages granted by the higher ground.

Aethelred and Alfred regained control of their army and headed for the ridge. The Danish forces had been divided into two parts -- one led by the petty kings and the other by the earls. The West Saxons chose also to divide into two parts, Aethelred confronted the kings' host and Alfred faced the earls. Since Aethelred refused to enter the battle until his morning prayers were completed, Alfred was forced to attack first, to be later joined by his brother. By evening, the Danes were in rapid retreat to Reading, having lost one king and five earls to the West Saxons.

Ashdown had little affect on the course of the war. Two weeks after the battle, the West Saxons lost at a place called Merantun. Even worse, in April of 871, the Danes encamped at Reading were reinforced by another army of Vikings, and King Aethelred died soon afterwards. While Aethelred had left children, none were of an age to defend their kingdom. Their uncle, Alfred, who had assisted Aethelred in the war, was immediately recognized as Aethelred's successor.

Alfred inherited a difficult position. The West Saxons were slowly but steadily losing ground to the Viking forces.
By the year's end Alfred had little choice but to pay danegeld to gain a period of peace for his people. Fortunately for Wessex, a Northumbrian revolt in 872 recalled the Viking army up north, diverting its time and energy from the south. The success of Alfred's rule and West Saxon freedom came to depend on the shifts of Danish attention to the territories north of Wessex.

The army located its winter quarters at Torksey in the Mercian province of Lindsey. Apparently it wasted little time on reconquering the rebellious Northumbrians, because although their initial puppet king fled and died in exile in 873, the Northumbrians quickly chose another ruler named Ricsige who kept his land independent of the Vikings until 876. The installation of a puppet proved a better strategy in Mercia. In 873, the Viking army moved from Torksey into the centre of Mercia and waged war successfully enough that Burgred, the king of Mercia and Alfred's brother-in-law, fled England to live out his remaining days in Rome. The Danes replaced Burgred with the thegn Ceolwulf, and placed him under heavy obligations to them.11

In the autumn of 874, the Viking army divided itself into two armies and went in opposite directions. Three kings (Guthrum, Anund, and Oscytel) went from Repton in Mercia to Cambridge, while the force under Halfdan went up to the Tyne. The Danes were in the first stages of settlement

(11) Stenton, p. 252.
since looting had become less profitable than farming.
After nearly eight years of plundering, most of the portable
wealth of England had passed into Viking hands. In 876,
having regained control of Northumbria, Halfdan granted out
portions of the land to his followers, most notably in the
province of Deira and around York. Shortly thereafter,
Halfdan vanished from English history in much the same
fashion as his brother Ivar, leaving the eastern part of
Northumbria under Danish rule.

Meanwhile, Guthrum and his associates had gone south to
attack Wessex. Since the division of the great army had
taken over half of the men north in 874, the West Saxons and
the southernmost Danes (who would form the core of the
so-called Second Great Army) were about equal in strength
during the battles of 876. By autumn, both sides had agreed
to a peace and an exchange of money and hostages. Attempts
on the part of the Danes to renege on their agreement to
leave Wessex immediately found them on the defensive in
Exeter, with their fleet of reinforcements destroyed in a
storm off Swanage. By the summer of 877, the Danes had
returned to Mercia, whereupon they proceeded to partition
the territory between themselves and King Ceolwulf. The
Danelaw was now centred around the 'Five Boroughs' of
Lincoln, Stamford, Leicester, Nottingham and Derby -- it
stretched from the Humber and the Wash in the east to Wales
and western Mercia in the west.
When the Danes retreated to Gloucester and then began to settle in the Danelaw, it looked as though Wessex was safe until the end of winter and the start of a new campaigning season. Guthrum, who appeared to be the only remaining king among the Danes, had other plans. In January of 878, the Danes sallied out of Gloucester and struck deep into West Saxon territory in their first attempt to partition Wessex. They took Alfred and his small warband completely by surprise at the royal manor of Chippenham. Alfred eluded the Danes sent to capture him and escaped to the area west of Selwood. Large portions of Wessex submitted to the Danes.

While his kingdom lay uneasily under Danish control, Alfred and a small band built a fortification at Athelney and proceeded to undermine the Danish position. Just after Easter, Alfred set up a rallying point for his people at Ecgbrihtesstane (Brixton) on the Wiltshire border, and prepared for battle. Three days later, at Edington just north of Salisbury Plain, Wessex routed the Danish army. Guthrum took refuge in the manor of Chippenham, and later surrendered after a siege of two weeks. Shortly thereafter, Guthrum submitted to baptism at Alfred's hands and took 'Aethelstan' as his Christian name. Then he and Alfred made

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(12) Alfred's efforts were aided by the defeat of a Viking invasion shortly before Easter. It was led by Ubbe, tentatively identified as the third Viking son of Ragnar Lodbrok. He and a large part of his force were slain by the men of Dorset.
the Peace of Wedmore which defined the boundaries between Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian territories. The settled areas of the Danelaw were officially recognized by the peace; it also helped to distinguish between the Danish settlers and those who had joined the army for the sole purpose of raiding and looting. The new settlers moved back to East Anglia, but the remaining Viking raiders were still a sizable, troublesome army, well-trained and professional in its methods. The battle of Edington convinced this force to leave England for Flanders; a second Viking fleet from the continent entered the Thames in the November of 878, heard of the battle, and returned to their continental haunts in the November of 879.

The battle of Edington proved to be the turning point of Alfred's career. In 886, Alfred freed London from Danish rule and signed a short-lived treaty with Guthrum sometime between 886 and 890, most likely in 886.13 Between 881 and 891, Alfred fended off two naval attacks and a raid on Rochester. In 892, the Viking Hasten returned from the continent with his own army and joined forces with the East Anglian settlers. The resulting force took Alfred until 896 to contain. The reason for Alfred's eventual success was the series of defensive programs which he initiated during the brief periods of peace between 879 and 892. The king

set up a land defense of fortified points or *burhs*, particularly around his borders. To deal with the Viking marine advantage, Alfred built a new fleet of ships which were actually of a superior design than the Viking longboat for naval defense. To solve the problems caused by a lack of steady manpower to defend the kingdom, Alfred divided his levies into two halves to ensure one half could handle domestic concerns while the other remained at hand. The sole exceptions were the *burhs*, which were manned by men who farmed the land nearby. Throughout his ongoing conflict with the Danes, Alfred proved a clever and innovative tactician. Eventually, in 896, Hastein and his army dispersed -- some went to settle in the Danelaw, the rest recrossed the Channel to the better opportunities offered by the continent.

When Alfred died in 899, all of southern England from the Thames down to the Channel coast, including London, was under West Saxon rule. Considering Alfred an example of resistance against Danish control, the English people independent of Danish rule submitted to him as the overlord of Anglo-Saxon England in 886. Mercia was firmly allied to Wessex through its ruler, the ealdorman Aethelred, who considered Alfred his lord as early as 883, and later married Alfred's daughter Aethelflaed. Aethelred served

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Alfred and later his son Edward until the ealdorman's death in 911. While he never claimed the Mercian crown, Aethelred controlled the city of London, headed the Mercian council and led the Mercian armies with acknowledged and unchallenged authority.

While the situation in Mercia can be pieced together from various sources and archaeological evidence from the southern half of England, the history of the island beyond the Humber in Northumbria is more obscure. That there was an active Viking state centred around York is unquestioned, but little is known about its internal workings. There is some indication that the Danes of Northumbria quickly accepted Christianity -- at least, the Danish ruler of York next mentioned after Halfdan, Guthfrith Hardaknutson (882 to 894) was a Christian. His successor was probably Sigefrid, who ruled until 897. The Northumbrian conditions were further complicated by the influx of Norse settlers into the north-western regions in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. By 919, York had fallen under the rule of a Norse king, Raegnald Guthfrithson.

During the same years, Alfred's son Edward began the process of extending Anglo-Saxon control over the Danelaw, aided by his brother-in-law Aethelred and later by his sister Aethelflaed. Both of Alfred's eldest children continued his strategy of burh-building. The 'Lady' of
Mercia repaired old Roman forts and built new ones -- by the time of Aethelflaed's death in 918, Mercia had reclaimed from the Danes two of the 'Five Boroughs', Derby and Leicester. If she had lived a short while longer, the beleaguered Danes of southern Northumbria would have submitted to Mercia in exchange for Anglo-Saxon protection against the Norse invaders. By Edward's death in 924, all of England south of the Trent lay under English control, including East Anglia and Nottinghamshire, and the Norse kings of York had chosen to make peace with Edward in 920, after he had succeeded to the overlordship of Mercia upon his sister's death.

Edward's son, Aethelstan, completed the work that Alfred had begun. Raegnald's successor, Sihtric, not only acknowledged West Saxon overlordship, but married one of Aethelstan's sisters. The Scandinavian settlers apparently had little trouble with an English overlord so long as their property and position were secure. However, submission was not complete. Many of the Northumbrian Norse were still

(15) It should be noted that Alfred's wife was of Mercian birth.

(16) The Mercian Register provides a brief summary of Aethelflaed's activities as ruler of Mercia, especially those pertaining to Mercian and Danish relations. Whitelock's edition of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle also displays the entries from the Mercian Register separate from those of the Chronicle. The retaking of the boroughs of Derby and Leicester are entered under the years 916 and 918.

(17) As mentioned in the Mercian Register, in 918, after the taking of Leicester and shortly before her death that summer, the people of York swore 'to be under her direction'.
pagan and inclined to military exploits. These adventurers combined with cousins from the Viking kingdom of Dublin, some of the veterans from Halfdan's army, Scots from further north and Britons from Strathclyde to form a large Norse-Celtic confederacy. This army met the army led by Aethelstan and his brother at Brunanburh in 937, where the Anglo-Saxons routed their enemies. The Battle of Brunanburh ended any serious Viking threat to England until the reign of Aethelred in the late tenth century despite the upsurge of Irish-Norse activity in Northumbria after Aethelstan's death in 939. With the death of the last king of York, Birik Bloodaxe, in 954, England was at peace until the second phase of the Scandinavian invasions began in 981.
III. THE STATE OF ANGLO-SAXON LEARNING AND LITERATURE

It is a generally accepted fact that the cultural development of Anglo-Saxon England was severely retarded by the Viking incursions of the ninth century, and its literary production reduced in volume. The question still remains as to how great the devastation of monastic libraries and nearly two centuries worth of literature actually was. The Northumbrian centres of learning, both great and small, were often the receptacles of the church's wealth, and as such were the primary targets of Viking raiders. The great army of 866 swept away much of the wealth of Northumbria as it advanced over and conquered northern England. As the army moved southwards it plundered the church establishments of Mercia, East Anglia and other Anglo-Saxon territories.

Monastic communities were uprooted and forced to flee inland towards the southern and western territories safest from attack. These communities were often able to carry away their relics and other precious items. To judge from the library lists done by modern scholars1, many monastic libraries escaped destruction. However, their alienation from their rich lands forced monastic refugees in less hospitable places to put survival above the pursuit of cultural activities. The need to provide food, clothing, shelter and defense took priority over learning, the copying

(1) Kemble's Codex diplomaticus aevi saxonici and Lapidge's "Aldhelm Bibliography" (found in Aldhelm, the Prose Works) are two examples.
of books or creating artwork to glorify God.

In his preface to the Old English translation of the *Cura Pastoralis*², Alfred speaks of the poor state of learning at the time of his accession in 871. According to the king, few clergy were literate in both Old English and Latin. However, he also states that this decline in learning had been apparent before the Viking invasion. Indeed, the destruction caused by the Vikings merely sped up the process of decay in the English Church. Writing in 894, Alfred probably exaggerated the poor state of intellectual affairs prevalent in 871, intentionally or not. One is inclined to believe that the passage of time coupled with Alfred's own pessimistic inclinations had jaundiced his perception of Anglo-Saxon scholarship to some degree.

There are various reasons to believe that the invasions had considerably less impact on the level of Anglo-Saxon learning than Alfred laments. Evidence indicates that literacy in Old English or in Latin was mostly confined to the clergy, and that few layfolk were learned.³ Alfred himself admits that the English Church had, for the most part, become lax in its educational and intellectual duties. The significant evidence attesting to that fact is that of the seven known scholars of Alfred's court, four were of

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Mercian origin. Somehow Mercia had managed to produce four reasonably eminent scholars in spite of the upheaval of the previous decades, probably because the westernmost portion had only been lightly touched by the Vikings, preserving many of the better monasteries and providing refuge for the scholars of others. 

Whatever the state of English learning in 871, by Alfred's death, it had begun a slow process of regrowth that would eventually culminate during the English monastic reformation of the second half of the tenth century. One gathers from Alfred's own works that he was a man who held a tremendous respect for learning. He felt that the more learned a person was, the wiser he became, and the more wisdom gained made a person closer to God's favor. Alfred's respect for the great works of the Christian fathers and of Christian philosophy, for the Anglo-Saxon

(4) It is difficult to give a list of potential refuges for the displaced monks since we cannot be sure of which monastic institutions of western England had lasted into the latter half of the ninth century. We have very little information about the church establishment of Mercia and the southern parts of the island. Some possible havens were Beckford, Bredon, Bradford, Gloucester, Handbury, Hanbury, Kempsey, Malmesbury, Stratford, Tetbury, and Winchcombe. A. M. Ryan, A Map of Old English Monasteries (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 9-28.

(5) Alfred's faith in the moral power of learning is shown clearly by the literature that he chose to translate. This faith of his is especially seen in the his translations of Boethius and Augustine, who both concern themselves and their translator with the beneficial effects of the virtue of Wisdom and self-knowledge upon a man's life. E. S. Duckett, Alfred the Great and his England (London: Collins, 1957), pp. 151-155, 158-160.
scholars of the eighth century, and for the cultural efforts
of Charlemagne and his court both resulted from and shaped
his own desire to foster intellectual growth among his own
people. These goals were proclaimed in the preface to the
_Cura Pastoralis_. Since so few could read Latin, the king
and his helpers determined to translate pertinent works into
the vernacular so that those free-born available for
schooling could be taught to read in their own language.
Those who later chose a clerical vocation could then learn
Latin.

The use of the vernacular language was not unprecedented
in Anglo-Saxon learning. Even after accepting Christianity,
the Anglo-Saxons continued to use Old English instead of
Latin in their annals, chronicles, poetry, psalter glosses,
and for at least one prayer. While most of the body of Old
English legal literature survives in copies made and
possibly translated after the ninth century, it is probable
that Anglo-Saxon law had always been set down in the
language of the people. Despite the belief that Old
English was a poor substitute for Latin, by the late ninth
century the Anglo-Saxons could draw on a distinctive and
well-developed tradition of prose-writing that endured until
_the Norman Conquest._

(6) The translation was probably done between 890 and 893.

(7) J.M. Bately, "Old English prose before and during the reign
of Alfred", _Anglo-Saxon England 17_, P. Clemoes, ed. (Cambridge:
As Alfred became more proficient in his understanding of Latin, his interest moved from translating works of a purely educational value to works that he felt would be educational, moral and up-lifting in a time of great trouble. At the same time, he developed a tendency to translate more freely and to elaborate on certain aspects that he found of interest. As both an example of and patron to scholarship, Alfred inspired much of the literary work of the late ninth century and was fondly remembered by the scholars of the following century. During his reign, the West Saxon court became a meeting place for continental and British scholars, pagan Scandinavians and Christians from many places. Prominent among the scholars assembled were Alfred's seven helpers -- Werferth, Plegmund, Werwulf, Athelstan, St. Grimbald, John and Asser.

Werwulf and Athelstan were Mercians, but little else is known of them. The other five men formed the key intellectual figures of Alfred's court and were the king's primary teachers and aides in his literary and educational endeavors. Werferth, the bishop of Worcester, translated Gregory's Dialogues into Old English in the early 890's as a favor to Alfred, whose Latin was not yet equal to reading the original. It is possible that Alfred had other copies of the translation produced for the benefit of his clergy as a part of his educational campaign. Plegmund, the archbishop of Canterbury during the latter part of Alfred's
reign, had a reputation for learning among his peers. However, we have nothing positively identifiable as his work. There is the distinct possibility that he was the martyrrologist responsible for the ninth-century Old English Martyrology. Another work assigned very tentatively to either Werferth or Plegmund is the Old English translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. The Old English Bede contains all the hallmarks of Mercian translation* if neither Werferth nor Plegmund were the translators, then it is likely that they were the inspiration for the fellow Mercian who was.

Of the contributions of St. Grimbald and John the Old Saxon, considerably less is known. Grimbald held the office of abbot at the minster of Winchester, and while we have no indications of his literary output during his career in England, we have a fair idea of his background. It is likely that he is the Frankish monk Grimbald of St. Bertin's mentioned in a letter of Archbishop Fulco of Rheims (c. 886) to Alfred, sent in response to Alfred's request for scholarly aid. If all the evidence is sound, then the Grimbald of Alfred's court was also known as a scholar of

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(8) Bately, p. 103.

(9) Mercian scholars usually translated original works as exactly as possible, although they were capable of great skill in the editing and compilation of such works. The Old English *Bede* is a fine example of this type of skill. West Saxon translators tended to follow Alfred's more liberal manner of translation, and were capable of altering, digressing from, or commenting on the original source to suit their own tastes.
repute on the continent.\textsuperscript{10} John the Old Saxon from Corvey in Westphalia has also left little behind, apart from some early tenth-century poetry dedicated to Alfred's grandson Aethelstan that scholarly opinion has tentatively attributed to the German cleric.\textsuperscript{11} The last of Alfred's named intellectual advisors is the Welshman Asser, whose contributions to Anglo-Saxon literature will be examined in another place.

The amount of literature produced between Alfred's death and 940 is debatable. His son Edward probably supported cultural development in a limited fashion; his grandson, Aethelstan was a notable collector of manuscripts (most of which he seems to have given away as gifts), but the lack of surviving work suggests that literary production fell off rapidly after 899. Clearly Alfred's successors were more concerned with extending West Saxon control over the other Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian kingdoms than in promoting English education and literary production.

Yet in the case of Aethelstan, this assumption does not necessarily hold true. Insufficient evidence remains to indicate just how stimulating a patron Aethelstan was — scholarly opinion is divided between those who believe him

\textsuperscript{10} P. Grierson, "Grimbald of St. Bertin's", \textit{English Historical Review}, 55 (1940), pp. 542-554.

to have been a mere dilettante superficially emulating Alfred's example, and those who believe him to have played an active role in a still productive cultural movement that unfortunately survived only in minuscule bits and pieces. What is certain is that Aethelstan was, to some degree, a supporter of intellectual development while pursuing his role as a soldier and statesman.¹² At the very least, all of his reputed book collecting would have stimulated the copying of manuscripts, if not any original works. Certainly, he must be given credit for inspiring the notable epic poem on the Battle of Brunanburh found entered in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under the year 937.

(12) Michael Wood studies the question of Aethelstan's continuation of his grandfather's cultural and political policies in much greater detail in his article "The Making of King Aethelstan's Empire". The article addresses the political power and prestige attributed to Aethelstan by his peers, the possible methods of royal administration employed by the king, his support of Alfred's cultural program, and the use of both British and continental sources to expand our knowledge of his rule. Michael Wood, "The Making of King Aethelstan's Empire", Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society, ed. P. Wormald (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), pp. 250-272.
IV. ANGLO-SAXON SOURCE MATERIAL

The foremost record of Anglo-Saxon history is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The work is preserved in seven manuscripts and two fragments. Each piece is similar in content, apart from occasional additions, omissions and peculiarities in script. The oldest manuscript records Anglo-Saxon history from the sixth century to 891, and was set down by a single scribe in the late ninth or early tenth centuries. It is this manuscript that was probably circulated around to other scribes in England and eventually formed the foundation for the other Chronicle manuscripts and fragments, which have been dated to the mid-tenth and eleventh centuries. Both they and the original were continued by other scribes -- the earliest manuscript has entries up until 975, while the others extend up to the Norman Conquest. The most complete edition of the Chronicle is the version edited by Dorothy Whitelock, published in 1961, in which all the Chronicle manuscripts and fragments have been combined into a coherent whole, with appropriate notes indicating where manuscript discrepancies in date and content occur. Earlier scholarly opinion inclined towards the belief that Alfred was the author of the earlier manuscript, due to the similarities to the Old English Orosius, but later studies render this view questionable. All that can be said is that the earlier chronicler was likely a West Saxon, an assumption born out by the distinct
lack of interest in events beyond the affairs of Wessex --
the further north a place, the less is said of it.

As noted above, the Vikings first appear in the Chronicle
in 789, then in 793 and 794. They then do not appear until
the attack on Sheppey in 835. After 835, the Vikings appear
in the Chronicle with great regularity. Between 835 and
940, mention of Viking movements both in England and on the
continent occurs in sixty-four entries over a span of 105
years. During the period between 880 and 892, when the
Viking army in England divided and one part crossed the
Channel, the Chronicle follows its movement across Frankish
territory, showing as deep an interest in continental
affairs as those of England\(1\).

Occasionally a scribe has inserted poetry under
significant dates in the Chronicle, either from another
source or composed specifically for the Chronicle. Most of
these entries appear after 940. One of the most stirring
and historically important pieces of Old English poetry
dates from before 940, the epic poem of the Battle of
Brunanburh, entered under the year 937. While obviously
meant to be an uplifting and patriotic work, the Battle of
Brunanburh also describes -- probably with a fair amount of
accuracy -- the victory won by Aethelstan and his brother
Edmund over the confederation formed by Irish, Norse and

\(1\) Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, years 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885,
886, 887, 890, 891, and 892.
Scottish forces. This, the last major Scandinavian-formed invasion of England for the next forty-odd years, was crushed by Aethelstan's force of West Saxons, Mercians and Anglo-Danes. That Aethelstan was capable of summoning such an array of allies is evidence of how far the separate Anglo-Saxon and Danish territories had integrated under West Saxon overlordship.²

Unfortunately, while the so-called 'Alfredian' chronicler gives a fairly clear outline of Viking activity in southern England, especially after 865, he pays considerably less attention to Mercia, East Anglia and Northumbria. Mercian affairs occupy more space than East Anglian or Northumbrian, mainly because of the ties of marriage between Wessex and Mercia. East Anglia's fall to the Danes rates scarcely two sentences, nor is the fall of York discussed in any detail. Until the northward advance of Aethelflaed and Edward the Elder in the early tenth century, the Chronicle says little about the events beyond the West Saxon borders within Britain.

Not even the marital ties between Mercia and Wessex were enough to convince the chroniclers in the tenth century to detail the success of the West Saxon Lady of Mercia in

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(2) On the other hand, the poem The Capture of the Five Boroughs entered in the Chronicle under the year 942 also points out that more assimilation was necessary for the Danelaw to be integrated completely into the Anglo-Saxon sphere. The poem commemorates the successful capture of the Anglo-Danish territory in 942 by Aethelstan's brother, Edgar.
reclaiming Mercian territory from the Danes and protecting Mercia from Norse attack. Despite Aethelflaed's status as Alfred's daughter and Edward's sister, her exploits as ruler of Mercia would be unknown but for a source known as the Mercian Register. This Register is a series of consecutive annals from 902 to 924, which expand a little upon the activities of Mercia and Aethelflaed.

F.T. Wainwright postulated that the rather puzzling absence in the Chronicle of the deeds of a woman who was Alfred's eldest daughter, the sister of Edward the Elder, and the effective ruler of Mercia from about 902 onwards due to the illness of her husband Aethelred, resulted from political necessity. Even the fragmentary evidence of Aethelflaed's deeds imparts some notion of the stature of her work in strengthening the Anglo-Saxon Mercian border. It is possible that she did her work too well -- she died before English control of the Danelaw was complete -- but after her policies had restored Mercian self-confidence. The Chronicle indicates that at his sister's death, Edward immediately moved to take control of the Mercian throne, with a show of force and only a token bow to Mercian sovereignty. It is obvious that even though Aethelflaed and Edward were both half Mercian, the Mercians had little desire to become a province under the West Saxon king. Yet Edward could not afford to deal with an independent Mercian nation. If Aethelflaed had been granted the recognition she
was due, her example of rulership could have served as a rallying point for Mercian independence. Therefore, Edward and his chroniclers embarked, of necessity, on a conspiracy of silence.\(^3\)

While a meager set of Mercian annals has survived as the Mercian Register, Northumbrian records have been less fortunate. The scattered fragments of ninth-century Northumbrian records are lists of royal succession. We know of at least two northern tenth-century annals -- one from St. Cuthbert's Church at Chester-le-Street and one apparently from York. Neither work seems to have survived independently. Simeon of Durham (d. 1129) used the Cuthbertine annals as a source in his historical works. The York annals were integrated into the work of the thirteenth-century chronicler, Roger of Wendover.\(^4\) The Cuthbertine annals appear to end in 955, and the York annals in 975. As the various Anglo-Saxon Chronicle manuscripts began to diverge considerably in content after 915, there are two versions, continued probably by northern scribes,

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(4) \text{English Historical Sources (c. 500-1042), 2nd edition, ed. D. Whitelock (London: Eyre Methuan, 1979), pp. 275-283. Simeon's Historia Regnum contains 26 entries on northern England between 800 and 939. Roger of Wendover's Flores Historiarum has 16 entries.}
\end{array}\)
that do pay more attention to Northumbrian affairs."

One other source closely connected to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is the Chronicon Aethelweardi. Written by the West Saxon ealdorman Aethelweard sometime between 975 and 998, it is obviously composed later than 940. However, not only did Aethelweard make use of yet another Chronicle manuscript as a source, but he was in a position to add additional information to entries for the reigns of Alfred, Edward and Aethelstan based on the personal accounts of others. Descended from Alfred's brother Aethelred, and a powerful noble and patron of learning in his own right, Aethelweard took a special interest in the preservation of his family's history. He also maintained contact with his cousin Matilda, abbess of Essen in Westphalia, who was able to supply him with news from the continent. In fact, Aethelweard's peculiar Latin chronicle was dedicated to Matilda. Judging from the frequent presence of the ealdorman's name in Anglo-Danish treaties of his time, Aethelweard was in a position to hear Danish stories of the first Viking invasion. Despite Aethelweard's decidedly eccentric use of Latin, the Chronicon Aethelweardi is an


(6) Aethelweard's chronicle ended with the year 975; apparently he intended to continue his work, when able. It is believed that Aethelweard died in 998. Chronicon Aethelweardi, ed. A. Campbell (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Limited, 1962), pp. xiv-xv.
invaluable complementary work to the Chronicle.

There is one Anglo-Latin biographical work dating from the late ninth century, Asser's once controversial Life of King Alfred. Asser, the last of Alfred's known intellectual advisors to be examined, was a Welshman from the kingdom of Dyfed and one of Alfred's closest scholarly aides during his efforts at translation -- particularly in the case of his translation of Boethius. While the head of a Welsh bishopric, probably that of St. David's in Dyfed, Asser was summoned to Alfred's court sometime around 885, and divided his time between his work at court, his episcopal duties at St. David's and his obligations to the southern English monasteries at Cengresbury and Banwell. Alfred later arranged, apparently with the approval of the church in St. David's, for Asser's installation to the see of Sherborne sometime between 892 and 900. Asser wrote the Life in 893, and survived Alfred by nine or ten years.

Asser's work is the earliest known biography of an Anglo-Saxon king, and was partially influenced by Einhard's Life of Charlemagne. It is divided into two broad and unequal parts, the one chronicling events of the later ninth century to 881 and the other, a general appreciation of

Alfred and his rule. The two parts are separated by a brief but important passage in which Asser describes his own contributions to Alfred's work. Part one is an expanded Latin version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle with additional information supplied by Alfred, his family, his court and the personal experiences of Asser himself. The passage linking parts one and two is a semi-autobiographical account of the relationship between Alfred and Asser, and provides us with nearly all of what little material we possess on Asser's history. Part two is about Alfred the ruler. The Life ends abruptly at chapter 106, and is apparently a copy of an unfinished draft. Asser lived until 908 or 909, and his apparent failure to produce a completed draft of the story of Alfred's life remains a mystery.

Nor does a complete manuscript appear to have been circulated. Indeed, even if Asser wrote the Life with a Welsh audience in mind, there is no evidence for its circulation in Wales in any form, and but minimal evidence for its currency in England. So much mystery in fact surrounds the Life of King Alfred that its authorship by Asser was held in doubt until Whitelock conclusively proved its authenticity in her work of 1968, The Genuine Asser. Despite the apparent lack of interest in a circulation of


(9) D. Whitelock, The Genuine Asser (Reading: 1968).
the Life, chance alone preserved the incomplete version
which now serves as a valuable complement to the Chronicle.
In its detailed accounts of the struggles between West Saxons and Vikings, Asser's work is significant.

Among the incidents in the Chronicle to which Asser adds enlightening material is the siege of Nottingham in 868, where he explains why the Mercians and West Saxons made peace with the Vikings within the city. He also clarifies the Danish position at Reading in 871, and gives a fuller account of the later battle of Ashdown than is found in the Chronicle, especially about Aethelred's refusal to join battle before he had finished Mass. The Life also provides a description of the flight of the Danes at the battle of Wiltshire shortly after Aethelred's death in 871, as well as containing a rather full description of the locale of Wareham where the 876 Anglo-Saxon altercation occurred. He adds to the Chronicle entry about the seizure of Chippenham, Alfred's fugitive life in the wilds of Somerset, the attempted invasion of Devon by Ubbe and his forces, and Alfred's rallying of the West Saxons against the Danes. Certain details also appear about Guthrum's surrender and the events leading up to it. Asser also expands upon the entries of 882, such as Alfred's engagement of the Danes in a naval battle, the conflict between the West Saxons and the continental division of the Viking army of 885, and Alfred's taking of London in 886.
As mentioned earlier, Alfred was as much a scholar as a warrior, and if the days when scholars attributed nearly every work of the period to the West Saxon king are long past, he has left a legacy of great value to historians. However, one must bear in mind that Alfred's works are valuable principally because they depict his character and his response to the difficulties of his reign rather than as objective comprehensive and historical sources. Indeed, the one history that has been attributed to Alfred may not have been written by him at all.

Asser's Life lists only a few of Alfred's works and does not cover the king's entire life, omitting the years in which he probably wrote most of his work. Consequently we are forced to rely on the sometimes erroneous claims of later sources, notably those of Aelfric of Eynsham in the later tenth century and of William Malmesbury in the twelfth. Not only are these later sources mistaken in certain of their claims, but they list works by Alfred that we do not possess today. It is possible that Alfred left a larger body of literature that yet remains undiscovered. It is highly unlikely that we will ever be able to assess comprehensively the whole body of work that he may have produced.

Of the works attributed to Alfred, it is certain that he produced the translation of the Cura Pastoralis of Gregory the Great, the De Consolatione Philosophiae of Boethius and
the *Soliloquies of St. Augustine*. He was also responsible for the first Anglo-Saxon legal code issued in a century.\(^{10}\) Scholars have also agreed that all available evidence supports the view that Alfred was the author of the first fifty prose psalms of the Paris Psalter.\(^{11}\) Debate continues over an apparently lost manuscript called the *Enchiridion* or *Handboc* that William of Malmesbury attributes to Alfred. It is possible that this manuscript was the same handbook of favorite writings that Asser claimed that Alfred kept. Whitelock postulates that Malmesbury may have confused the manuscript that he saw (perhaps at Worcester) with either the translation of Augustine's *Soliloquies*, or perhaps another work reputed to have been by Alfred called the *Dicta*. On the other hand, it is possible that the *Dicta* -- which seems to have been lost -- is yet another portion of the *Soliloquies* manuscript. Unless a copy of either the *Enchiridion/Handboc* or the *Dicta* are found, these theories will never be verified.\(^{12}\)

When examining Alfred's works, it is essential to remember that the principal purpose behind them was his

\(^{10}\) The previous code was Ine's, which was issued in the early eighth century.


desire to promote learning, and to improve his people's moral conduct and spiritual well-being. Consequently, he translated Latin works that he believed would both benefit his people and hold their interest. He tailored the original to fit the needs of Anglo-Saxon readers, and elaborated on themes that he perceived to be pertinent. Thus he translated the originals with a fair amount of license. The king's first piece of translation -- accomplished with the aid of the scholars of his court -- was Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, a handbook outlining the ways and means of caring for the spiritual welfare of a priest's flock. In fact, Alfred originally called the Old English version the *Hirdebo* (the *Shepherd's Book*), and hoped it would improve the work of the lower clergy. The choice of the *Cura Pastoralis* was due both to its popularity in the Carolingian Church and to the belief that it was first brought to England by Augustine of Canterbury in the seventh century. It is in the preface of the translation that Alfred describes the moral and intellectual state of England.

Alfred's choice of Boethius is a little more puzzling, since it apparently had little circulation in England prior to his translation¹³, even though it was popular on the continent. Continental scholars at Alfred's court such as

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Grimbald and John the Old Saxon may have introduced the work to the king. While the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* is not, technically, a Christian work, the writer Boethius was nevertheless profoundly influenced by aspects of Christian thought, and the subject matter of his work appealed greatly to Alfred. Alfred's version completely changed the arrangement of the original from that of four books subdivided into chapters to a single book of forty-two chapters. While it is probable that he intended to translate the original text correctly, Alfred seems to have identified with portions of the text to the point where he expands on or digresses from the original. It is likely that Alfred chose Boethius because he found it relevant to the difficulties that he faced as king, and because he believed that his people would also identify with Boethius' philosophy. The *Soliloquies of St. Augustine*, extracted from the works of Augustine, bishop of Hippo, were also chosen because Alfred found them heartening.

There are two other extant works attributed to Alfred. The first, the Old English version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, was probably the work of a Mercian, since it exhibits the literalism typical of Mercian translators. The translator of the other work, the Old English version of Orosius' *Historia adversus Paganos*, still remains a mystery. Since Orosius happens to be quite liberal in translation as is Alfred's own work, the general consensus is that if
Alfred did not write it, then another West Saxon, perhaps someone who frequented his court, did.

This conclusion derives both from the style of translation and from the extra information added to the original fifth-century text. In the first book of the translation, new and original material appears concerning the geography of Europe, particularly that of northern Europe. This appears to be the only geography of Europe written by a contemporary that also gives the location of Germanic and Slavic peoples of the north as early as the ninth century. A large portion of the material pertaining to the northern coastline of Europe emerges from the accounts of two sailors, Othere (a Norwegian) and Wulfstan (an Anglo-Saxon or a Dane), related to Alfred at his court. Here is early written evidence demonstrating that, raiding aside, peaceful relations between Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians existed abroad and at home.

Othere was a Norwegian noted for his wealth, status and truthfulness, who visited Alfred's court sometime between 890 and 899, apparently at Alfred's request. A trader by profession, he told Alfred of his two voyages along the west and north coasts of Norway into the White Sea sometime in 890. The objects of these ventures were to hunt walrus and to trade. He is clear and precise in his observations about

the geography and the people encountered during his trips, and distinguishes between what he has been told by others and what he himself has seen. While the background of Others has been compiled from various sources, the origins of Wulfstan remain rather obscure. Wulfstan's voyage went from Slesvig to the port of 'Truso' near the mouth of the Vistula.

Apart from his translations, Alfred is also associated with four Anglo-Saxon documents that provide some information about the Danes and the Anglo-Saxon attitude towards them. Alfred's legal code sprang out of the need to provide a means of uniting the Anglo-Saxon territories under a shared legal heritage. In one sense the code symbolized the new political unity forged by Wessex out of the long struggle against the Viking invaders. Standing against the Viking tide forced Alfred to continue the political expansion begun by his grandfather Egbert. The force of circumstances left Alfred with no choice but to provide the Anglo-Saxons, bereft of able leaders by years of turmoil and destruction, with the strong leadership and inspiration they required.

Until Alfred's time, Anglo-Saxon law had usually been oral, customary and regional, written down only when specific changes were made to customary practice. Alfred brought together the Mosaic laws of the Scriptures, the synodical records of the early church, the written laws of
his own Wessex, of Mercia and of Kent, with older laws
reinterpreted to fit the views and needs of Alfred and his
fellow English, all incorporated into Alfred's broad view of
kingship. He could educate the English in the laws of the
Bible, the church and their forefathers while at the same
time expanding the West Saxon political sphere.

Besides the legal code, two important royal documents
have also survived, namely a treaty between Alfred and the
Viking king Guthrum from East Anglia, and Alfred's will.
The treaty dates from about 886 when Alfred recaptured
London, thereby hedging in the Dane and his forces. It
defined the boundaries between Anglo-Saxon England and the
southern Danelaw, and attempted to regulate relations
between the native population (particularly in East Anglia)
and the Scandinavian settlers. As a source, the treaty
demonstrates at once the common ground between the two sides
peoples and the deep differences. The Anglo-Saxons could
accept that the new settlers were there to stay, and both
sides could agree to equitable legal treatment and respect
for each others social customs, but neither party could
find a common relic or symbol to swear their oaths upon and

(15) F.L. Attenborough, The Laws of the Earliest English Kings

(16) Of the five clauses that make up the agreement, the second
and third clearly state that the English and the Danish had
the same wergild, and that both peoples of the Danelaw would
follow the same legal procedures for certain common disputes.
Attenborough, p. 99.
thereby bind all the people to the treaty. Guthrum, despite his baptism, swore on Thor's hammer and Alfred on a Christian relic. In other words, the difference in faith could not be bridged until the Scandinavians completely accepted Christianity. Judging from evidence found in the Chronicle, it is probable that the treaty was broken by the Danes shortly after Alfred's death, but certainly by 911. The treaty also demonstrates Alfred's status among the Anglo-Saxon territories, since he negotiates Mercian boundaries as well as West Saxon.  

In his will Alfred again remarks on how the turmoil during his lifetime disrupted English life. He also speaks at considerable length about his rights to the lands that he bequeathed in his will, how he had managed to appropriate large amounts of property left vacant by Viking raids, and the justifications for his actions. Land along the eastern and southern coasts, especially in Kent, was seized by Alfred and his heirs mainly for the purpose of coastal defence.  

Alfred's fort-building campaign was not 


(18) Alfred writes in his will: "But it came to pass that we were all harassed with the heathen invasion; then we discussed our children's futures -- how they would need some maintenance, whatever might happen to us through these disasters." Select English Historical Documents, ed. F. E. Harmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), p. 49. 

without its opponents, and many of the churchmen alienated from their lands complained to their continental brethren and even to the pope. The few extant letters from continental sources addressed to the king generally admonish him for his so-called 'abuses' of the English Church. 

Evidence of Alfred's defensive plans are found in the Burghal Hidage. This document might have been written anytime between 886 and 914. It describes the networks of burhs or fortified sites built as a part of Alfred's military defense program begun in the 880's. It also provides an assessment of the theoretical area allotted to each site and the size of the garrison supported by the allotted land. The Burghal Hidage suggests the way each fort was manned to ensure maximum protection of its area and the efficient maintenance of its garrison.

Another document that provides information about the Vikings in England is a donation made by the earl Aelfred of Surrey and his wife Werburg to Christ Church. The document containing this transaction was drawn up in the late ninth century. Aelfred also left a will and a charter to posterity. The principle gift to Christ Church was the Codex Aureus. The Codex is a volume of Gospels, which might


(21) A copy of the Burghal Hidage can be found in Keynes and Lapidge's book Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources, page 193.
account for the use of the plural in the document, but it is also possible that additional works were presented. Aelfred and his wife paid gold to retrieve the book from heathen hands.\textsuperscript{22} Possibly the volumes were looted from another church by a Viking warrior from one of the armies working in England. If this were the case, the document can be dated to sometime between 865 and the late 880's.

One would assume with all the conflict between Anglo-Saxon and Viking forces, there would be a large amount of Old English heroic literature commemorating at the very least such victories as Ashdown and Edington. However, aside from the Chronicle's \textit{Battle of Brunanburh}, there is not. If such works did exist, and it seems highly unlikely that they did not, they appear to have been lost. It is difficult to assign dates to much of the Old English material because so much of it has been preserved in more recent copies of earlier, lost, and therefore undatable manuscripts. Consequently, estimating composition dates can be painstaking and frustrating work with pieces that may never be satisfactorily put in place. Due to this confusion, there is a fair amount of uncertainty in assigning poetic and hagiographic material to the ninth and tenth centuries.

\textsuperscript{22}Select English Historical Documents, ed. F. E. Harmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), p. 46. Aelfred's other two extant documents can be found in Harmer's volume, pp. 10, 11 and 12.
An example of this problem is the verse epic Judith contained in the same manuscript as the epic Beowulf. Judith, an Old English version of the biblical story of Judith, is the centre of a controversy focussing on its authorship and date of composition. Traditionalists hold the view that the eighth-century poet Cynewulf composed Judith. They base their stand on the strength of its definite similarity in poetic form and literary style to Cynewulf's known work. Their opponents argue for a much later composition date. The most interesting hypothesis to spring from the renewed study of Judith is that the poem is a heroic piece inspired by Alfred's daughter Aethelflaed who led the Mercians against the Scandinavian invaders until her death in 918. While the poem revolves around the Old Testament story, the choice of that particular tale with its similarities to the career of Aethelflaed and its clearly patriotic theme could just as easily place the date of composition in the late ninth or early tenth centuries as in

(23) T. Gregory Foster, Judith, Studies in Metre, Language and Style (Strasbourg, 1892). Foster's work is the chief proponent of the nontraditionalist view of the origins of Judith. Until his work, Cynewulf was generally assumed to have produced the poem. While this assumption is now somewhat questionable, no one seems to have been inspired to follow Foster's lead, possibly because it is almost impossible to positively identify the poet based on available data. D. Chamberlain considers the possibilities of dating the poem on the basis of its style and use of biblical imagery to sometime in the ninth or tenth centuries in his essay, "Judith: A Fragmentary and Political Poem", Anglo-Saxon Poetry: essays in appreciation for John C. McGailllard, ed. L.E. Nicholson and D.W. Frese (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), pp. 135-159.
the eighth century itself.

Another piece of verse marginally related to hagiography and other religious narrative tales is *Solomon and Saturn*\(^\text{24}\). Originally discovered in Anglia, this piece is a dialogue between the pagan prince Saturn and King Solomon about the merits and practices of Christianity. If this work was indeed written in the ninth century as is supposed, one could argue that its author conceived the work as a missionary tract for the conversion and teaching of Danish settlers (or lapsed and erring Anglo-Saxons). Unfortunately, there is no conclusive proof of this. One can merely draw conclusions from the nature of the work, the obvious need for the English Church to Christianize the pagan settlers of the Danelaw in spite of the decayed state of the church itself, and the complaints of later tenth-century clergy ministering to the Danelaw about the rampant superstition evinced by many Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Danes.

Among the last pieces of Old English literature to be considered are two works of religious verse -- the Kentish Hymn and the Kentish Psalm (or Psalm 50), found in Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury. There is some confusion in dating these pieces; Dobbie claims that they are late tenth-century material, while Wrenn merely says they are a

product of the years between the start of the Viking raids and the late tenth century and are notable as religious poetry flavored with heroic overtones. If one takes the heroic aspects of the poetry seriously, their composition can be ascribed to either of the two main Viking invasions. Alternately, one might point out that Old English religious literature tended to draw on the heroic symbolism of Old Germanic poetry.

Like the Chronicon Aethelweardi, Abbo's account of the death of St. Edmund of East Anglia was composed near the end of the tenth century, but since it is about a ninth-century event, it should be included in the list of sources. Strictly speaking, the Life or Passion of St. Edmund is a fairly standard Carolingian hagiographic account. What makes the work of particular interest is that it is a third hand account of the last days of Edmund of East Anglia.

Abbo of Fleury taught at the monastery of Ramsey from 985 to 987. During his stay in England, he made the acquaintance of St. Dunstan, whom he seems to have admired. According to a prefatory letter sent to Dunstan, the Passion


is based on the saint's own retelling of the account he had heard in his youth from a man who had been with Edmund in his final days before his last battle against the Vikings in 869. While Abbo lavishly used the fancy rhetoric dear to the hearts of the majority of the continental scholars of the time, the fact that he sent Dunstan a copy of the work strongly argues that the substance of the story remained unchanged from Dunstan's own. Due to the complexity of Abbo's Latin, Aelfric of Eynsham later translated Abbo's *Passion* into Old English for the benefit of those who were unable to handle the grammar.

Lately, Abbo's work has become the centre of conflicting views. The conflict arises from various difficulties. Firstly, we really know very little about pre-Christian Scandinavian religious practices. Secondly, there is debate over Abbo's use of imagery in the *Passion*. Thirdly, there is also debate over the origins of the cult of St. Edmund. In 1977, Alfred P. Smyth put forth the theory that both Aella of Northumbria and Edmund were executed by the Viking rite of the 'blood eagle', and that the Viking army had intended such a fate for Alfred, at the hands of either Guthrum or Ubbe in 878. Smyth based his theory on information culled from Old English, Frankish and Scandinavian sources dating from the late tenth century.

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onwards. One of the earliest and central of the sources used is Abbo's *Passion of St. Edmund*, specifically Abbo's description of Edmund's torture at the hands of Ivar the Boneless and his men²⁸.

Smyth's conjectures were later refuted by Roberta Frank in 1984. Frank points out several errors in Smyth's research methods, such as the improper use of skaldic literature. In the case of Abbo's work, she aptly notes that the most significant examples of torture described by Abbo are strikingly similar in description to certain Roman tortures described in early Christian hagiography.²⁹ By the end of the article, it is fairly obvious that Smyth is guilty of regarding his material with too narrow a view, and that his arguments are not as cut and dried as he might wish.

But if Smyth ignores certain discrepancies in his source material, Frank seems to undermine her own credibility through the ferocity of her attack on his work. In pointing out that there is no indisputable case or documentation for

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(28) Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles, 850-880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). The entire book is aimed at clarifying Viking activities in the British Isles between 850 and 880, particularly the careers of the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok. The so-called rite of the 'blood-eagle' is intimately connected by Smyth to these three Viking leaders, especially Ivar. Smyth examines the 'sacrifices' of Aella and Edmund in chapters XIV and XVI, and the Viking use of sacrifice in general in chapter XVII.

accepting the existence of the sacrificial rite, she assumes the lack of written sources stands as irrefutable proof of the rite's nonexistence without considering that it might have been preserved in oral tradition as late as the late medieval period. Nor does it occur to her that Abbo might have imitated the earlier hagiographic imagery to fill out a sketchy knowledge of a form of ritual that did exist, if not precisely in the bloody form detailed by Smyth. One might also contest her view that the cult and legend of St. Edmund was effectively created out of whole cloth by royal sponsorship and the work of St. Dunstan and St. Aethelwold. All in all, we simply do not have enough information to verify the accuracy of the Passion of St. Edmund, save perhaps to say that, all embroidering aside, we have reason to believe that Edmund was captured by the Danes and executed. Meanwhile, the rulers of Abbo's own land faced the possibility of meeting a similar fate.
V. CAROLINGIAN FRANCE 800-954

At Charlemagne's death in 814, the boundaries of the Carolingian Empire ran from the Danish peninsula down the north-west coast of Europe to the Iberian peninsula, along the Pyrenees and the Côte d' Azur, along the Italian peninsula to the border of the duchy of Benevento and up north again to the Danish peninsula. Theoretically the empire included the territories or provinces of Saxony, Austrasia, Neustria, Brittany, Aquitaine, the Spanish March, Septimania, Provence, Burgundy, Lombardy, the Papal States and Spoleto, Carinthia, Bavaria and Alemannia. Charlemagne was, in many respects, a legitimate successor to the imperial mantle of the Western Roman Empire besides his official coronation at Rome in 800. He most assuredly deserves the reputation bequeathed upon him by English and continental scholars\(^1\). Unfortunately, like that earlier empire, the Carolingian Empire was structurally flawed.

Firstly, it was an extremely large entity; composed of culturally diverse regions, many only nominally Christian and forcibly conquered by the Franks, and others containing cultures considerably more advanced than the Franks.

Charlemagne and his administration provided the glue that

\(^{1}\) Charlemagne (742-814) was a legend in his own time and greatly admired by his own peers; even the Byzantine Empire acknowledged reluctantly his imperial claims with all the prestige and power that attended the position. In western Europe only Offa of Mercia could approach the Frankish emperor on an equitable standing; the papacy itself relied upon Charlemagne's good favor to maintain its stability and status.
held these varied peoples together within the empire, and the ruler provided much of the impetus behind the efficient functioning of the imperial administration. Once Charlemagne -- a man of tremendous ability, personality and luck -- died, the flaws of the system that he had been able to surmount became a painfully apparent detriment to his son Louis.

Louis inherited an empire riddled with problems. That he managed to rule effectively from 814 to 830 and survived as emperor despite intrigues and rebellion until his death in 840, sharply contrast with the popular opinion that depicts Louis the Pious as a weak and incompetent fool.² Politically, the inevitable decentralization of the empire had given rise to powerful nobles with ambitions contrary to autocratic imperial policy. The imperial administration was corrupt, causing inefficiency and additional decay in imperial governance. The corruption extended to the law courts, which allowed the practice of gross injustices. Charlemagne's military policies had caused many economic and social problems; a drained treasury, spreading poverty, famine and plague; a reaction against war, the growth of practices which would eventually establish serfdom; general

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(2) As can be seen in the evolution of the heroic epics based on Carolingian characters and events, by the twelfth century popular legend depicted Louis with the worst of his faults and none of his virtues. Examples of this development are in le cycle de Guillaume (especially in the Couronnement de Louis), and several of the epics dealing with noble revolt. This attitude prevails today.
lawlessness; and overly heavy secular and ecclesiastical taxation. As the integrity of the empire waned, its added vulnerability attracted increasing interest from Viking raiders that it could no longer repel in an adequate fashion. In short, Louis was able to stave off the dissolution of Charlemagne's great empire for a short while, but from the start had been fighting a losing battle.

Perhaps the worst problem afflicting the empire was that Louis had four male heirs. The conflict between father and sons, brother and brother, did more to accelerate the dissolution of imperial power and the defence of the Carolingian territories than any other single factor. Division first arose from the Germanic custom of dividing property fairly between heirs. Originally, this meant a division of territorial rule between Louis' sons by his first wife, Ermengarde: Lothar, Pepin and Louis. With Louis' controversial second marriage to Judith and the birth in 823 of a fourth son, Charles, upon whom he doted, his elder sons found it difficult to accept the redistribution of their own inheritances to accommodate this unwelcome latecomer to the imperial family. The last decade of Louis' life saw frequent conflict between Louis and his sons -- one from 830 to 831 that involved all three elder sons,

(3) Charles might have been better tolerated and Louis wiser in allotting territory to his youngest son if it were not for the Empress Judith's extreme ambition on the behalf of her son. It was Judith's meddling that did more to alienate Louis and his elder sons from 830 onwards than the existence of Charles.
another conflict that began in 833 and ended with the exile of Lothar to Italy in 835.

In 840, Louis died of the respiratory illness that had plagued his old age. Upon his death, his sons proceeded to tear his empire apart. The ugly dispute that developed shortly after his death eventually forged an alliance between Charles the Bald and Louis the German against their elder brother, the Emperor Lothar. The Treaty of Verdun in 843 saw the official resolution of this fraternal dispute, although in reality the territorial struggle between the three brothers continued until only one was left. While the Treaty of Verdun divided the empire into reasonably equal portions, both Charles and Louis lost the extensive estates they held in Austrasia to Lothar because of the new boundaries set by the treaty. Furthermore, the new divisions of authority failed to acknowledge culturally distinct areas such as Burgundy: the treaty divided it into two parts under different rulers, but the region continued to consider itself intact politically, customarily and culturally.

Unfortunately for Charles, his new kingdom held several such distinct regions and additional sub-regions such as

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(4) Pepin died in 838.

(5) Charles got Brittany, Francia, Neustria, part of Burgundy, Aquitaine, and Gothia. Lothar kept the imperial title, Austrasia, the other part of Burgundy, Lombardy, and Provence. Louis received Saxony and Bavaria.
Gascony. This proved to be a recurring source of aggravation for the young king. Among the more Germanic peoples Charles could find a common binding thread. No such ties bound the king to the racially distinct peoples of Gascony and Brittany. While all of these disparate peoples could be united under the name of the quasi-Roman Carolingian Empire, under Charles they had no common political designation or identity, nor would they for more than a hundred years⁶. Even the name 'Francia' or 'West Francia' was inaccurate since it more properly described a region within the realm, and 'Gaul' referred to a territory that no longer existed in reality. Modern historians tend to use 'West Francia' for lack of a better term.⁷

After the death of Louis the German in 876, the empire once again was united briefly under Charles, who died the following year. His son and successor Louis II the Stammerer died in 879, leaving three heirs. The eldest, Louis III, was a promising military leader who successfully withstood the Viking invaders only to meet a young and unexpected death in 882. His equally capable brother Carloman died in 884. Due to the extreme youth of the

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(6) By this statement, one means that the Romans established a precedent for imperial rule over western Europe to the Danube. As the successor to the western imperial throne, a Carolingian emperor had a claim to rule these areas, as well as the prestige and glamour attached to the position. Charles, as a mere Frankish king, did not have this support.

youngest brother, Charles, the West Frankish throne was filled briefly by the inept Charles the Fat and Count Eudes of Paris before occupied by Charles III the Simple, who ruled until 929. The throne passed to Charles' descendents Louis IV d'Outremer, Lothar, until the legitimate West Frankish Carolingian line became extinct with the death of Louis V in 987.

The scarcity of capable and legitimate Carolingian rulers after the death of Louis II more than once forced the election of leaders with murkier connections to the royal family. Charles the Simple was only ten years old in 888, and he was likely the only legitimate Carolingian left in the empire after the death of Charles the Fat. While the East Frankish realm immediately turned to the able Carolingian bastard, Arnulf, duke of Bavaria, the decision in the west proved less easy. The success of Alfred of Wessex's resistance to the Vikings persuaded these raiders to take a stronger interest in West Francia. A strong military leader was imperative to order the West Frankish defence.

In February of 888, an assembly of West Frankish ecclesiastical and lay officials met at Compiègne and elected Eudes, count of Paris and lay abbot of St. Denis, to rule over them. This election was made on the basis of his brilliant defence of Paris during the great siege of 885 to 886. Eudes had no connection to the Carolingian royal
family; his election was a break with custom and, when he suffered a series of military reverses, the fears of his nobles forced Eudes to name Charles the Simple as his heir to prevent a civil war. While Charles became king in 898, not all in the West Frankish realm supported the surviving Carolingians. A division over policy caused the angry people of Lorraine to crown first Eudes' brother Robert in 922, and then his son-in-law Raoul of Burgundy in 923 in defiance of Charles the Simple.

These events were part of a trend that found the great magnates of the West Frankish territories exerting much greater power over the selection of their rulers, upheld by the precedent set by the election of Eudes in 888. Between 840 and 940 most of the political and military power in West Francia passed from the hands of the king to the hands of the West Frankish church and aristocracy. It was a weakness that would take the Capetian successors to the Carolingian line many generations to reverse. The Viking raids played a substantial role to this decentralization of royal power.

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(B) Superstition played a large part in the fall of Eudes. His military prowess prompted the nobles to set aside Charles' claims to the throne in favor of the count. When a run of demoralizing Frankish defeats occurred, his one-time supporters believed they were a divine punishment for displacing the true heir, no matter how practical their reasoning for the deed. The impression left by this period contributed to the decision of Hugh the Great (Eudes' nephew) to recall the Carolingian Louis d'Outremer from England to assume the kingship in 936 when he could have easily taken it for himself. The Carolingian belief in divine intervention in worldly affairs is amply illustrated in the more popular forms of religious literature such as saints' lives and translations.
There was one major difference between the Scandinavian invasions of England and those of Carolingian France and Germany. England had no geographical ties to the homelands of the Scandinavians. Its only contacts with the Scandinavians were through trade, piracy, and the later raids and invasions. If the Anglo-Saxons had succeeded in preventing the establishment of certain key fortifications such as those at Thanet and Sheppey, the Viking armies would not have been able to mount a land war. In the case of the Carolingian Empire, close geographical proximity laid it open to both overland and naval attack, not solely raiding and looting. Sharing boundaries with the Danish peninsula also forced the Carolingian emperors into diplomatic contact with the Danish rulers, as well as into manipulating Danish domestic politics. This contact also led to the sponsorship of missionary work among the pagan Scandinavians and further interaction between them and the empire. Politically motivated Danish assaults on the empire were generally confined to Frisia and Saxony, although some of the major pirate raids of the early ninth century could have been unofficially sanctioned by the Danish rulers. Viking raids tended to concentrate on the northern and western coasts of Europe, particularly upon such great waterways as the Rhine, the Seine and the Loire.

During the reigns of Charlemagne and his son Louis, the Scandinavians -- or, more specifically, the Danes -- were
more of a political problem. A little over a decade before the death of Charlemagne, various Danish factions struggling for territorial power were united under the rule of Godfrid in 804. Once his power was consolidated, Godfrid entertained notions of Danish expansion into the Carolingian territories of Frisia and Saxony. Towards that end, he may have encouraged Danish marauding along the northern imperial coasts from 804 onwards. Certainly, there appear to have been very few incidents of Viking assault upon the northern shores of the empire prior to his rule. The severity of these raids is difficult to determine. They do not seem to have significantly disrupted the empire, but were alarming enough to prompt Charlemagne to initiate efficient coastal watch and defence measures. These are generally considered an example of Charlemagne's foresight rather than an indication of the immediate concern over Vikings. According to Einhard, these measures confined serious raiding to the islands off the coast of Frisia.

The Frisian raids were in a sense an exception to the usual raiding on the continental coasts in that they were

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(9) That Godfrid intended conquest of Carolingian territory is implied by both Einhard and the Royal Frankish Annals.

(10) Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, trans. S.E. Turner (The University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 44. Charlemagne prepared a fleet for river and coastal defence, and devised coastal watches for the harbors and larger river mouths. He had ordered similar measures to be taken along the coasts of Italy and southern France against Saracen pirates.

(11) Ibid., p. 45.
closely tied to the Carolingian/Danish political situation of the early ninth century. When Charlemagne incorporated Frisia into his empire, he neglected to maintain its naval resources, leaving it vulnerable to its Danish neighbor. In 810, Godfrid overran Frisia and parts of Saxony, and even set his sights on taking Charlemagne's seat at Aachen in the heartland of the empire\(^2\). Godfrid's ambitions were cut short when he was assassinated by one of his bodyguards in 810. The Danish political unity achieved by Godfrid lapsed into yet another power struggle between the various Danish political factions.

Most of the diplomatic and political contact between Louis the Pious and the Danes concentrated on the need to remain on cordial terms with the Danish rulers, while at the same time using the Danish political situation to undermine the threat to the empire. Louis also sponsored the Frankish Church's missionary work in Scandinavia, the most notable example being the work of St. Anskar. The imperial presence of Charlemagne and his coastal protections had impressed the Danes. They paid a similar respect to Louis until the civil strife of his last decade of rule eroded the solidarity and

\(^{12}\) There is some evidence that implies that Godfrid's apparent plan of conquest may have actually been a clever ploy to divert Carolingian trade to the Baltic into routes more favorable for Danish-held trade bases. R. Hodges and D. Whitehouse, Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 111-118.
defence of the realm. Viking attacks were, at first, infrequent; there were raids on the island of Noirmoutier which was in a vulnerable position at the mouth of the Loire, and two known raids on Flanders and Aquitaine in 819 and 820.

Frisia was additionally weakened by the continued contact between the Carolingian and Danish courts. The political conflict in Denmark resolved itself into two major factions -- that of Godfrid's sons and that of the Dane Harald. Harald's rather shaky position led him to seek Louis' protection, to the point of accepting baptism in Mainz under Louis' sponsorship in 826. This acceptance of Christianity included Harald's wife, children and retainers. As a token of Louis' favor, Harald was also granted an estate in Frisia as insurance of refuge should his throne be seized. Nor was Harald the only Dane to receive land in exchange for support of the emperor; other lords in Frisia and Germany, or of 'enfeoffed' Danes had been previously established on imperial land. This created a certain territorial ambiguity. Not only were Danes in legal possession of Frisian land, but the boundaries between Frisia and Denmark were unclear to the point where Franks held posts in the courts of both realms. As well, the Frisians, who had some

(13) Louis also continued his father's program of building coastal defences. He stationed fleets in the north-eastern river mouths of France, more along the Frisian coast, and converted an ancient Roman watch tower near Boulogne into a lighthouse. Brøndsted, p. 45.
cultural affinity with the Vikings, often joined their forays. This ambiguity of boundaries resulted in many of the raids on Frisia actually being feuds between rival groups of Danes.

Perhaps the worst recorded attack for gain during Louis' reign was the sack of Walcheren, Dorestad and parts of Frisia by Hemming between 835 and 837, while Louis' own throne was in jeopardy. However, it was only after his death that the Vikings began to batter down the defences of the Carolingian territories. Germania bore the brunt of the so-called political raids. Serious Viking raids on West Francia began in 841, and remained constant until the early tenth century except for a few brief periods when their attention concentrated elsewhere. Embroiled in a fraternal war, Charles the Bald was in no position to take any action. Afterwards, he had not the resources to drive them continuously from their West Frankish bases.

By the time the feuding between the sons of Louis the Pious had been settled at Verdun in 843, Charles' kingdom was in poor shape. Vikings had seized and plundered Nantes and wintered on the abandoned island of Noirmoutier at the mouth of the Loire. Charles' war against Lothar and later


against the rebellious Bretons limited the manpower necessary to ensure stable trade, and diminished agricultural production to the point of famine. In March of 845, the Danish chieftain Ragnar Lodbrok led his band up the Seine to capture and sack Rouen and Paris. Charles, his men frightened off by the Vikings, finally paid an enormous sum of money to recover the city of Paris. Ragnar's band left as violently as it had arrived, ravaging the coast as it went.

Over the next ten years, the weaknesses of the West Frankish realm were exploited by Viking bands. In 848, Aquitaine was invaded and Bordeaux burned. The abbey of St. Martin at Tours was torched in 853, although the monks had sufficient advance warning to send their treasures to Orléans. Agius, bishop of Orléans, and Burchard, bishop of Chartres, successfully repelled a Viking attack on Orléans in 854. However, the successful defence of Orléans was the exception rather than the rule. Vikings pillaged, raped and burned up and down the Seine and Loire riverways. In August of 856, yet another band entered the Seine to wreak havoc. It wintered at a convenient and fortified spot from which it raided and burned the churches of Paris. In 857, Vikings sacked Poitiers and other parts of Aquitaine. On the Loire, Tours and Blois again came under attack.

Charles did his best to meet the challenge. Unfortunately, his relatives were as much a threat to the kingdom as the Vikings. The alliance between Louis and Charles became strained to the point of nonexistence after the defeat of Lothar in 843. Lothar's death in 855 and the partition of his lands between his own sons further strained relations among the Carolingian royal family. Thus in 858, when Charles had finally got himself in a position where he might rid his land of one of the major Viking groups despite unforeseen difficulties, Louis the German invaded the West Frankish kingdom. Charles, caught suddenly between the Vikings and his brother's armies, and deserted by his own force, fled into Burgundy. Burgundy rallied to its king and checked the advance of his enemies. In 859, Charles attacked Louis' army, scattered it, and drove Louis back to Germania.

Meanwhile, a Danish Viking army commanded by the chieftain Weland had settled on the river Somme, burning Amiens and laying waste to the surrounding territory. Despite his victory over Louis, Charles still remained vulnerable in 860. The unreliability of his nobles' support restricted the military measures against the Vikings, who were still firmly ensconced on the Seine and the Somme.

(17) Duckett, Carolingian Portraits, p. 188. Charles had apparently confined the band to the island Oissel on the Seine, but not before the Vikings had captured his chancellor, Abbot Louis of St. Denis, and the abbot's brother. Charles had to pay a large ransom for their return.
Attempts to bribe or negotiate the raiders into leaving were fruitless. When the wealth of the Somme region had been picked nearly clean, Weland and his company briefly visited England and then moved on to entrench themselves on the Seine. While the Somme had been emptied, the Seine held two sizable Viking bands terrorizing the countryside and sacking Paris in 861.

Charles finally managed to raise a sum of money sufficient to persuade Weland to clear the first Viking band off the island of Oissel. The Oissel band, sick and starved, paid Weland an additional 6000 pounds of gold and silver to let it go. When the wretched band tried to leave the river, winter storms forced it back into the Seine. Weland himself chose to move on to the Marne and loot the city of Meaux. While awaiting reinforcements at Senlis, Charles built a bridge across the Marne, stationed every man he had along the banks, and forced Weland to send him hostages and submit to his terms. Charles insisted that Weland release the captives caught during the raids up the Marne, and leave that region and the Seine along with the raiders previously ousted from Oissel. If the Oissel band refused to fulfill the promises it had made to Weland and the king earlier, Weland was to ensure its departure along with his own. By the end of 862, both bands had left West

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(18) Duckett, p. 281. Charles offered 5000 pounds of silver and a large amount of livestock for Weland’s services. It is debatable whether he was capable of paying the entire sum.
Francia, and Weland had actually chosen to swear homage to Charles and to convert to Christianity.

After 862 there was a brief lull in Viking activity in West Francia due to operations in England. By the late 870's, the victories of Alfred of Wessex had again directed Viking attention back to the continent. They ran without check over Belgium and the Netherlands until 880. They attacked Flanders, burned Cambrai, looted the monastery of St. Riquier near Amiens, then Amiens itself and finally the monastery of Corbie in 881. In the August of 881, the Viking armies received a setback when Louis III routed them at Saucourt near Abbeville. Louis' death while on his way to deal with the Vikings of the Loire in 882 left his brother Carloman king of West Francia. When he died two years later, Charles the Fat, as the oldest living Carolingian, was asked to assume the rule of West Francia. The Vikings were rolling over Frisia and Germania to the east and threatened Rheims, Laon and Soissons to the west. While Carloman lived long enough to save Rheims, only Charles was left to aid Paris in 885 and 886.

The great siege of Paris lasted just over a year, and was one of the more spectacular examples of Frankish resistance to the Vikings. The city, under the leadership of the brilliant Count Eudes, held fast against an army, largely formed of the remaining portion of the Second Great Army from England. By contrast, Charles the Fat feared the enemy
so greatly that he chose to buy off the Vikings even though his own army held them at a disadvantage. Charles preferred to pay tribute to the enemy or let them do as they pleased until famine and plague forced a return to their old bases in Kent.

In 896, yet another wave of Vikings sailed up the Seine. However, by 900 a shift from the routine of sacking, pillaging and extorting to colonization occurred. Frisia had been settled by Danish Vikings for about twenty years. Now the Vikings in West Francia cast appreciative eyes upon the Frankish province of Neustria. A key figure in the colonization of Neustria -- soon to be renamed 'Normandy' -- was the chieftain named Hrolf or Rollo, of Danish or Norse background. Rollo had been active in the Seine region for many years prior to 900, and by 911 he and his army (mostly Danish) were practically the unofficial rulers of north-west Neustria. They lost a major battle at Chartres to Charles the Simple. In accordance with his policy of granting land to those capable of protecting the weaker portions of the kingdom19, Charles decided to confirm Rollo's power over the conquered land in exchange for his services. In 924, Maine and Bessian were added to Rollo's holdings, granting him power over nearly all of Neustria. Due to their determined emulation of West Frankish culture, the 'Normans' became

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(19) One assumes that Charles hoped that once the attackers became the owners of the land attacked, they would have more care for their property.
integrated into that society within two generations.

The early tenth century saw not only a shift to colonization, but also a shift in the threat cast by the Vikings. Outside the Norwegian bases on the Loire, the majority of the Vikings in France were Danish. Resistance in West Francia became a great deal fiercer in the 890's, culminating in several serious Danish defeats, and the Danish people were weakened by the drain in manpower. By the early tenth century, a Swedish dynasty had taken control of Denmark. With the settlement of Rollo as Charles' man in Neustria, a large number of raiders settled down to become integral and protective inhabitants of their new land. By 934, Henry the Fowler of Germany had effectively invaded and trounced the Danes in their own country. Scandinavian activity on the continent declined even further with the end of the Norwegian threat in 954. The high point of Viking activity was over.

(20) This new dynasty resulted in the exile of Rollo, who went on to establish his own dynasty in Neustria.
VI. THE STATE OF CAROLINGIAN LEARNING AND LITERATURE

To have any understanding of the damage done by the Viking invasions to the Carolingian culture, one must first examine the Carolingian renaissance experienced in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, and the general state of the Frankish Church during that same period. In the late seventh and the eighth centuries an influx of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon scholars and missionaries flowed into Frankish Gaul and Germany. These men, armed with learning superior to most of Europe north of the Alps, began to revive an interest in ecclesiastical and secular knowledge in the one-time Roman provinces. They also set about Christianizing the remaining pagan German peoples and attempting to reform the weak Frankish Church. The Carolingian line proved to be a strong supporter of this work.

Charlemagne was especially interested in both the reform of the church and the attendant spread of the missionaries, as well as the advancement of education in his realm. He was aware that the support of a strong church would help create a strong central administration, and that a strong central administration was necessary to effectively rule his empire. He also realized that a body of educated men was needed to restore the church and build an efficient administration. To this end, Charlemagne gathered scholars from the British Isles, Gaul, Spain and Italy to work in his
court, in the Frankish Church, and to teach in his Palace School. This encouragement of culture and learning, particularly after his imperial coronation in 800, caused the blossoming of a miniature renaissance.

Under Charlemagne's control, the Frankish Church became a powerful tool in the administration of his broad realm, one that was a loyal and competent complement to his lay overseers, the counts. The chief administrators of the church were the bishops, who were expected to be discreet in their worldly enjoyments, prompt in the fulfillment of military service to their ruler, and just and efficient in the care of their sees. There is some evidence to demonstrate that a few bishops tried to improve the work of their parish clergy by providing them with proper instruction and supplying them with the equipment necessary for sacramental needs.¹ To fulfill the religious and political duties expected of him, a bishop needed a certain level of education.²

While Charlemagne was not particularly sympathetic towards monasticism, he nevertheless initiated reforms because he understood its usefulness as a conveyer of

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² Bishops and other highly placed church officials were often required to undertake diplomatic missions, secular posts in the royal government, or serve as missi — special emissaries of the ruler sent out into the provinces to seek out corruption, injustice, and evidence of treason.
learning. Thus he encouraged the building and rebuilding of monasteries. To establish a standard in monastic practice, he decreed that only the Rule of Benedict should be used in the monasteries of his realm. Not only did this allow the development of more efficient monastic practice, but it led to an increase in the importance of the role of the scriptoria in the western monasteries.

While the late eighth century saw the growth of various monastic schools that taught, until the reign of Louis the Pious, both lay and monastic students, the most important work occurred in the scriptoria. Due to the brief period of stability during Charlemagne's reign and the so-called 're-establishment' of the Roman Empire in 800, there was a renewed interest in the collection, copying and teaching of classical works. This interest and the resulting demand for manuscripts turned the scriptoria of large monasteries such as St. Martin of Tours into medieval book factories. This development would later prove a blessing, since it would help preserve rare classical and Christian works for future generations.

Few of the church schools established during Charlemagne's lifetime survived the turmoils of the ninth and tenth centuries. At the very least, they emerged from this dark period greatly altered, if they weathered the

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storm. Of Charlemagne's legacies to his descendents, the schools generally proved more temporary than the fruits of the scriptoria. One scholastic innovation that left a lasting impression among his successors and his admirers was Charlemagne's transformation of the Palace School at Aachen. The Frankish use of a palace school had been in existence in one form or another for many years, primarily to train royal servants. Charlemagne extended its purpose to include the education of the children of his nobility to ensure their loyalty to his family and to train them as possible future royal administrators. It was to provide them with a high level of learning that the ruler recruited the Anglo-Saxon scholar Alcuin into his household.

While the Carolingian emperor has been praised as a great patron of learning and culture, the reasons for his support had far more to do with practicality than pleasure. Charlemagne's biographer, Einhard, portrayed his master as a pious man interested in improving his own mind. However, Charlemagne understood that educated churchmen and nobles could only prove beneficial to the administration of his empire. To Charlemagne, politics took priority over piety: the reform of the church was a political blessing, since it gave him the means to educate his future imperial administrators. The study of Latin provided the administrators of his multilingual, multiracial empire with a common language just as the spread of Christianity
supplied a common religious bond. Education meant that written records might be made and preserved, instead of relying on fallible memory. Education meant a more efficient government.

Education also entailed the production of literature. Aside from the property titles, monastic charters, cartularies and capitularies, the scholars of the late eighth century produced poetry, hagiography, theological dissertations, annals and other works inspired by classical examples. Yet, for the most part, the Carolingian renaissance was not one of original scholarly thought. The scholars and scribes who so reverently gathered and copied the works of the classical period and the early church often did so without criticism or the correction of discrepancies in the texts. Ancient literature was not discussed and interpreted by Carolingian scholars, and few original contemporary works were written. Imitation of classical works, especially in the composition of poetry, produced little worth note.

Louis continued his father's patronage of learning during a slow but determined intellectual revival that continued to

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(4) This statement refers to Carolingian literature in general. It should be noted that in certain areas of especial interest -- that is, in theological matters -- Carolingian scholars produced work of outstanding quality. The ninth century was particularly a time of great theological activity. For a concise report of the religious literature of the late eighth and ninth centuries, see M. L. W. Laistner's book, Thought and Letters in Western Europe A.D. 500-900, Cornell University Press, New York, 1959.
rise and eventually peaked in the ninth century despite of the difficulties of the time. He was in an advantageous position to encourage the blossoming of a more profound mode of scholastic achievement. As it was, Louis did favor a more stringent and radical reform of the church based on the ideals of his mentor Benedict of Aniane. However, this idealism, in the long run, had little effect on the state of the Frankish Church or the piety of his court. Nor did it benefit the educational interest begun by Charlemagne, since Louis actually legislated restrictions against the admittance of lay students to monastic schools in an attempt to protect the moral discipline of the monasteries. The development of the monastic schools suffered further impairment with the increase in Viking raids along the coastal and river regions where many of the more prosperous monastic foundations were situated.

For a variety of reasons, urban centres and monasteries placed on the coast or the great rivers were in positions to amass great wealth. For towns and cities, such as Quentovic and Dorestad, geographic location was conducive to trade.

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(7) Important West Frankish schools of the ninth century were St. Denis, St. Martin of Tours, St. Riquier, Ferrières, Jumièges, St. Wandrille, St. Vaast, St. Bertin, and Corbie.
and, aided by royal patronage, created a wealthy economy. As for the larger monasteries, agricultural surplus, the cultivation of fine crafts, geographical position, prestige both political and religious, and the privileges and immunities conferred by royal patronage, created centres of commercial activity and wealth.

Due to their maritime traditions, the Scandinavians cultivated trading as well as piracy, and contributed to the growth of Carolingian trade centres. It is more than likely that the Vikings who targeted the Carolingian Empire in the early ninth century knew exactly where the best opportunities for loot lay. Later Viking armies planned careful campaigns: as mentioned, they knew where the best targets lay, the type of terrain they faced, and when special events such as religious celebrations and festivals rendered cities and monasteries more vulnerable to attack. Obviously the raiders were capable of doing great damage to the empire.

It is still difficult to measure how greatly monastic

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(B) Quentovic and Dorestad were the sites of royal mints.

(9) As an example of this, among the very first major casualties of the ninth-century Viking raids were Quentovic and Dorestad. Quentovic, which was probably an early version of the city of Calais, was raided continuously from 842 onwards, until it ceased to be mentioned as a town of any consequence in the records of the time. Dorestad, south-east of Utrecht, was sacked in 834 and suffered frequent raiding thereafter. However, by 864, a series of tidal waves and floods shifted the waterbed of the Rhine to the point of isolating the port of Dorestad. Nature ruined the city's economy and position as a trade centre before the Vikings could. Brynstedt, pp. 46-47.
centres were damaged by the Vikings. According to estimates of the damage done to the Carolingian monasteries during the ninth and tenth centuries, much of that damage as well as the decline in the strength of the church can be attributed to the Carolingian nobility and rulers\(^\text{10}\). They were behind the increasing secularization of the Frankish Church in between the sixth and ninth centuries that eventually weakened its integrity. This secularization took two directions. The first was the usurpation of monastic property by the monarchy which caused the growth of royally administered monasteries and churches in the eighth century. The second was the usurpation of church lands by the local nobility for their own interests. This development was an even worse problem in the ninth and tenth centuries when central royal power waned.

The acquisition of ecclesiastical land provided the owner with significant additional revenue. At the same time, it also led to the overexploitation of the land and drained the resources necessary for its maintenance. Not only did the monastery or church lose economically, but the secular trend of awarding ecclesiastical positions to men chosen for their family or political ties limited religious development. Ability, or even a religious vocation was not always a prerequisite for an ecclesiastical office. Church property could also be traded for political favors by both king and

\(^{10}\) Kay, pp. 8-18, 30.
noble. Thus the church was drained financially, morally and intellectually.

Attempts to reform the situation occurred as early as the time of Charles Martel, but proved only marginally successful. Charlemagne tried to fix the grosser abuses and corruptions of the church and raise its intellectual level, and Louis the Pious later concentrated on its religious development. He set a trend for calling synods for church reform that was emulated to some degree by his descendents. Of special concern at these gatherings were problems caused by the loss of ecclesiastical property and revenue to laymen, and the laxity of secular and monastic church discipline. Ironically, Charles the Bald, for all of his support of church reform, was one of the worst offenders when it came to the alienation of church property. Piety did not prevent him from taking from the church to buy support. His brothers were nearly as bad.

The sons of Louis contributed also to the decline of the church through the years they spent quarrelling over territory instead of buttressing the defences of their respective realms. The chaos that their wars generated smoothed the path for Viking invasion and allowed their nobles to run wild. In West Francia, this instability, coupled with weak rulers, eventually led to the alienation of both church property and royal power into noble hands. At the same time the Viking invaders burned, killed and
looted throughout the countryside. When reading accounts of
the time, it is often difficult to decide whether a
monastery was attacked by greedy nobles, Vikings or local
robber bands which gave refuge to many men displaced by the
upheavals.

The source material from this period is only of limited
help in piecing together the movements of the Vikings in
West Francia or elsewhere, and in judging the effects of
their presence. There are several reasons for this problem.
Obviously the violence and turmoil of the ninth century made
it difficult for a monastic community to write and preserve
records, or to record current events fully and accurately.
As well, the annalists and other authors often did not
consider Viking activity to be the most important news to
set down, nor did they usually include specifics about
raiders of any type when they did mention them.
Additionally, the records that have survived tend to be
biased: since the ninth-century church was extremely
conservative, it frequently overreacted when the established
order appeared to be challenged.11

One important result of the coastal and river raids was
the migration of monastic communities. By the middle of the
ninth century, there were two ways for the monastic
communities to deal with the Viking incursions, namely
fortification or flight. In West Francia a pattern emerged

(11) Kay, p. 31.
in which, much like Alfred's Wessex, lay and ecclesiastical authorities took advantage of the lulls in Viking activity to build defences against future assaults. Other communities were either driven from their lands by unexpected attackers, or found the maintenance of a frequently raided monastery to be fruitless, and sought more secure places of refuge. Some communities, like Noirmoutier, were pushed from one refuge to another, moving ever deeper into the heartland of West Francia as the Viking bands advanced\(^{12}\).

Not all houses chose to remove themselves completely from their original lands. Some continued to migrate seasonally from their established sites to temporary homes safe from attack. The establishment of these safe houses was done expressly for the preservation of relics, other valuables and monks when necessary. Still other communities relied upon neighboring or affiliated houses to safeguard their property during times of trouble. Nor did all of those who fled to distant regions choose resettlement in a new spot over returning to rebuild their original house once the danger had passed.

Regardless of strategy, it is easy to see why assessing the effect of the raids can be difficult. First of all, one cannot always trace the fates of the communities that moved.

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elsewhere, or the welfare of those communities that held their ground. Secondly, with the hazards of moving communities and valuables to safety, entire libraries may have been lost or destroyed. What little evidence there is suggests that a limited amount of scholarly activity continued, and that perhaps less knowledge was lost than we might assume.

When studying the migration of the monastic communities, one tends to focus on the destruction causing the migration, not the regrowth that occurred later. It has been suggested that the transplantation that resulted from the migrations may have eventually proved beneficial to cultural and intellectual development. Although it is difficult to gauge how greatly art, literature and education were affected by the invasions, it is possible that the displaced communities from wasted lands simply put down roots and continued such work. The paths of entire libraries have been followed across France.\(^\text{13}\) Displaced scholars continued their work in other monasteries, or built a new home with the rest of their communities.\(^\text{14}\) The movement of manuscripts and minds may have actually stimulated future intellectual and

\(^\text{13}\) P. Riché, "Conséquences des invasions normandes sur la culture monastique dans l'ouest franc", \textit{Settimane di Studio}, 16 (1969), pp. 714-716. One example was the movement of the manuscripts of St. Wandrille through the provinces to Boulogne, seemingly by osmosis.

\(^\text{14}\) Ibid., p. 716. For example, the monks of Saint-Maixent passed from Auvergne to Brittany and finally settled in Bourgogne at the start of the tenth century.
cultural development in spite of the instability of the period.

The migrations themselves generated certain types of religious literature. The movement of relics not unexpectedly produced miracles which were set down by one of the monks who followed the relic in question. Troubled times also produced miraculous events on home territory which, coupled with the Carolingian urge to improve upon the 'crude' hagiographies of earlier centuries, sparked new saints' lives. These forms of literature can be almost as valuable as annals and chronicles, because they often contain pieces of information about the movements of the Vikings and the West Frankish reactions to their presence. Of course, these are not necessarily large pieces of information and they are frequently confusing. For many scholars, suffused with biblical and classical images, the Vikings were a contemporary incarnation of the fifth-century barbarians who toppled mighty Rome. They were both the pagan destroyers of Christian society and culture, and a divine punishment for the sinfulness of the society under attack.

Most of what can be called original scholarly work in the ninth and early tenth centuries revolved around theological argument\(^{15}\), commentaries on the Bible, sermons and moral

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(15) There were two theological controversies during the ninth century on the subjects of transubstantiation and predestination.
lessons written for ecclesiastics, rulers and the public in general. There was also some study done on classical works as part of the ongoing interest in earlier literature. As historical sources, many of these are helpful in an indirect fashion. Besides the surge in hagiographical writing, Einhard's *Vita Karoli* sparked a few other biographies about Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, either in recollection of better days or to gain favor. Interest in secular biographies waned with the division of the empire after 840. One of the reasons scholarly work continued in West Francia was the patronage of Charles the Bald. His parents, Louis and Judith, had impressed upon him at an early age that the development of learning and culture was an essential duty on the part of a Christian Frankish king. In pursuing that duty, Charles accumulated a library, sponsored scholars and tried to set a proper example for his people through the patronage of learning, use of schools such as the palace

(16) R. McKitterick, "Charles the Bald (823-877) and his library: the patronage of learning", *English Historical Review*, 95 (1980), pp. 31. While the content of the works themselves may say little about current events, prefaces and dedications can sometimes be revealing. In 840, Freculph of Lisieux gifted Charles the Bald with his revised edition of Vegetius' treatise on warfare. In his preface to the *Epitome rei militaris*, Freculph notes that the work might be useful in combatting Viking raiders.

(17) In Louis' case, the attempt to gain favor was two-sided -- of the three surviving biographical works on Louis, at least two were written to defend him during the more humiliating portions of the domestic conflict between 830 and 840.
school of Laon, and collection of literature.  

The most valuable source of information left from the ninth and early tenth centuries are the annals and chronicles. They provide the most extensive data about the Vikings. Unhappily, the vast majority of annalistic literature from Carolingian West Francia tells us almost nothing about the Vikings. The testimony they offer is, more often than not, taken from the *Annales regni francorum* or the *Annales Bertiniani, Annales Vedastini* or the *Annales Mettenses*. In short, they often plagiarized information about important events from the larger, more comprehensive accounts. For the most part, annalists were more concerned with the political and religious affairs of the realm than outside invasions. This attitude changed somewhat as the raiders penetrated deeper into West Frankish territory, but usually, unless action happened to be in the vicinity of the author's home, reports about Viking activity rarely exceeded one or two lines.

For the scholar studying the Viking presence in West Francia, the sad fact is that to the literate Carolingian,

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(18) McKitterick, pp.28-29. The cultural accomplishments of Charles' reign have only recently come under concentrated research, led by such names as Nelson and McKitterick. For additional information on the so-called 'second Carolingian renaissance', see *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, ed. J.L. Nelson and M.T. Gibson, BAR International Series 101, 1981. Two sections of especial interest within the volume are P. Godman's "Latin poetry under Charles the Bald and Carolingian poetry", pp. 293-309 and R. McKitterick's "The palace school of Charles the Bald", pp. 385-400.
notice of the Vikings took last place after religious and political activity, and news of the Bretons, Muslims and finally, of the Slavs. As the Carolingian world view narrowed after the division of the empire, the interest of the people, including the intellectuals, narrowed as well. As a result, while ninth-century West Frankish sources give an adequate if bare picture of Viking activities, tenth-century source material is limited, uncertain and inadequate. While the latter half of the tenth century produced superior pieces of historical literature, most of them are more interested in the contemporary actions of the duchy of Normandy than its origins. Besides the scarcity of sources, our understanding has been further clouded by the amount of false documentation produced in forged monastic records. In the late ninth and early tenth centuries, monasteries forged records of Viking attack and destruction in the hope of winning land grants from sympathetic nobles and rulers, or with the purpose of justifying their occupation of abandoned estates. Finding contemporary source material about Viking activity in West Francia is not as easy as it first appears.

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(19) Riché, pp. 712 and 719.
VII. WEST FRANKISH SOURCE MATERIALS

The primary Carolingian/West Frankish sources produced between 800 and 940 can be divided into several categories; the annals, chronicles and histories; the biographical works about prominent figures of the time; the secular poetic works and finally, the literary genres that do not fit those classes. In examining source material in relation to the goal of this thesis, yet another distinction may be made between sources concerning secular topics and those primarily religious in nature. Much of the religious work included has been relegated to the miscellaneous section because the sources belong to genres of religious literature whose rules of composition place them outside the other categories.¹

A temporal/geographical distinction must also be made, since the viewpoint of an author was affected by the territorial fragmentation of the Carolingian Empire following the death of Louis the Pious. While the major annalists and intellectuals before 840 tended to hold an 'imperial' world view and wrote of people and events influencing a large geo-political sphere, this broad vision narrowed considerably during the latter half of the century. Thus the works of the earlier ninth century can be called 'Carolingian', and are valid regardless of their place of origin because they pertain to the Carolingian political

¹ The best example of this are the saints' lives.
sphere as a whole. The later works which will be employed are more properly considered to be of West Frankish origin; more specifically, those works originating in the area between the Loire, the northwestern coast of France and Flanders. One must bear in mind that the convenient territorial and political names of modern Europe, such as 'France' and 'Germany', cannot accurately be used for the peoples and places of the ninth and tenth centuries.

Annals and chronicles provide the basis of much of the historical data on the Viking presence in the West Frankish lands. They are the only surviving Carolingian literature that record Viking activities with any regularity. It is true moreover that many church establishments left fragments of historical documentation to posterity, but only a few scribes were comprehensive in their treatment of events.

The earliest significant set of ninth-century annals is the *Annales regni francorum*², or the Royal Frankish Annals. Written by anonymous annalists at Charlemagne's court³, the royal annals were an offshoot of the interest in historical writing inspired by Charlemagne's achievements and by the cultural renaissance that accompanied his rule.⁴ It was an

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(3) Scholars once believed that the annals were written by Einhard. This is no longer thought likely.

interest that waned rapidly after the emperor's death in 814, yet left behind a valuable legacy. The annals run from 741 to 829 and range widely over the Carolingian sphere of influence, aided by the proximity of the annalists to the central imperial administration. While the annalists note three incidents of Danish piracy in the North Sea (800), and along the Frankish coasts in 810 and 820, and were also aware of Scandinavian raids against Ireland and Scotland, the royal annalists are more concerned with diplomatic and political relations between the Danish rulers and the empire. Between 782 and 829, the annals are knowledgeable of Danish affairs from the question over Saxon fugitives finding refuge in Denmark to the struggle for the Danish throne. Despite (or perhaps because of) the awareness of the growing Viking threat, they tended to regard the Danish rulers as presumptuous and foolhardy upstarts ignorant of the power and majesty of the Carolingian Empire.

The Royal Frankish Annals were continued from 830 to 882 by the Annales Bertiniani, which is found in two parts. Prudentius, bishop of Troyes, is credited with the compilation of the first part, a task continued by Hincmar,


archbishop of Rheims. This work is especially valuable because it describes, in some detail, Viking movement in the worst hit areas of West Francia during the years when such activity steadily increased as the internal stability of the realm decreased. Over the fifty-two-year span of the annal, there are forty-three entries containing information about the Scandinavian invaders.

Until 841, other than the mention of the second major attack on the commercial town of Dorestad in 835, the annalist concentrates on the Carolingian interest in the struggle for the Danish throne. After 841, a record is kept of the devastations to the countrysides of Francia, Neustria, Brittany, Aquitaine, Frisia, and Gascony, following the advance of raiders up every large river system in West Francia from the Garonne to the Somme. The annals even contain information on Viking movement further to the east. Naturally the annals pay particular attention to the West Frankish campaigns against the Vikings.

The Annales Mettenses (Annals of Metz) were, as far as scholars can tell, written by a monk of St. Arnoul in Metz

(7) It is believed that Prudentius worked on the annals from 835 to his death in 861. Thereafter, Hincmar continued the annals until his death in 882. Laistner, p. 263.

(8) Of particular interest are the entries for the years 844, 845, 852, 853, 854, 857, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 869, 873, 881, and 882.

(9) See entries for the years 850, 858, 863, and 880.

at the outset of the tenth century. Geographically, Metz is slightly outside the parameters of this thesis, but the work should be included because it is considered to be a continuation of the *Annales Bertiniani*, and like its predecessor is in itself one of the more comprehensive annals of the ninth and early tenth centuries. The *Annales Mettenses* spans the years from 883 to 903, and is as detailed in its coverage of Viking activity as the *Annales Bertiniani*, although there are only eight pertinent entries. However, the anonymous annalist records the details of one of the peak periods of Viking invasion in West Francia, as well as the internal political confusion of the time.

Another of the great annals of the period from West Francia is the *Annales Vedastini*, or the Annals of St. 

(11) The annals can be considered as such due to the way they overlap and continue on from the last entries of the *Annales Bertiniani*. Certainly Guizot treats the work as a continuation of the information provided by the older work.

(12) The *Annales Fuldensis* is the last of the five large and comprehensive annals of the ninth century, and was written at the German monastery of Fulda. The other four major annals are of course the Royal Frankish Annals, the *Annales Bertiniani*, the *Annales Mettenses*, and the *Annales Vedastini*. Due to the way these works overlap in their dates of writing and their greater attention to events occurring across the territories once included in the imperial Carolingian sphere of influence, they are the most comprehensive sources for the history of ninth-century France.

(13) B. de Simson's edition of the *Annales Vedastini* was published in tandem with the *Annales Xantenses* since the two annals (as we have them) complement each other so well. The Annals of Xanten, which end in 874, were probably written in Cologne. The work contains six very limited entries on the Vikings.
Vedast/Vaast of Arras. These annals cover from 874 to 900, supplementing the information provided by the later entries of the *Annales Bertiniani* and the *Annales Mettenses.*

Nearly every date in the *Annales Vedastini* provides information on Viking activities ranging from brief statements to detailed descriptions of movements all over West Francia and Lotharingia -- although greater attention is naturally paid to the events that occur in Francia and Neustria, the regions closest to Arras. In writing the entries, the annalists usually impart an impression of great destruction and terror caused by the advances of the Vikings. Arras itself is located not far from Flanders, off the Scheldt River and above the Somme. Its location not only placed it near the borders of the western and middle Carolingian kingdoms where an eye could be cast on the events to the east and west, but also in an area very easily accessible to Viking attack. Unlike many of the church centres in more central areas of the Carolingian realms, the annalists of St. Vedast could scarcely concentrate on the

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(14) Among the lesser annals of the period, it is fairly common to find that the annalists made extensive use of the above annals to flesh out their own record of local events. One compilation of note is the *Chronicon de gestis normannorum in Francia*, done by an anonymous author. Based mainly on the source material provided by the annals of St. Bertin and the annals of St. Vedast, this manuscript does not seem to be especially important in spite of its title. Reputable scholarly works on early medieval French history seem to have ignored it. However, Thomas O. Kay uses it frequently in his thesis, along with sources from the better known annals, which leads one to believe a certain amount of corroborative material was included by its author and that the work deserves closer study.
political and religious difficulties of the time to the exclusion of the Vikings.

Flanders itself provides four more annals for brief consideration. The *Annales Blandiniensis* and the *Annales Elnonse* are part of the respective annals of St. Pierre of Gand and of St. Amand in Flanders, and are the two most important annalistic sources for the study of the origins of Flanders. In the case of the *Annales Blandiniensis*, there are two supplementary annals: the *Annales Elmareenses* and the *Annales Formoselenses*. The annals are typical in structure -- the *Annales Blandiniensis* surveys western history from the birth of Christ to 1390, the *Annales Formoselenses* only to 1136, the *Annales Elmareenses* from 598 to 1245, and the *Annales Elnonse* from the year 23 to 1223. While all four annals together contain a dozen entries related to the Vikings, all but three set in the latter half of the ninth century, they are all brief one-line notes. The information given is sparse and not particularly helpful unless used in conjunction with more complete and comprehensive material.

The last piece of annalistic literature to be considered...

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(15) This is due to the work of P. Grierson, who was commissioned by the Commission royale d'Histoire de Belgique to produce more accurate editions of the two major annals. Grierson found that the *Annales Elmareenses* helped to establish the earlier text of *Annales Blandiniensis*, while the *Annales Formoselenses* supplemented the information in the annal. *Les Annales de Saint-Pierre de Gand et de Saint-Amand*, ed. P. Grierson, Brussels, 1937.
is the Annals of Flodoard. Like the Chronicon Aethelweardi, Flodoard's annals are slightly outside the designated time period since Flodoard began his work after 952, and continued until his death in 966. However, Flodoard wrote with some authority upon events for the years between 919 and 966. Since the focal point for the work is the city of Rheims and the surrounding area, there are fifteen entries pertinent for the years between 919 and 940. They tend to be quite extensive. By reading them one not only forms a fairly clear picture of the events described, but one can also trace the remarkable shift in the nature of the relationship between the Vikings and the people of West Francia from foreign marauder and prey to two political entities in one realm. By 940, there was a distinct difference between 'Viking' attacks and difficulties with

(16) The work mentioned by Poole (p. 38) is called the Annals of Flodoard of Rheims. The French translation found in Guizot's Collections des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France, v. 6, is titled Les Chroniques de Flodoard. Unfortunately, Guizot's bibliographical information on 'Flodoard' of Rheims and his work is missing from the 1969 edition of his collection. However, after comparing descriptions of the works of Flodoard with the translated works of Frodoard, the identical material and dates of production argue that they are the same man. This conclusion is supported by the fact that 'Frodoard' of Rheims does not exist in any indices or lists of early medieval authors and manuscripts, or any encyclopedia dealing with medieval history. Evidently Guizot or subsequent printers misspelled Flodoard's name. Dictionary of the Middle Ages, 13 vols., ed. J.R. Strayer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), vol. 5, pp. 30-91.

(17) Flodoard's work is known to have been continued up to the year 978 by scribes in Dijon and Rheims after his death in 966.
the 'Normans' who had settled in Neustria.18

It is not that far a leap from annals to the histories of the time. One of the more famous histories of the ninth century was the work Nithard composed between 940 and his death in 944. Nithard's Histories19 is the best source about the internal struggles of the heirs of Louis the Pious between 840 and 843. Charles the Bald commissioned the first two of the four books comprising the work in 841, in an attempt to justify the feud between the brothers and the less than glorious victory of Charles and Louis the German over Lothar at Fontenay. These first two parts are carefully written to put Charles and Louis in the best light, and the Emperor Lothar in the worst. The final two books were continued through Nithard's own inclination.20 Certainly, Nithard's own faith in Charles and his cause declined in his later efforts, and more equitable treatment is given to all parties in the later books. However, the

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18 Entries that illustrate this development are related under the years 923, 924, 925, 939 and 940. In these five entries one can see how Frankish forces have rallied against Scandinavian marauders who can no longer maintain the same level of raiding enjoyed by the earlier Vikings. There is also evidence that raiding of the period is also in part politically motivated, and that the Frankish forces make readier use of Viking/Norman bands in the internal struggles of the realm. During the contention over the throne of Charles the Simple, the submission of William of Normandy to Charles is an important concession. Furthermore, after 940, a definite distinction between the Scandinavians settled in 'Normandy' and raiders from Scandinavia occurs.

19 Nithardi historiarum libri IV, MGH SS. II, pp. 649-672.

work's attention is almost entirely on the territorial struggle, so that Scandinavian activity in Carolingian lands in usually noted only when it impinges on the matters at hand. The only appearances worth note are in the second and third chapters of the fourth book, and concern Lothar's military arrangements with the Norse, and more raids on Quentovic and the southeastern coasts of England. The information is indirect and secondary to Carolingian internal affairs.

Flodoard also left an ecclesiastical history to posterity, along with his more secular annals. The *History of the Church of Rheims* traces events from the founding of the city to the mid-tenth century. Much information about the prelates, policies and the state of the church of Rheims is imparted to the reader. He also includes a fair amount of church correspondence, especially that of Archbishop Hincmar. Except when it definitely influences the status quo of the see, the secular world rarely intrudes directly into the ecclesiastical information of the work. One noteworthy section is chapter fifteen, which describes the synodal assemblies held by Archbishop Hervey to facilitate the conversion of the Normans in the first half of the tenth century. Flodoard sets down the reasons motivating the Normans to adopt Christianity, the request from Bishop Guy

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of Rouen for Hervey's advice on the undertaking, and Hervey's reply. This is a singular chapter since it deals both with a key point in the absorption of the Scandinavian settlers into Frankish society, and suggests to what a degree they had already adapted.

Apart from historical writings, Charlemagne's reign sparked an interest in the writing of secular biographical works about the emperor and his son Louis. In the case of Charlemagne, the purpose was first of all to extol his virtues and secondly to preserve a record of his reign for future generations. As the Carolingian Empire fragmented and destabilized, other works were written to recall the glories of the work of the old emperor in a brief retrospect of the good old days of Charlemagne. In the case of Louis the Pious, works were written to gain favor, or to defend Louis and clear his name of the slanders it suffered during the last decade of his rule.

Without question, the earliest and most valuable of the biographical works about Charlemagne is Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, modelled on the classical biographies of probably Suetonius. Einhard, an esteemed member of the courts of Charlemagne and Louis, was a great admirer of the emperor and a part of Charlemagne's intellectual circle.

While obviously partial towards his subject, as an intimate

of Charlemagne and with access to the royal records, Einhard is nevertheless a highly-rated source. Unfortunately, since the work ends with Charlemagne's death in 814, it contains little on the Vikings. Between the years 805 and 810, Einhard concerns himself with the Danes as a foreign political entity pecking away at the imperial borders. Reference is made to piratical activity by the Danes in times past, but recent large-scale raiding is interpreted as a tactical maneuver on the part of the Danish ruler Godfrid's territorial ambitions. In 813, Einhard does record the efforts of Charlemagne to prepare his coastal regions against an increase in pirate activity. It is clear that Charlemagne had a fairly good understanding of the damages threatened by an increase in Danish raiders, and that an adequate coastal defence would be vital for the preservation of the maritime provinces of France and Germany. Similar precautions were also taken along the Mediterranean coasts of southern France and Italy to stave off Moorish pirates. These measures, upheld and added to by Louis for the majority of his reign, bought the Carolingian territories nearly thirty more years of relative safety from Viking depredations.

Another extant biographical work on Charlemagne\(^{23}\) dating

from the late ninth century is the *De Carolo Magno*.²⁴
Charles the Fat commissioned the work from Notker the Stammerer of St. Gall around 883 or 884. Notker divided the biography into two books, the one on the emperor's character and the other on his military exploits. While not actually a West Frankish source, it is valuable as a collection of anecdotes that reflect the metamorphosis of Charlemagne the man into Charlemagne the legendary emperor. For that reason, it is difficult to determine what is fact from what is completely fiction. Still, it is interesting to compare Notker's version of Charlemagne's campaign against Godfrid with the information provided by the Royal Frankish Annals and Einhard's *Life*. In the last the references are brief. Notker on the other hand sets out a romanticized and descriptive account of the start of the Danish problem, Charlemagne's ill-starred attempts to rid his realm of the Northmen, and a tidy explanation of the murder of Godofrid. One can already see in this work heroic elements similar to those of the twelfth-century *chanson-des-gestes* and later chivalric literature.

Notker also includes an anecdote that reiterates Einhard's implication that Charlemagne understood the

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²⁴ There is one more biographical work from this period -- the Saxon Poet's *Life of Charlemagne*, written between 888 and 891 by a Saxon monk from Corvey whose identity is only speculation. As a work, it is valuable only as an example of late ninth-century Germanic poetry since it is basically a poetic rendition of Einhard's biography of the emperor. The Latin version can be found in MGH SS. I, pp. 225-279.
severity of the Danish Viking threat, as well as hinting at the regard the Danes may have had for Charlemagne.

According to Notker, one day Charlemagne and his men arrived at a coastal town in southern Gaul incognito. While at dinner, Charlemagne caught sight of strange ships heading for the harbor, and subsequently identified them as Scandinavian raiders. The emperor's men rushed to meet the Northmen in battle upon learning the news. However, when the pirates heard that Charlemagne -- whom they called the 'Hammer', in apparent confusion with Charles Martel -- was nearby, the raiding party fled fearing for their lives and their ships. As they retreated, Charlemagne stood looking out the eastern window, weeping bitterly. When he finally recovered enough to explain his unusual behavior to his attendants, he said that he wept at the thought of the damage the ruffians would wreak after his death.

Like his father, Louis the Pious inspired three biographies of varying worth. Perhaps the best source is the Vita Hludowici written by an unknown member of Louis' court. Through the information garnered from the manuscript, the author was as interesting a person as his emperor. 'Anonymous' was born around 800 and died after

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(25) De Carlolo Magno, Book 2, Chapter 14.


(27) Also known as the 'Astronomer'.

842, was likely not of Frankish or Gothic origin, and was well-versed in astronomy, medicine, law, weather forecasting and warfare. Judging from the author's rather cool view of churchmen, he was likely that medieval rarity -- a literate, well-educated layman. While sincerely admiring Louis and the concept of imperial rule, 'Anonymous' maintains a distinction between Louis the emperor and Louis the fallible man. Unlike the uncritical idealizations of Einhard or the other biographies of Louis himself, 'Anonymous' never loses sight of Louis' failings even while he upholds Louis' position as emperor.

The author uses several sources in his work. For the years between 814 and 829, he uses the narrative (probably written, now lost) of a monk named Adhemar. From 830 to 840, 'Anonymous' makes use of his own observations and experiences, as well as information collected from the court, such as the Royal Frankish Annals. He also used Einhard's Life and other available annals with, possibly, the poem by Ermoldus Nigellus. Of the material gathered, the portion recounting the early years of Louis' reign (814 to 828) contains the only references to the Danes/Northmen, which appear to be the same events outlined in the royal annals. Apparently, the Viking attacks during the later years of Louis' reign were too peripheral to earn a place in the text.

The last two biographical works on Louis tend to be as,
or less helpful than the first piece. Ermoldus Nigellus wrote *The Works and Deeds of Louis the Pious* sometime after 826 in an attempt to flatter Louis. Thegan of Trèves wrote *The Life of Louis the Pious* sometime between 835 and his death in 845, supporting the beleaguered emperor. Both Ermoldus and Thegan were considered scholars of some standing in their time, and wished to present Louis in glowing terms. Neither author was particularly concerned by the growing Viking threat along the coasts of the Carolingian Empire. Thegan's work only repeats, very briefly, the same entries on the Danes from the Royal Frankish Annals for the years 815/6 and 826. Ermoldus does go into some detail about the characteristics of the Danish people, Louis' desire to Christianize them to lessen the threat they pose, and the efforts of Ebbo of Rheims to convert Harald of Denmark. Yet the attention is paid more towards the political threat rather than something more disorganized, unpredictable and less complex than territorial expansion.

Charlemagne's reign also marked a surge in hagiographical writing that carried on through the instability of the ninth and early tenth centuries. A large number of these Carolingian hagiographies were reworkings of earlier, less

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sophisticated efforts into literature more artistically pleasing to the intellectuals of the Frankish Church. Not all of the hagiographical works were restricted to traditional saints. They also included *vitae* about contemporary missionaries and the careers of distinguished monastic leaders. These biographical works usually followed the same rules of composition applied to traditional hagiographies. The stylistic priorities required by these rules can, and frequently do, diminish the usefulness of a work as a historical source. The more recent the subject, the less distorted the facts. Nevertheless, although many of the prominent figures in Carolingian monastic communities were forced to deal in some fashion with the Vikings, surprisingly little is said about them. As a result, these works contribute less to the study of Viking movements in West Francia than one would expect, although there are a couple of important exceptions.

One of the tools employed by Charlemagne in the expansion of his empire eastward into pagan Germanic territories was the Frankish Church. He understood that a common religion, especially one that preached peace like Christianity, might provide an influential bond between the diverse peoples of his empire. With the aid of missionaries, Charlemagne sought to undermine pagan Germanic resistance and to integrate the German people into the Carolingian realm by promoting, forcibly if necessary, their conversion to
Christianity. His son Louis later sought to blunt the Danish/Scandinavian threat through the sponsorship of missions among the Scandinavian people. Louis' attempts had very limited success -- Charlemagne had backed his missions with military force, a policy that Louis was unable to implement against the Scandinavians.

Out of Louis' missionary sponsorship came the Vita Anskarii30, written by Anskar's contemporary, Rimbert. This hagiography deals intimately with the Frankish missionary effort in Scandinavia. Under the aegis of Harald of Denmark31, Anskar spent the years between 826 and 829 proselytizing in Denmark. With Harald's flight and exile in 829, Anskar returned to his monastery at Corbie, and then set off for Sweden in response to a request for a Christian mission. King Bjorn of Björko welcomed the mission. He hoped to garner Frankish political aid through a token interest in Christianity, but did so little to promote conversion among his staunchly pagan people that Anskar and his companion Witmar returned home for advice a year and a half later. By 832, Louis had gained papal permission to set up the new see of Hamburg, as a base from which to send missions into Scandinavia. Anskar became the new see's first archbishop. Despite raids by the Danish king Horich/


(31) Harald was the Danish ruler supported by the empire and who became Louis' godson in 826.
Rorik, Anskar not only reached an amiable understanding with the king, but consolidated his see so well that he returned to Sweden in 852 on a second, slightly more successful mission. By 854, Anskar felt that he had accomplished a solid enough foundation to allow his own return to Hamburg, where he stayed until 865.

The Vita Anskarii's description of its subject is overly optimistic, for Christianity was not successfully entrenched in the region until the later tenth and eleventh centuries. Still, it does offer us some insight into missionary work in Scandinavia, into Scandinavian society, and the response of the Scandinavians to the Carolingian missions. Reactions to the mission ranged from the violently hostile to the indifferent. It is easy to understand why it took nearly two centuries to convert the Scandinavians. It also explains why it is so remarkable to read of the conversion of a Scandinavian raider (especially when it appears to be of his own will, not through coercion), and why converted Scandinavians frequently ignored most of the tenets of the faith or lapsed completely from any form of Christian worship. Many Scandinavian leaders accepted baptism or allowed missionary work solely for the political support it would acquire for them from the Carolingian rulers. It was not until the tenth century that Scandinavian rulers had the

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(32) By successful, one means that the Swedes no longer tried to abuse the missionaries as they preached, and converts were actually made.
religious fervor or the political acumen to find any benefit in the mass Christianization of their respective subjects.

The other hagiographic work is the Gesta Conwoionis abbatis Rotonensis. It was produced in 868 at the Breton monastery of Redon by the river Vilaine, and records the career of its abbot in the years from 832 to 852. Politically, it concentrates on the struggles between the rulers of Brittany and their theoretical overlord Charles the Bald, and the internal power struggles within Brittany itself. The Vikings are mentioned in the third part of the work, section nine, which traces the movement of the Viking Sidrocc and his company over Brittany, and into the Seine and Loire valleys. Of especial interest to the author was the threat to local holy land (shrines and churches) and the rescue of the land from the Vikings.

Another form of religious literature popular in West Francia was the translatio, an account of the events and miracles that attended the movement or translation of relics from their original shrine to another. At first, these were used to record the acquisition of relics during the late eighth and early ninth centuries when the revering of relics became popular. As the Viking threat to vulnerable church establishments forced the removal of valuables to safety, a corresponding increase in the composition of translations occurred. There was also a surge in the composition of

(33) Gesta Conwoionis abbatis Rotonensis, MGH SS. XV, 455-459.
miracula about the resident or patron saints. It seemed as conditions deteriorated in West Francia, the church sought to write of anything that would encourage hope and reaffirm the power and mercy of God.

A fine example of the translatio is Einhard's History of the Translation of the Blessed Martyrs of Christ, Marcellinus and Peter\(^3\). Of noble birth, Einhard was educated at Fulda and the Palace School under Alcuin. While a layman and, by all accounts, a devoted husband, he nevertheless enjoyed the supervision and revenue of several important abbeys. He retired from court service in 830 due to ill-health and a growing disgust with the antics of Louis' court, to take up in earnest his duties as a lay abbot. An architect by training, he chose to settle and build an abbey on his estate at Seligenstadt. He resided there until his death in 840, nearly seventy years of age.

Once Einhard had decided to build a new abbey, it seemed imperative that he procure suitable relics for its shrine. The tale of their acquisition is recounted in his translation, written about 830. While the work says nothing about the Vikings, it is useful for three reasons. Firstly, it is an extremely good example of a Carolingian translatio. Secondly, the acquisition of relics was neither simple nor particularly legal, and the work provides some idea of the

hazards of transporting valuables less than two decades after Charlemagne's death. Thirdly, it indicates the special place that relics and other holy objects had in Carolingian society.

The movement of relics also generated a compilation of miracles. As a result, one finds that the wanderings of the community of St. Philibert from Noirmoutier at the mouth of the Loire documents Viking movement up the Loire. This information is found in two works -- the *Vita Sancti Philiberti* and the *Miracula Sancti Filiberti*. Both were written by Ermentarius, a ninth-century monk of the community. The *Life* is actually a rewritten version of the seventh-century *vita* done shortly after the saint's death. Of the two, the *miracula* is the more informative part, but by correlating them, one can trace the history of the community from its first foundation in the seventh century to its eventual resettlement in the monastery of St. Valerian of Tournus in Bourgogne.

Summarized, the community first established itself on the island of Noirmoutier in the seventh century. The site was however a prime target for pirates, attested to by the first destruction of the monastery by Saracen raiders in the eighth century. Although the monastery was restored, by 819, Viking depredations forced the current abbot, Arnoul, to establish a safe house at Grandlieu. Seasonal migrations between the two houses became a permanent removal in 836,
leaving the island to become a Viking base. By 845, heavy raiding had forced the monks to establish a second refuge at Cunauld. They abandoned Grandlieu for Cunauld in 858, then continued on to Poitou in 862, where Ermentarius died in 867 or 868. His narrative was continued by the eleventh-century Chronicle of Tournus, the site where Charles the Bald had placed the community in his monastery of St. Valerian. The community of St. Philibert never reestablished the old monastery on Noirmoutier as an important house.

The Translatio S. Alexandri, composed by Ruodolf and Meginhart in the latter half of the ninth century, details the movements of the saint's relics between 851 and 860. Beyond a comment on the ferocity of the Vikings and their movement in Frisia, Saxony and further east, little more is said about them. The minor works of St. Vedast supply scarcely more information. That part of the Miracula S. Vedasti attributed to Ulmar uses the traditional lamentation over the divine use of the Vikings as an instrument of divine retribution to note their activity in Transalpine Gaul, and draws a comparison between contemporary tribulations and those visited upon the Frankish people by German raiders prior to St. Boniface's reform of the Frankish Church. A later piece from St. Vedast (c. 893), Sermo de relatione corporis beati Vedasti, reports fresh

(35) Rudolfo et Meginharto, Translatio S. Alexandri, MGH. SS. II, 673-681.
raiding in West Francia in the year 879. Of slightly greater interest is the *Sermone in tumulatione SS. Quintini, Victorici, Cassiani*, which briefly describes the movement of Viking and Frankish forces between 880 and 883; especially noteworthy is a mention of the Frankish victory at 'Seulcurte' in 881.36

Three other *miracula* contain somewhat more information. The *Miracula S. Germani* includes, under the events of 845, a fair amount of discussion about the Vikings. This is a good example of the typical attitude adopted by churchmen towards the invaders. After complaining about the decline of Christian standards because of the strife among Christians, the author depicts the Northmen, with much use of biblical imagery, as a scourge sent by God to punish his erring people. He then proceeds to discuss Viking/Frankish conflicts during 845. In the *Miracula S. Mauri sive restauracione monasterii Glannafoliensis*, Odo of St. Maur-sur-Loire (c. 863) relates the miraculous events that take place when the relics of St. Maur are temporarily removed to a refuge in Burgundy (St. Maur-des-Fosses) between 861 and 863. In this account the relics play an active role against the Vikings, since St. Maur divinely aids the priest Hildebrannus and his associates in their

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(36) This obviously refers to the battle at Saucourt. *Sermone in tumulatione SS. Quintini, Victorici, Cassiani*, MGH SS. XV, p. 272.
actions against the Viking raiders.  

Still another interesting work is the Miracula S. Bertini Sithiensis, extracted from the minor works of St. Bertin. The miracula were produced by a monk of St. Bertin, who surveyed events between 861 and 891. Others of the community continued the work until 900. The main text first briefly sketches the advance of the Vikings into Neustria and Brittany along the course of the Seine. According to its editor, Holder-Egger, these miracula are connected to the fortification of St. Bertin and the development of a local fortress into a refuge. The author may have wanted to explain the need for such security and military measures. Or perhaps, like Abbo and the Siege of Paris, the author wished to instruct readers on proper monastic defence and security, not necessarily or solely directed against Viking marauders.

As a historical source, Abbo's work about the Viking siege of Paris in 885 and 886 is a treasure. It is the only piece of extant Carolingian poetry that doubles as a reasonably solid historical source. Abbo of St. Germain-des-Pres composed the three books of the Bella

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Parisiaca Urbis (The Siege of Paris) near the end of the ninth century. In the first two books, he describes the siege in detail. Abbo experienced the siege firsthand and is careful to report what he himself witnessed. He gives accurate descriptions of the battles, military strategies and equipment of both sides. He also expresses his increasingly low opinion of the poor behavior exhibited by the leaders of the Frankish army. Oddly enough, the third book has nothing to do with the epic contained in the first two. It is rather an educational discourse intended for young clerics. As Abbo explains in his prefatory letter, the first two books were written as a literary exercise and as a piece of practical literature for towns facing difficulties similar to those of Paris. The last book was something of an afterthought. There is some debate among scholars as to whether the third book was intended to be a serious piece of educational material or a mockery of the literary styles of his contemporaries.

A distinctive and significant genre of medieval French literature is the chanson-de-geste, several of which are set in the reigns of Charlemagne and Louis and can be linked to actual historical figures and events. Unfortunately, few of

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(39) See MGH SS. II, pp. 776-805 or the French translation in Guizot’s Collections, v.6, pp. 1-66.

these epic poems are set in a time and place that would include significant Viking activity. Their usefulness is limited still further, since nearly all the earliest recorded *chansons-des-gestes* were written down between 1100 and 1150*¹, and time and artistic license has distorted the original tales so that their historical roots can be extremely vague. There are two epics that do contain pertinent information on our subject, one of which exists only in a single longish fragment. The antiquity of both works is, unhappily, difficult to assess.

There appear to have several versions of the tale of Gormont and Isembart, only four of which have survived. Only three of the remaining versions are intact. The three complete versions, Hariulf's account in the Chronicle of St. Riquier (end of the eleventh century); Philippe Mousket's *Chronique* (1260); and the German prose romance *Lohter et Maller* (1437)*², relate the complete tale only hinted at in the earliest fragment. This fragment is tentatively dated to the period between 1068 to 1104, or from 1100 to 1150,

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(41) The extant heroic poems probably existed in some form as early as the first quarter of the eleventh century, and were likely a result of the stimulating presence of Gerbert/Pope Sylvester II at the Cathedral School of Rheims between 972 and 982. J. Crosland, *The Old French Epic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1951), pp. 8-10.

and is contemporary with the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Chanson de Willame*. There are clues in this 660-line fragment that imply an even earlier date.

The tale tells of a Saracen king named Gormont who is persuaded to invade the Carolingian Empire by an exiled and possibly apostate French knight named Isembart. The invasion is foiled in a great battle between the Saracens and the armies of Louis the Pious in which both kings and Isembart are mortally wounded. The fragment plunges the reader directly into the final battle, and provides us with two fascinating pieces of data. Firstly, its depiction of Louis as a vital and courageous leader argues for the extreme antiquity of the original composition. Secondly, the battle itself is a reproduction of the rousing victory enjoyed by Louis II of West Francia at Saucourt in 881, against the Vikings. This has generated much speculation over the possible identity of the 'Saracen' King Gormont, if he actually existed at all. So far, inconclusive evidence points to either the Danish 'Godrun' mentioned in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, the leader 'Wurm' defeated by Charles the Fat in 882, or a composite of the two Vikings.  

Here, at least, we are able to find some indication that the Viking invasions did leave some mark on popular literature of the time.

A similar indication is to a lesser degree found in the

(43) Calin, p. 49.
Chançun de Willame. This epic is the earliest of the cycle narbonnais. It is probably about Count William of Toulouse, who died in 813. One of the conflicts of the epic is the battle between a Saracen force led by 'Deramed' and William's family: the 'Saracens' being Viking pirates. The Chançun de Willame was written about 1140 to 1150, but appears to be a combination of different versions of a much older epic poem, now lost. If the thinly disguised Vikings of the epic indeed reflect an actual attack, then we have a very early description of a Viking incursion outside of annalistic literature.

Another surprisingly sparse and indirect source of data on the Vikings are the letters of the clergy and the court. Naturally, one must remember that few of the large number of letters that for whatever reason likely passed between clergymen, between church and court, and between the court and its officials for one hundred and forty years have survived. Yet those few that have survived tend to deal with matters of state and administration, scholarship or religion, and not with extraneous events. Mention of the Vikings usually occurs only when they blunder directly into these areas of interest.

Einhard, Lupus of Ferrières, and Hincmar of Rheims were prolific letter writers. Einhard had a wide circle of

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friends, and his reputation attracted more. One of his acquaintances, Lupus of Ferrières, was a respected biblical and classical scholar in his own right. Hincmar, as the archbishop of Rheims and a noted theologian, corresponded frequently on matters of church and state. They say little about the Vikings.

In the case of Einhard, the lack of reference is understandable, since the Vikings had only begun to pose a serious threat to in the last ten years of Einhard's long life. Lupus Servatus, born around 805, entered the abbey of Ferrières as a student, where, apart from six or seven years of study at Fulda, he spent the rest of his life as a brother and later an abbot until his death in 862. Even though Ferrières was located about sixty miles from Paris, the subject of the Vikings hardly appears in his numerous letters. Of the 130 letters surviving from his correspondence, only seven definitely contain pertinent news, with a further three letters possibly referring to Vikings. Judging from his letters, Lupus' abbey was in as

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much danger, if not more, from Frankish robber bands and greedy lords as from Viking raiders. It is only when the writer puts a name to the menace that one can tell the difference between these hazards. Hincmar's correspondence places the actions of the Vikings second to the administration of church, state and theology.

The last set of historical documents that require some consideration are the capitularies. Among the West Frankish capitularies, those of Charles the Bald contain both the earliest mention of Vikings and the most pertinent examples. Between 847 and 854, Charles issued a series of edicts that addressed, in varying degrees, the growing Viking threat. Three of the edicts were the result of negotiations with Louis the German or the Emperor Lothar, and contain a general reference to the need for teamwork between the three rulers in the process of holding off the raiders. The capitulary of April 853 exhorts the monks of St. Medard in Soissons to rise above personal damages and aid the other victims of the Viking raids. Two later capitularies from 853 and 877 contain articles outlining the proper responses to Viking attack by the king's local representatives. An edict resulting from a synod convened at Pistoia in 862 addresses the need to straighten out the confusion in the ecclesiastical administration in northern West Francia.

caused by Viking depredations*. Of particular interest are Charles' two edicts concerning the collection of tribute to the Vikings. Issued in the respective springs of 861 and 877, the edicts are essentially a demand for money from those capable of paying in order to buy off the Vikings based on the Seine. In comparing the language of the two edicts, it is apparent that by 877 the West Frankish attitude towards tribute collection was pragmatic enough that Charles no longer required the use of flowery persuasion.

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(49) Ibid., pp. 476-478.
While on the topic of church councils, it should be reiterated that the reason for the scanty use of the synodic records of the Frankish Church in this thesis is due to generally obscure nature of any possible references to the violence of the time. A good example of this obscure approach can be found in the records extant from the Council of Trosly in 909 where Archbishop Hervey of Rheims pontificates about the problems caused by raiders, but says little to identify the troublemakers. Sacrorum conciliorum nova, et amplissima collectio XVIII, 53 vols. in 60 parts, ed. J.D. Mansi, vol. 18a, columns 264-266.
VIII. CONCLUSION

When one compares Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian/West Frankish literature, it immediately becomes clear that West Francia produced more extant material between 800 and 940. This is not quite so remarkable when one realizes West Francia was a much larger territory than Anglo-Saxon England; even the land between the Loire and the northern coast had greater area. It is even less remarkable when one discovers that scarcely any literary sources of this period have been found from the regions of England north of the Thames. Nor must one presume the larger volume of Carolingian/West Frankish sources automatically mean a larger amount of information.

Just what do we have in the way of Anglo-Saxon sources that shed light on the Viking presence in England? A few chronicles and annals, a royal biography, the works of Alfred and his scholars, some legal literature and a few pieces of poetry. It is a short list, yet such a small amount contains a surprising amount of information. From these sources we can, directly or indirectly, find ample enough data to form a fairly clear picture of the general activities of the Vikings in southern England, and the West Saxon reaction to their presence. We receive, to a much lesser degree, the same information about the Viking presence in the north of England. We even have fairly accurate accounts of Viking movement on the continent during
the late ninth century. All of this knowledge comes from a small and incomplete body of material.

That the Carolingian/West Frankish sources are more substantial results from the greater number of monastic houses and larger imperial/royal administrations which employed a more substantial body of literate men. As noted earlier, little of the literature from this period contains much information about the Vikings, and the types of material are similar to those of the Anglo-Saxons. However, in addition to annals, chronicles and other pieces, the West Frankish sources also include religious literature such as the translations and the miracula, and a far larger body of extant correspondence than that left from the Anglo-Saxons.

In a way, the misconceptions found in the later French epic poems are indicative of the Carolingian attitude towards the Vikings. For all the damage the invaders caused, they were generally considered a secondary item of aggravation in comparison to the political and religious frictions of the time. While the more comprehensive annals give detailed information, the majority devote one line or less to this disruptive force in their midst. In the end, one concludes that the briefest mention of the Nordmanni in an annal is proof that Viking activity has had great impact on the annalist.

Of course, in works done before 840 the lack of information in quite understandable. Until the unrest
caused by Louis' sons between 830 and 843, Viking attacks were sporadic and the threat came from the Danish rulers. Perhaps the Carolingian concept of empire did affect its view of the Viking threat. From the earlier annals and literature, there is a certain air of condescension towards the Danes found in the attitude of the court scribes. They seemed more insulted by the threat of Danish territorial ambition than alarmed. In the later annals, the belief seems to have persisted that the Vikings were a simple problem that would be easily swept away if the leaders of the realm would but spare the time and effort from their other enterprises. Even less interest was evinced about the events occurring in lands outside West Francia and Lotharingia, including the difficulties in England.

The religious writings convey another message. While only a few religious works are particularly informative about Viking activity, nearly every piece that spares a single line implies that the Vikings were a punishment from God resulting from the sinful practices of Carolingian society. It is likely that the Frankish clergy felt that their first concern was to redeem West Frankish society and pacify God's wrath. Religious literature was therefore meant to be uplifting, not documentaries on Viking raiding. Once the causes of sin were alleviated or eliminated by the church, God would fix the Viking problem. The usefulness of West Frankish religious literature as source material is
further limited by the rules of composition imposed by the examples of early Christian works. It is worth noting that the authors who describe the effects of Viking depredations often rely heavily on biblical imagery, and classical and early Christian depictions of barbarian invasion and martyrdom.

The chief value of the West Frankish edicts and charters is an indirect one. Unlike the Anglo-Saxons, ninth-century West Frankish rulers rarely met formally with Viking leaders to achieve a goal. Of those few encounters, which usually involved the arrangement of tribute payments, the ordinances regarding tribute collections are the only known results. Documents do survive from the early tenth century concerning the settlement of Neustria by Rollo and company.

Perhaps the two integral differences between the attitudes towards the Vikings found in the Carolingian/West Frankish and Anglo-Saxon sources result from the differing degrees and frequency of contact each people had with them, and the different cultural evolution of the Anglo-Saxons. When one examines the pattern of Carolingian/Scandinavian contact between 800 and 940, one sees that contact was at first political, and continued on that level until about 840. At the same time in England and the rest of the British Isles, full-scale pirate raids marked the first violent contact between the natives and the Scandinavians. By the time the continent felt the brunt of Viking raids,
the Norse had already begun to settle parts of Ireland and Scotland. Between 866 and 878, Viking armies swept over England, conquering two kingdoms, annexing part of a third, and nearly seizing Wessex as well, before Alfred drove them out. By the time of Alfred's death in 899, the Vikings had become the acknowledged rulers of Northumbria and East Anglia.

Across the Channel the West Frankish people were busily fortifying their towns, fortresses and monasteries against the Vikings and each other. There were still parts of the realm untouched by marauders; West Francia was too large a territory to be overrun by one or two large Viking bands, nor was it a series of small kingdoms to be taken one at a time. It was not until the early tenth century that sizable Scandinavian colonization was allowed to take place. However, Rollo and his army gained their land by submission to the West Frankish king, not by unconditional conquest. In England, even after Alfred's descendents regained Anglo-Saxon control of the land, they did so without depriving the Anglo-Norse and Anglo-Danish settlers of their cultural identities. In Neustria/Normandy, two generations after the first settlement the Scandinavian colonists were nearly indistinguishable from their West Frankish neighbors.

In England, relations between the Anglo-Saxons and the invaders was eased by the common Germanic background shared by the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians. This shared
cultural background provided, despite the differences in religion, some sort of foundation for Anglo-Scandinavian relations until the newcomer pagans were Christianized. Although the Franks themselves once shared a common Germanic heritage with the Scandinavians, over three centuries of integration into a Gallo-Roman Christian Mediterranean-orientated society had diminished the likelihood of cultural empathy between them and the Vikings. As the inheritors of the mantle of Roman culture, the Carolingian Franks emulated their predecessors through the preservation of their culture by absorption of the barbarians from without into the patterns of their own society.

When the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons conquered British land, they did it so thoroughly that there was no need to compromise with the customs of the natives. Thus they retained full use of their ancient customs. When Christianized in the late sixth and seventh centuries, they absorbed and merged the literary cultures of the Irish and Roman missions with their own cultural legacy. This cultural merger left the Anglo-Saxons considerably more flexible intellectually than the Carolingians. It was this unique background that allowed the Anglo-Saxons to produce a body of Old English literature when Latin learning ebbed in the ninth century, to revise older works to suit Anglo-Saxon audiences, and to not only take a broader view of the Viking
movement over Europe, but provide information about the invaders in surprising places.
MAP 5. The Danish Invasion of England, 865-71

The Danish wars 865-954
THE BORDERS OF THE NARROW SEAS

The names indicate the movement of the Danish armies as they were known in England.

Map 1. The Partition of Verdun, 843

Episcopal sees

Because frontiers were very fluid in this period, no attempt has been made to define counties, principalities, or countries.

Map 3. France in the Twelfth Century

THE SCANDINAVIAN KINGDOMS AND SEAS

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