Among other things this volume is intended to demonstrate—and perhaps even to provide reason for celebrating—the efficacy of scholarly collaboration in illuminating complex phenomena that occurred in the past. It stands to reason that fruitful collaboration depends in part on a common point of reference that can be shared both by cooperating scholars and by those who are informed by their investigations. This chapter is intended to help define such a common ground. It will seek to achieve this end by focusing attention on the larger setting within which a particular historical phenomenon—the cultural revival of the Carolingian age—took shape. It will be assumed that that setting had a significant bearing on the shape the Carolingian cultural renewal took. At least in theory, such a contextual framework should establish a matrix within which various aspects of Carolingian intellectual and artistic activity can be interrelated with some degree of coherence and posit issues that will stimulate further investigation of that subject. To create such a framework requires keeping a focus on the large picture, formulating generalizations, and making bold statements—all scholarly operations surrounded by considerable peril. Such risks seem justified in terms of the ends this chapter seeks to serve in providing a meaningful setting for the more sharply focused studies of Carolingian cultural activity that follow it.

It will not have escaped the attention of most readers, especially Carolingianists, that there are troublesome ambiguities surrounding any
attempt to discourse on the context shaping Carolingian cultural activity. Rooted in the very terms selected for the title of this chapter, they need to be identified, and some explanation must be offered concerning what position will be taken on them.

The conscious selection of the singular term context as the focus of this essay implies that it is possible to define a single, consistent, all-embracing framework within which to treat the Carolingian cultural renewal. Although such a goal is worth pursuing, we have seen in the previous chapter that a long scholarly tradition has produced several different contextual paradigms within which to consider Carolingian thought and expression. Viewed from a global perspective these diverse approaches are noncomplementary and even contradictory. For anyone familiar with scholarly gamesmanship, this situation offers a golden opportunity for what is particularly alluring to the contemporary scholar: the fabrication of a radical revisionist position on a significant historiographical issue. There will be no response to that siren call in this essay; it is more Protean than Promethean in spirit. Its aim is to suggest how the well-established and fecund contextual approach that presently shapes scholarly scrutiny of Carolingian cultural activity might be expanded, enriched, and refined in ways that will add new dimensions to an interdisciplinary approach to Carolingian culture. It seeks not to fix what needs no fixing but to supply reagents that will increase the potency of an already powerful contextual brew that currently drives the exploration of Carolingian thought and expression.

Another ambiguity embedded in the title of this chapter involves the term cultural activity. Readers have a right to assume that this term has a specific meaning that will allow them to focus on a particular subject matter or process. However, they must be warned that Carolingianists are very latitudinarian about the term. Their catholicity is exemplified by the titles of the chapters included in this volume. For Carolingianists, cultural life embraces such disparate topics as education, biblical exegesis, art, music, book production, polemics, and ideology. That is only a small sample of what Carolingianists subsume under the rubric cultural activity, as would be obvious from even a glance at any bibliography attempting to provide a general guide to the study of Carolingian thought and expression. It can be argued that, in the interest of conceptual clarity, Carolingianists should be more precise in ascribing a meaning to cultural activity. That issue will not be addressed in this study. Whatever has survived from the period extending from the early eighth to the early tenth century, in whatever form, as an articulated expression of thought for whatever pur-
The Context of Cultural Activity

53

pose, will be considered to be a legitimate component of the Carolingian world of culture.

There are even problems associated with the use of “Carolingian” as an adjectival qualifier of “cultural activity.” Much of what is called Carolingian culture was a possession shared with earlier and later ages. No one was more aware of or satisfied with this fact than the Carolingians themselves. When Alcuin wrote “I wish to follow the footsteps of the holy fathers, neither adding to nor subtracting from their most sacred writings,” he was voicing the almost universally shared opinion that his age and all generations that followed would be served best by repossessing and safeguarding a sacred and ageless heritage that would be sullied by attaching to it a modifier implying singular possession. Thus, when modern scholars speak of “Carolingian” cultural activity, they must necessarily involve themselves with identifying and explaining what was particular, innovative, and creative about an enterprise whose agents, in the eighth and ninth centuries, perceived themselves as taking possession of and utilizing a fully sufficient cultural heritage. As the title of a recent book so felicitously put it, modern scholars concerned with Carolingian culture must wrestle with nova antiquitas et antiqua novitas.2

The context sought in this chapter is one that will help to explain how and why Carolingians modified and adapted an inherited cultural heritage. At a time when powerful intellectual currents are modifying traditional periodization paradigms, propounding new interpretive modes that alter how the Carolingian age is understood, and perhaps even threatening to obliterate the era as a discrete segment of the total historical continuum,3 it is especially critical that Carolingian scholars focus their attention on the uniqueness of the Carolingian age as a means of grasping the import of its accomplishments. Such an objective will be central to this search for the context of the Carolingian cultural renewal.

With the flanks and rear properly guarded, it is time to face the central issue. In setting the context for Carolingian intellectual and artistic life there is a strong temptation to dwell on features of the Carolingian age that impeded thought and expression. Quite aside from the vestiges of the venerable concept of the dark ages, which still gives a negative cast to the modern historical consciousness about anything medieval, the Carolingian record is replete with factors that seem antithetical to the nurture of culture: constrained material resources, anemic societal infrastructures,
massive illiteracy, brutality of manners, endemic violence, adherence to
verse and deeply ingrained "primitive" mind-sets running counter to the
light of learning. Woven into the very fabric of Carolingian thought was a
dark thread of fear and uncertainty that productive and useful cultural ac-
tivity could not be sustained. That concern was exemplified by a somber
observation written in the 840s by Walahfrid Strabo in the prologue of his
revision of the *Life of Charlemagne* by Einhard (or Eginhard):

> Of all the kings Charlemagne was the most eager diligently to search
for wise men... and he thereby made the entire kingdom which
God had entrusted to him in a state of darkness and, so to speak, of
virtual blindness radiant with a blaze of fresh learning, hitherto un-
known to our barbarism... But now once more the pursuit of
scholarship is falling back into decline; the light of wisdom is less
loved, and is dying out in most men.⁴

A diligent searcher in the Carolingian record can find abundant anec-
dotal evidence suggesting a superficial, transient dimension to the Caro-
ingian effort to nurture learning and expression. What, for instance, is
one to think of a cultural renewal whose chief architect provided in his will
that his "great collection of books" should be sold to help the poor?⁵

Could not learning have been better served by a royal mandate founding
an *Institutum ad Romanum gubernandum* as a repository for the royal li-
brary? The importance of learning in the Carolingian world seems some-
how diminished by a passage penned by one of its most notable
champions, Abbot Lupus of Ferrières. In one of his letters he reports that
in his efforts to win back some property, he was tempted to imitate the
ancients by "turning to the artifice of erudition," but then decided that
would be fruitless. As he put it: "If Vergil himself were to return now and
expend all the skill of his three works to win hearts, he would not find a
single reader among our contemporaries."⁶ How deflating it is to read
William of Malmesbury's account of the ultimate fate of one of the most
learned of all Carolingians, John Scottus Eriugena. That account says first
that John left Francia for England. Does not that fact alone speak volumes
about the state of learning in the Carolingian world? Then it reports that
John's English students stabbed him to death with their pens because he
made them think.⁷ The troubles faced by teachers in England obviously
predate our generation!

But let us abandon this negative approach. To pursue it further would
only result in shaping a contextual framework founded on a riddle: how
could cultural life flourish in a world that had nothing working in its favor? A more positive approach is required to account for the fact that intellectual and artistic life did blossom.

In a study that seeks to enrich and refine current approaches to the context of the Carolingian cultural revival, a logical starting point requires at least a brief excursus on the prevailing contextual framework within which Carolingian thought and expression are examined. As befits any discourse on Carolingian culture, a short exegesis on a scriptural passage will provide the fundamental touchstone to that issue. In Isaiah 9:1–3 we read:

The people who walked in darkness have seen
a great light;
Upon them who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shown.
You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing;
They rejoice before you as at the harvest, as men make merry when dividing the goods.

Every Carolingianist will immediately recognize the metaphorical sense of these words. Those living in darkness were the eighth-century Franks, the land of gloom was Gaul. The great light that came upon them was the light of Christian learning. The “you” who brought abundant joy was Charlemagne, the “philosopher of liberal studies,” the new David who “love[d] to understand the hallowed knowledge of the ancients . . . and to ponder the secrets of holy wisdom.” Those who rejoiced at the harvest were an array of Carolingian scholars, poets, clerics, and even lay magnates whose world was made so “radiant with the blaze of fresh learning, hitherto unknown to [their] barbarism” that “the modern Gauls or Franks came to equal the Romans and the Athenians.” And those who make merry while dividing the spoils are modern Carolingianists, who, a century and a half ago, came into a priceless benefaction: their own renaissance to describe, explain, and even gloat over.

This playful exegetical exercise comes amazingly close to characterizing the contextual framework that currently shapes the study of Carolingian cultural activity. There was a demonstrable darkness afflicting Gaul during the seventh and eighth centuries, marked among other things by a deterioration of education, expression, religious life, and manners.
Awareness of the encroaching darkness and its political and religious implications, an awareness perhaps nurtured by models of active learning establishments in the Lombard kingdom, Anglo-Saxon England, and Ireland, produced decisive, consciously taken action without which any comprehensible history of Carolingian cultural activity is unthinkable. That action took the form of a public mandate formulated in the late 780s and early 790s by Charlemagne, a ruler deeply concerned with the welfare of his subjects and supported in his aspiration to improve their condition by a court circle that included learned figures from foreign lands where the light of learning burned more brightly than in Francia. Among modern scholars the centrality of Charlemagne’s mandate has understandably and rightly provided powerful impetus to treat Carolingian cultural life in the context of public policy. This contextual framework has given prominent place to describing the royal promotion of cultural renewal through legislation and patronage and to assessing the reciprocal impact of the consequent intellectual and artistic activity on the political and religious actions and the consciousness of the Carolingian power establishment.

Given the fact that the nurture of cultural life was elevated to the level of public policy by Charlemagne and was accepted as such by many in the royal circle, it follows that the meaning of the royal mandate has been of central importance in establishing a context within which to approach the Carolingian cultural revival. The search for that meaning has produced a widely shared scholarly consensus: as perceived by Charlemagne and his cohorts, what Frankish society needed to dispel the darkness was to rediscover and apply the “norms of rectitude” that had been formulated and written down in a past age to guide individual and collective Christian behavior. Access to those salvific norms became a critical public issue to which the only response was the encouragement of learning activities. From the perspective of modern scholarship, the reception of tradition became a key component in defining the contextual framework that guided the investigation of Carolingian cultural life. The result has been a vast body of scholarship concerned with how, when, under what circumstances, and to what effect the Carolingian world received a literary and artistic heritage formulated in a distant past.

This contextual framework—featuring a mandate imposed from above by public authority directing cultural activity toward the recovery from the past of norms that would correct and renew society—quite understandably assumed another crucial dimension. Evidence abounds to indicate that Charlemagne and his collaborators were painfully aware that the late eighth-century Frankish world was ill-equipped either to seek or re-
The Context of Cultural Activity

receive the saving wisdom from the past, which was enshrined in an impos­
ing written corpus. Only education dedicated to improving Latin literacy
offered that world a solution to its disability. As a consequence, education
became the central element of the Carolingian cultural endeavor. And edu­
cessional issues have provided a major focus for the modern scholarly effort
devoted to the investigation of Carolingian culture. A case could be made
that in relative terms more attention has been given to the role of educa­
tion in Carolingian society than has been the case for any other era in his­
tory. Especially prominent has been the effort to elucidate the creation and
evolution of the educational infrastructure: schools, textbooks, teaching

tech­iques, scriptoria, libraries, and writing systems. Related concerns in­
clude the impact of the educational system on the reception of tradition,
the response of the educational establishment to expanding intellectual
horizons resulting from the absorption of ancient texts, and the impact
of education on the intellectual and creative activities of those involved
in it. 18

Another important contextual consideration emerges logically from an
approach to Carolingian cultural activity that is fixed on the conscious
public policy that aimed at serving the public weal by recovering tradi­
tional wisdom through the instrumentality of education. Scholars have
been prompted to ask what was recovered and how that legacy was uti­
ized. 19 These issues have played a major role in the scholarly treatment of
Carolingian cultural life. The writings of various learned individuals and
the artifacts produced by architects, painters, and sculptors of the Caro­
ingian age have been scrutinized in minute detail in search of answers to
these problems. 20 Various facets of Carolingian cultural life—including
especially the liberal arts in general, grammar and rhetoric, literature, the­
ology and philosophy, political theory and law, ecclesiology, and art 21—
have been analyzed in terms of the sources undergirding them and the
modifications imposed on these sources by the learned establishment seek­
ing to achieve a renovatio. Studies conducted within such a context have
provided cogent demonstrations of the unique and distinctive characteris­
tics and accomplishments of the Carolingian cultural effort. Equally im­
portant, this line of investigation has established the grounds upon which
Carolingianists could claim that their era left a significant Nachleben giving
shape to post-Carolingian intellectual and artistic life in western Europe.

It can even be argued that the broad contextual framework just delin­
ceated has governed the scholarly treatment of the terminus ad quern of
Carolingian cultural history. Unfortunately, one of the perils of periodiza­
tion schemes involves the need to bring to closure what the paradigm
defines as a unique and distinctive segment in the total continuum of his­
toric time. If there was something that legitimately can be called the Caro­
lingian cultural achievement, then whatever that was must have come to an
end. Although the problem of defining the end of the Carolingian age in
all its aspects confronts Carolingianists with increasing difficulty, a well-
established tradition among historians of the Carolingian intellectual and
artistic effort prompts them to end their story early in the tenth century. In
arriving at that closure, they speak in contextual terms with which we are
already familiar. They sadly note that after 877 the guidance and support
extended to cultural activity as a matter of public policy by a Charlemagne
or a Charles the Bald gave way to the feeble efforts of what Edward Gib­
bon called "the dregs of the Carolingian race . . . a crowd of kings alike
deserving of oblivion." With rare exceptions the secularized bishops and
abbots of the tenth century were incapable of the cultural vision of their
predecessors, who had been prime patrons of learning and art. The educa­
tional infrastructure upon which Carolingian learning had been built was
eroded by the second wave of external invaders, civil disturbances, and the
diversion of ecclesiastical resources into secularized activities centered on
building local power bases. The increasingly feudalized world dictated be­
havioral norms considerably different from the "norms of rectitude" ap­
propriate to a Christian commonwealth defined by Christian learning. The
late Carolingian cultural establishment became too set in its ways and too
constricted in its intellectual tools to sustain the impetus that originally
created it or to respond to the changing world that it had helped shape. In
short, Carolingian culture was a victim of the very contextual factors that
had once energized it. Some will undoubtedly charge, probably with good cause, that this
characterization of the contextual framework within which modern
scholars have approached Carolingian cultural life is overly simplified and
excessively schematized. However, by way of summarizing our point, it
would not be too far from the mark to argue that most modern treatments
of Carolingian intellectual and artistic life fit into—and are given meaning
by—a contextual approach that can be given precise articulation in the
following terms: The Carolingian cultural renewal was a phenomenon
shaped and driven by a conscious public policy aimed at serving the public
weal by utilizing education to recover and transmit behavioral norms de­

dined in the distant past. Its achievements can best be assessed in terms of
the capacity of its agents to capture, adapt, and apply that tradition in ways
that modified the behavioral patterns of a troubled, "backward" society
seeking to renew itself.
Perhaps indicative of the general acceptance of and satisfaction with this contextual framework is the fact that the scholarly world concerned with Carolingian cultural life has been remarkably free from disagreements, such as those surrounding the meaning of Charlemagne’s imperial coronation, the nature of the Carolingian economy, or the status of the Carolingian nobility. The only note of discord in that community has been an occasional scuffle over whether the Carolingian cultural achievement should be described as a renaissance or a renovatio. Did its impetus and achievement center on a rebirth of humanistic culture akin to that of the classical world or on a renewal of society in a moral and spiritual sense? Probably most Carolingianists would join François L. Ganshof in dismissing this distinction as a matter of semantics having little to do with the most fundamental aspects of Carolingian cultural life.25

Viewing current Carolingian scholarship in broad terms, there seems no compelling reason to challenge a contextual framework that has served so fruitfully in promoting, guiding, and integrating the study of Carolingian culture or to propose a new one. Perhaps, however, scholars concerned with various aspects of Carolingian thought and expression might profitably consider expanding and refining the contextual approach that presently frames their collective effort. In what follows some suggestions are offered pointing in that direction. No claim of originality is made in identifying certain contextual considerations that might stimulate new lines of investigation and produce new levels of understanding of Carolingian culture. Most of what will be said derives from a general reading of recent Carolingian scholarship devoted to Carolingian society as a whole.26 The important issue is whether these borrowed insights might add fruitful dimensions to the ways in which scholars are presently inclined to approach Carolingian cultural history.

In defining the context within which they pursue their investigations, Carolingianists concerned with cultural history should consider the need to expand their chronological framework, especially backward. They have long been accustomed to accepting a periodization model that hinges on a decisive turning point in historical development in the middle of the eighth century. Such an approach came easily in the light of the dramatic events in 751 that replaced “do-nothing” Merovingian kings with a vigorous new dynasty that made things happen. That chronological perspective was given persuasive conceptual substance by the famous Pirenne thesis, which entered the full light of day with the publication of Henri
Pirenne’s *Mahomet et Charlemagne* in 1937. Pirenne argued that as a consequence of Muslim expansion the unity of the Mediterranean world was ruptured in the middle of the eighth century, a development that ended the ancient world and marked the beginning of a new, medieval pattern of civilization unique to western Europe. In a fundamental sense, the Pirenne thesis tempted and even convinced many Carolingianists to think that what happened before about 750 was of minor concern to them as they sought to delineate the “new” order that began to take shape at a decisive turning point in history. However, in the half century since the Pirenne thesis began to assert a decisive influence on Carolingian studies, an ever increasing body of evidence has been amassed indicating that many essential aspects of Carolingian history can only be explained in terms of civilizational patterns that preexisted the so-called dawn of a new age. In brief, Carolingianists have increasingly had to learn to cope with continuities rather than to feast on discontinuities. 

Scholars concerned with Carolingian culture have, of course, been sensitive to this need to expand their chronological sights backward in time for a simple reason: a fundamental dimension of Carolingian cultural activity involved the reception of a tradition embedded in earlier literary and religious texts, art works, and musical compositions from which the Carolingian world felt separated to its peril. Especially crucial were the literary and religious texts. Modern scholars all know well enough who, in the eyes of the Carolingians, represented that tradition: God's writ enshrined in Scripture; a select group of pagan Latin authors; a circle of late antique religious Fathers, including especially Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Benedict of Nursia, Gregory the Great, and Isidore of Seville; the Christian poets of late antiquity; and the compilers of liturgical, pedagogical, and legal texts. The models in the visual arts and music are likewise fairly obvious. On the surface, the challenge facing modern scholars has seemed simple and straightforward. Their task has been to determine who among the Carolingians took what from that storehouse of tradition, how the recipients understood what was received, to what use the acquired wisdom was put, and with what consequences in terms of the history of thought and expression.

However, any effort to understand the processes involved in the transmission and reception of tradition has another crucial dimension. The modern scholar is an active agent in reconstructing those processes and in weighing their consequences. How he or she understands and interprets the elements of tradition under consideration is a decisive ingredient in elucidating its transmission to and reception by the Carolingian world.
This reformulation of the well-worn truism that the past is always seen through the prism of the present poses a fundamental methodological question about the treatment of Carolingian cultural life. Have modern scholars been sufficiently sensitive to the role played by their own comprehension of the tradition being absorbed by the Carolingian world in their analysis and explanation of its reception? Have they been sufficiently rigorous in examining their understanding of the authorities who represented the tradition in question to see whether it needs to be refurbished? Or have they been content to treat the sources of authority with which learned Carolingians engaged themselves as fixed quantities, the import of which is a matter of common knowledge and complete consensus? When assessing Hrabanus Maurus’s dependence on Isidore of Seville in composing his *De rerum naturis*, evaluating how the disputants in the quarrel over predestination wrestled with the views of Augustine, tracing the extent to which John Scotus Eriugena borrowed from Pseudo-Dionysius in fashioning his *Periphyseon*, or assessing the dependence of the Carolingian architects who designed the new church at Aachen on Byzantine models found in Italy, have Carolingianists proceeded as if everyone knows exactly what Isidore or Augustine or Pseudo-Dionysius or Byzantine artists meant?

While any generalization on this issue is likely to be misleading, there are grounds for concluding that those investigating Carolingian culture seldom face these issues. The consequence is their tendency to proceed as if the tradition being received was a fixed entity, leaving them only to measure how much and how well learned Carolingians appropriated that constant and fixed store of accumulated learning.

As an antidote for this constricting disability it seems obvious that scholars concerned with Carolingian cultural activity must come to view various components of the tradition that nurtured Carolingian learning and expression as entities in perpetual flux, constantly being redefined and reinterpreted by those who make a speciality of investigating and interpreting them and their creators. To cope with that situation will require that Carolingianists expand the chronological context within which they approach Carolingian culture in ways that will make them participants in a larger scholarly universe than has conventionally been perceived as the Carolingian world. In more specific terms, they must become aware of what their colleagues studying the pre-Carolingian world, especially that of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, are doing to illuminate the meaning of the tradition upon which so much Carolingian thought and expression depended. They must absorb as part of their own mental
equipment what is being revealed by modern scholarship about the sense of the cultural artifacts to which the Carolingians turned for their intellectual and artistic sustenance, and they must let the light of that scholarship, dealing with what they too often perceive to be another and different age, shine constantly on their efforts to elucidate Carolingian cultural activity. To cite but a few examples by way of illustrating the point, when Carolingian scholars are discussing the reception of the Rule of Benedict or of Gregory the Great or of Isidore of Seville or of Boethius, they must be certain that they have found and absorbed the works of Adalbert de Vogüé, Carole Straw, Jacques Fontaine, Henry Chadwick, and Jerold C. Frakes.29

While the expansion of the temporal context backward to embrace several centuries preceding the Carolingian age will add a needed ingredient to the investigation of Carolingian learning, there still remains the problem of fixing the specific context marking the inception of a distinctive chapter in the history of culture that can be called “Carolingian.” In considering this issue scholars need to foreshorten their backward look in order to center attention more rigorously on the eighth century. As already noted, the prevailing contextual approach to Carolingian culture has focused on a conscious policy choice made by Charlemagne at a specific moment in the late eighth century to promote cultural activity of a special kind in the service of a particular politico-religious program intended to renew society. Those who shape their approach to Carolingian cultural life within that context have been willing to consider certain eighth-century preconditions that shaped Charlemagne’s cultural program. They note such factors as the availability of men of learning from parts of western Europe where local “renais­sances” had recently occurred; the inception of a reforming mentality reflected in religious legislation of Pepin III and Carloman; the impact of missionary figures such as Willibrord, Boniface, Pirmin, and Kilian; and certain activities of Pepin, which some have argued prefigured his son’s actions with respect to cultural life.30 However, on the whole, these precon­ditions for the revival of Carolingian cultural activity have not been judged decisive in giving shape and form to Carolingian culture. With his usual directness, Walter Ullmann put the point unequivocally: “It was in pursuit of [Charlemagne’s] educational policy—exclusively a royal measure and carried through at royal expense—that the literary and cultural phenome­non of a Carolingian Renaissance emerged.”31

Without diminishing the decisive role played by Charlemagne in giving shape to Carolingian cultural life, Carolingianists need to ask whether there existed in the eighth-century Frankish world forces—other than the
royal will that stimulated cultural activity and gave it a particular thrust and substance—that sometimes complemented and sometimes ran counter to the royal renaissance. They need to escape the tyranny asserted over all aspects of Carolingian historiography by a mind-set existing since Carolingian times, which has tended to see everything before and after Charlemagne as either prelude or postlude. Major problems face anyone seeking a contextual perspective on issues related to cultural life during the decades preceding Charlemagne’s accession, an era almost as difficult to view on its own terms as is the reign of Louis the Pious. But at least scholars concerned with Carolingian culture should open their minds to the possibility that the entire eighth century should be embraced within the contextual framework they employ as the setting for the Carolingian cultural effort. Perhaps Pope Gregory II knew something that modern scholars have overlooked when, in a letter written to Emperor Leo III in 732, he observed that the civilized East appeared to be returning to savagery and violence while the previously savage and barbarian peoples of the West were becoming civilized!

Having considered the advisability of adjusting the temporal framework within which Carolingian cultural life is treated, let us shift our attention to another arena. In the search for contextual factors affecting Carolingian thought and expression, it is perhaps time to ask again whether scholars have given sufficient attention to the full range of interests and aspirations of certain power groups as factors affecting the development of Carolingian cultural life. That issue was especially critical during the eighth century, when power relationships were being redefined under circumstances of considerable flux, which compelled competing interests to seek new modes of defining and legitimating their position.

One might begin with the challenges faced by the Carolingian dynasty itself. Not the least of those concerns was the matter of the dynasty’s legitimacy. Although the status of the Carolingian family had been open to challenge from the time of Pepin of Herstal’s victory at Tertry in 687, the issue became especially critical as a consequence of Pepin III’s deposition of the last “long-haired king” in 751 to clear the way for his ascendency to the throne and then, not long after, the even more audacious elevation of Charlemagne to the imperial office in 800, acts that smacked of usurpation. Modern scholars have been inclined to argue that election by “the people” (that is, by the potentes) and ecclesiastical approval in the form of ritual anointment—buttressed by the unique political abilities of Pepin
III and Charlemagne and by booty fortuitously gained from military victories—sufficed to legitimize the new dynasty.

However, it is far from certain that Pepin and Charlemagne were fully confident that the fate of the stirps karolinorum was assured by acclamations of the "people," religious rites, personal political skills, and unpredictable campaigns against the likes of the Aquitainians, Muslims, and Saxons. Their ongoing concern for legitimacy reverberates through the history of the last half of the eighth century. It was reflected in various events: Pepin's poignant request to Pope Zacharias before his deposition of the last Merovingian for guidance in defining upon what the authority to rule was based; the measures taken by Pope Stephen IV during his visit to Francia in 754 to foreclose on future dynastic changes by threatening with anathema anyone who sought to disinherit Pepin's heirs; Pepin's troubles with his half brother Grifo and with his brother Carloman and his sons after Carloman's abdication to become a monk; Charlemagne's attempt to appropriate the Merovingian heritage by giving his twin sons born in 778 names unique to the Pippinid family tradition, Louis (Clovis) and Lothair (Clothair); Charlemagne's consternation with the rebellion in 792 involving his bastard son, Pepin the Hunchback, who "conspired with certain of the Frankish leaders who had won him over to their cause by pretending to offer him the kingship;" and Charlemagne's concern about the meaning of two eclipses that preceded and followed the death of his son Pepin in 810.

Given these uncertainties about the position of the new dynasty, Pepin III and Charlemagne needed above all else to establish their suitability (idoneitas) to rule, to provide qualitative dimensions to what Einhard in almost the opening words of his Life of Charlemagne described as the "useless royal title" (inutile regis nomen) of the last Merovingians. There were various options that would serve this end: royal prowess on the field of battle; strengthening the bonds of kinship and personal dependence; effective management of royal resources; exemplary personal conduct; administrative assertiveness; and mustering the powers of the Church to curry God's special favor.

Pepin and Charlemagne eschewed none of these possibilities. But surely they must have sensed that poets, historians, artists, liturgists, and exegetes could serve to exalt their accomplishments and thereby demonstrate the fitness of their royal line. The feats of their chief models, Solomon and David, were celebrated in the written word and the visual image, as were those of Constantine. The service rendered to some of their Merovingian predecessors by the panegyrics of Venantius Fortunatus was not unknown
The support given by men of learning to the Lombard monarchy provided a model closer at hand. Pepin spent time at the Lombard court in his youth, and Charlemagne turned there for one of the first scholars he recruited, Paul the Deacon, already famous for his historical works and panegyric poems lauding the Lombard rulers.

Soon after 751 the record begins to reflect the light of learning focusing ever more sharply on celebrating the attributes and achievements of those bearing the seed of Arnulf in a way that highlighted their suitability to exercise lordship over the populus christianus. A succession of popes discussed in learned terms on the divine blessing that would fall on Pepin and Charlemagne for their service to St. Peter’s “peculiar people.” The liturgy of the Church began to be adapted to provide for glorification of the king, and so did the symbols surrounding the royal office and the exercise of power. Chronicles took shape to assure the selective presentation of the passing events in a way that cast the best light on the newly elected royal family. A learned monk at Saint-Denis formulated a prologue for a recension of the Salic law that exalted the Franks as an illustrious race instituted by God and especially their equally illustrious leaders, who since Clovis had worked under the inspiration and protection of Christ to fulfill the divine plan. The papacy matched this lofty characterization of the Franks and especially of their rulers by likening their accomplishments to a new Israel.

Military victories took on special dimensions at the hands of writers, as evidenced by Pope Hadrian’s panegyric written following Charlemagne’s victory over the Lombards, by the poem entitled Carmen de conversione Saxorum composed in 777 at a moment that was apparently assumed to be a decisive turning point in the Saxon wars, and by the verses written to honor Charlemagne’s victory over Duke Tassilo of Bavaria in 787. In that last poem the anonymous “Hibernicus Exul” poses a question and receives an answer that offers an important clue to a force giving shape to cultural life. “Do tell me, what is the value of my poetry?” asks the poet, to which the Muse replies that “sweet-sounding praises to the king” are a gift greater than the “enormous load of silver and of gleaming gold” offered by “leading men of the world,” a gift that “will remain for all time!” By the 790s many aspects of court life, especially the poetic production of figures like Alcuin, Theodulf of Orleans, and Angilbert, suggest that Charlemagne was almost as interested in learned men who could and would sing his praises as he was in the renewal of Christendom. When Angilbert proclaimed that “David loves poetry . . . David loves poets,” there can be little doubt that the royal sentiment stemmed in part from gratitude.
for what men of letters had done to define the suitability of the Carolingians to rule.  

The theme of *laudatio regis* remained central to cultural life throughout the entire ninth century, especially in poetry, letters, "mirrors for princes," history, biography, and art. Although valiant efforts have been made to translate this facet of Carolingian learning into the nobler idiom of ministerial kingship and theocratic political theory, it has the unmistakable odor of literary and artistic effort in the service of a noble family never quite certain of its hold on a usurped crown. Indeed, one suspects that it was only in the world of learning that Walahfrid Strabo could find assurance for the categorical affirmation he made in a poem written in 829: "The ruling dynasty will never fail in its seed / Until in His brilliance the King appears in a cloud of belching fire!" Scholars need to give closer attention to the impact that this concern for defining the suitability of the *stirps karolinorum* for rulership had on Carolingian learning, letters, and art: on the selection of sources from the storehouse of tradition; on the adaptation of those sources; on the choices made in literary and artistic forms; on language patterns; on the sensibilities of bellettrists and artists in search of patronage; and on historical consciousness. Attention to these matters might give many aspects of Carolingian cultural activity a different look.

Another power group in the Carolingian world whose relationship to cultural activity needs reconsideration is the episcopacy. Raising this issue is in no sense intended to imply that the Carolingian episcopacy has suffered scholarly neglect. Episcopal involvement in all aspects of Carolingian life has been investigated in great detail, with special emphasis having been given to the role of bishops as agents of royal power and religious reform. That scholarship has not overlooked the episcopal role in the revival of culture both in general terms and in terms of individual bishops. However, the major thrust of the modern scholarly treatment of the episcopacy as a force shaping the world of culture has tended to highlight the bishops as agents engaged in carrying out the royal cultural program, an approach that has left little room for ascribing an independent role to the episcopacy in shaping the Carolingian cultural *renovatio*.

Perhaps that approach needs to be reevaluated, especially in light of changing perspectives on developments during the eighth century. It has become increasingly clear that from early in that century there developed in the Christian world considerable tension, if not a crisis, involving a quest for the locus of authority that would provide direction and cohesion for Christian society. In dealing with this issue, Carolingian scholarship
The Context of Cultural Activity

has focused attention chiefly on the evolution of two responses: papal mon­
nism and ministerial kingship (with due attention to the sustenance these
fledgling concepts drew from the vestiges of imperial ideas of lordship of
the late Roman Empire still claimed in Byzantium). A third possibility
needs to be given greater prominence in elucidating this crucial issue,
which would remain central to discussions of governance of Christian so­
ciety far beyond the eighth century: there existed a venerable tradition as­
cribing to the episcopacy, acting collegially in council, the right to direct
Christian society.⁶³

A case can be made that from at least the middle of the eighth century
there was clearly present in the Frankish world an impulse on the part of
the episcopacy to reclaim that right by articulating a rationale and engag­
ing in a course of action that would justify the entrustment of ultimate
authority to the college of bishops, who by virtue of their office were col­
lectively clarissima mundi luminaria, as one Carolingian capitulary put it.⁶⁴

The revival of this collective episcopal consciousness manifested itself in
several ways during the eighth century: renewed episcopal collaboration in
church councils after a long hiatus; the positive reaction of the episcopacy
to the expanding efforts of the Pippinids to involve bishops in public life
under royal direction; episcopal involvement in the change of dynasties;
episcopal participation in missionary activity; the less-than-enthusiastic re­
action of the Frankish episcopate to the Roman-inspired reform program
of Boniface; the quest for episcopal solidarity reflected in the establish­
ment of a prayer brotherhood at the Council of Attigny in 762; and the
efforts to reestablish the corporate structure of the clergy reflected in the
legislation of the early reforming councils of Pepin III and Carloman and
in Chrodegang’s Regula canonicorum.⁶⁵

Despite the fact that the papal, monarchical, and episcopal concepts of
authority often overlapped and interpenetrated one another during the
Carolingian age, they all involved an issue fundamental to the shaping of
the Carolingian cultural revival. At stake was control of the traditions that
defined by whom, through what means, in what ways, and to what ends
Christian society should be directed.⁶⁶ It almost goes without saying that
cultural activities of various kinds were of crucial importance in recovering
and interpreting those traditions. There seems to be clear evidence that key
figures in the episcopal establishment had realized that connection at least
as early as the time when the royal program of cultural revival was
launched. The careers of Boniface, Willibrord of Utrecht, Chrodegang of
Metz, and Lul of Mainz and the enactments of the earliest reforming coun­
cils seem to bear witness to this realization. The promotion of learning and
the shaping of its content thus became a basic concern of the episcopacy as a facet of its effort to define its corporate place in a renewed Christian society.

Especially crucial to the bishops' collective aspirations was the control of traditions dealing with what constituted right belief, right cult practices, right morality, right discipline, and right expression, for these were the realms where tradition most clearly afforded primacy to the episcopacy. Likewise, as was patently clear to the ninth-century episcopacy—represented by such redoubtable figures as Agobard of Lyons and Hincmar of Reims—the management of these realms in particular assured a decisive role in controlling Christian society. Even more important, these were matters of central concern to the world of culture in the Carolingian age. Unless modern scholars take into account the aspirations of the Carolingian episcopacy in their efforts to establish the context of Carolingian cultural activity, they are apt to overlook and misconstrue vital aspects of Carolingian cultural life concerned with education, theology, canon law, liturgy, music, art, and architecture.

In setting the context for Carolingian cultural endeavor there may be the need to give greater attention to still another power group in Carolingian society: the aristocracy. Although the political and social status of the Carolingian aristocracy has been explored in great detail in recent years, that group has not received a very positive press from investigators of Carolingian cultural life. The image of the Frankish potentes in the face of the Muses was set in stone in Theodulf's verse portrait of the noble courtier Wibod: a brawny, big-bellied, loud-talking, ill-gaited figure whose only reaction to displays of learning and literary prowess was to shake his thick head, cast dark looks, and rain threats on poets when they were not around. As Theodulf pointed out, the only creature worse than this late eighth-century Frankish Babbitt was an Irish expatriate claiming to be learned.

Perhaps this picture is distorted and misleading. There were signs already evident in the eighth-century Frankish setting suggesting that the aristocracy nurtured traditions, felt needs, and had aspirations that could be served by cultural activity conceived in its broadest sense. It should not be forgotten that the Carolingian dynasty had its roots in the aristocratic world; without questioning the efficacy of unction, even papal unction, one might reasonably assume that its bestowal did not instantly reconstruct the family's mentality. Might not the interest in cultural activities shown by the early Carolingians reflect a concern shared by others of the social stratum from which the Pippinids emerged? Charles Martel did
break a long-standing tradition by sending his son Pepin to Saint-Denis for his education rather than to a noble court. Another of his sons, Jerome, is reported to have made a copy of the life of his ancestor, Bishop Arnulf of Metz, when he was only nine years old, a feat requiring at least some education.

A brother of Charles Martel, Count Childebrand, and his son, Nibelung, played a part in preparing the continuation of the chronicle attributed to Fredegar, a cultural enterprise that undoubtedly served the interests of all the heirs of stirps karolinorum. The court of Pepin III was the scene of a variety of activities reflecting a concern with cultural issues.

Evidence of aristocratic interest in culture was not confined to a single family of noble origin. Boniface's visit to a nunnery at Pfalzel in 723 provided the occasion for the noble abbess's grandson, Gregory, the future bishop of Utrecht, to read aloud from a Latin text. Although the young aristocrat had difficulty in explaining the text he read, he was able to comprehend the saint's commentary. The letters addressed to the Frankish aristocracy by the papacy during Pepin III's reign, including one allegedly written by St. Peter himself, seem to presuppose aristocratic responsiveness to learned discourse.

A recent study has reminded us that during the early years of Charlemagne's reign—the incubation period of the royal cultural program—the court was dominated by noble laymen. At least in its initial stages, the royal educational program envisaged schooling for lay aristocrats; perhaps the reprimand that, according to the monk of Saint Gaul, Charlemagne heaped upon young nobles who neglected their studies reflects at least some involvement in education by members of that class.

Almost without exception the first generation of native Frankish men of learning, exemplified by Einhard and Angilbert, derived from aristocratic families, suggesting approval of pursuit of learning as an activity befitting noble status. Two of the early literary products of the Carolingian renaissance, Alcuin's De virtutibus et vitiis Liber and Paulinus of Aquileia's Liber exhortationis, were composed for homines laicos, Count Wido of Brittany and Duke Erich of Friuli. In one of his letters, Alcuin commended Erich for his zeal in reading Scripture. In another Alcuin indicated that members of the laity posed questions about the interpretation of Scripture. The fact that Charlemagne thought it important to put into writing the vernacular songs of noble society suggests some cultural sensitivity among aristocrats.

Toward the end of the Carolingian period, Otfrid of Weissenburg lamented that the Franks had not taken the trouble to write down the "webs they wove from their wordhoard"; by implication, something had been going on among aristocrats that was culturally valuable.
Nobles collected and patronized art, gathered libraries, and even wrote books, as witnessed by Einhard, Angilbert, Nithard, and most notably the noble lady Dhuoda.  

These disparate bits of evidence, indicating that from the eighth century onward the Carolingian aristocracy was more than a culturally inert collection of self-serving individuals and power-seeking kin groups, raise an intriguing possibility. Those of a cynical bent of mind might argue that the Carolingian clerical order sought to exclude the aristocracy from the world of literate culture as a part of its effort to establish its ascendancy. In the case noted above, Alcuin was not comfortable with the knowledge that members of the laity were thinking about the meaning of Scripture without benefit of clergy; one can at least wonder if fear of heterodoxy was his only concern. Nor should we forget that the monastic reforms of Benedict of Aniane tried to restrict aristocratic access to monastic education, and that Louis the Pious openly spurned the "heathen poetry" that appealed to his father and his aristocratic followers.

It is not impossible that these two pillars of clerical culture were applying cultural sanctions against a class whose members were a factor to be reckoned with in the struggle for control of minds that highlighted the reign of Louis the Pious. Perhaps the threat to the learned clerics seeking ascendancy at Louis's court was exemplified by the empress Judith, whose aristocratic background equipped her with cultivated tastes in literature and music. Could it have been that her cultural sophistication enhanced her influence and convinced many clerics that their lot would have been more secure if the reputation of this cultured Jezebel could be ruined?

These reflections suggest that modern scholars may neglect significant aspects of Carolingian cultural life unless they keep the Carolingian aristocracy within their sights as they address issues bearing on Carolingian culture. Obviously, with few exceptions, aristocrats were not creators of cultural artifacts; rather, they were consumers. The evidence suggests that they constituted an audience responsive to many of the currents central to intellectual, literary, and artistic activity: the search for a definition of authority; the concern for the meaning of history; the interest in reconstructing the deeds of saints and warriors; the attempt to define the content of education; the quest for moral norms; the search for proper ways of worship; and the awareness of the pleasures and benefits to be derived from literature, art, and music. Those who promoted the official program of cultural renewal, as well as those who were the creators in intellectual and artistic life, must surely have been aware of the aristocratic audience. It remains to explore more deeply how the existence of that au-
The Context of Cultural Activity

dience influenced the thought and expression of cultural leaders. And that exploration must not disregard the signs that during the ninth century the aristocracy may have been denied a place in the mainstream of cultural development by a clerical ordo bent on exploiting cultural forces as instruments of power. There is a possibility that the outcome of that cultural warfare left the unlettered and unrefined aristocracy in a position where it eventually had to develop its own cultural life, one that manifested itself in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in chivalric behavior and the flowering of vernacular literature.

Finally, there is the world of the monks. Many Carolingianists may be taken aback by the suggestion that the relationship between monasticism and Carolingian cultural life needs to be reconsidered. They will rightly point out that the role of monasticism in the Carolingian renaissance has been explored in great depth; the result of that intense investigation has tempted many scholars to equate Carolingian culture with monastic culture. But for all its richness, that scholarship leaves one with the sense that there is still something missing in the assessment of the role of monasticism in shaping Carolingian culture.

Modern scholarship has approached Carolingian monastic culture in what might be characterized as a reactive mode. Almost without exception, monastic cultural activities are described and evaluated as responses to the royal cultural program. The cultural heroes who served as abbots—Alcuin, Hrabanus Maurus, Paschasius Radbertus, Lupus of Ferrières, Hildegard, Walahfrid Strabo, Smaragdus—are portrayed as veritable royal ministers of culture. The monastic establishments over which they exercised their stewardship emerge as workshops where were worked out the details implicit in the official cultural program. This approach is not wrong; it is simply inadequate. It fails to consider whether there was a dynamism in the Carolingian monastic establishment capable of giving a unique and particular shape to the world of culture. Put in terms of defining the context of Carolingian cultural life, the crucial question is this: were there dimensions to Carolingian monasticism that gave it an independent interest in and unique capacity for creative cultural activity beyond the cultural objectives dictated by the royal, episcopal, and aristocratic power structure?

An answer to this question is far from clear, in part because of the limitations of modern scholarship in its portrayal of Carolingian monasticism in institutional terms. That scholarship has failed to produce a convincing picture of what Carolingian monasticism was and what drove it. In its main thrust it has left a negative picture of monastic life and institutions. Monasticism emerges as a kind of directionless avatar buffeted by royal
and aristocratic manipulation, misdirected by ambitious and greedy lay ab­
bots, overburdened with wealth and worldly concerns, befuddled by a ten­
tative comprehension of the tradition defining the ascetic ideal and how to
achieve it, and plunged into uncertainty and tension by the royal effort to
impose on the monastic establishment *una regula et una consuetudine*. In
brief, modern scholars find little of significance in the Carolingian phase of
monastic history; sometimes those describing Carolingian monasticism
seem almost impatient to get on to the tenth-century reforms that excised
the rot afflicting the Carolingian monastic establishment.\(^2\)

Perhaps a clearer picture of Carolingian monasticism would emerge if it
were approached within a larger temporal framework. Such an approach
suggests that the Carolingian era marked a crucial stage in the evolution of
western monasticism. It was a time of transition between two contrasting
concepts of the place of monasticism in the economy of salvation and in
Christian society. Prior to the Carolingian age monasteries were viewed as
isolated enclaves, outside the larger Christian community, where individ­
uals worked their way toward perfection free from relationships with the
world, which by its nature was irreparably corrupt and inevitably corrupting.
Such a conception of the monastery produced different institutional
forms: the hermit cell; the transplanted desert of Lérins; the place made
magic by the presence of a holy person; the transient camp of the Irish
*peregrinus*, with his evanescent following of spiritual groupies; the school
for the service of God of Benedict of Nursia. But these models shared a
common characteristic: each separate establishment stood alone, needing
nothing from other monastic communities or from society at large in or­
der to pursue the strenuous business of opening conduits to the divine,
through which grace flowed to select individuals who established their eli­
gibility for that grace by severing all ties with the world. Perhaps in the
total perspective of western European monastic history, the period from
400 to 700 can be characterized as an age during which the monastic quest
for perfection was organized on an autarkic principle.

Beyond the Carolingian age, say by the year 1000, one encounters a
different monastic world. The monks, while still living in individual estab­
ishments, now constitute collectively an *ordo* discharging a special role vi­
tal to the salvation not only of individual monks but of the total Christian
community. The bonds knitting together the members of the *ordo* of
monks have been consciously fashioned: a common constitution, a stan­
dard regimen of activity, a uniform pattern of worship, a shared mode of
interacting with ecclesiastical and political authorities, and a consistent
message to the entire Christian community. That new conception of mo-
nasticism was mirrored in the Cluniac order and given sharper focus by the
new monastic movements of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Borrow-
ing again from the language of political economy, monasticism had been
collectivized and socialized.

In many ways the Carolingian age appears to be the decisive period in
the revolutionary transition from autarkic to collectivized monasticism. The
dynamic element in Carolingian monastic life was the search for
means that would allow all monks to identify with each other as a distinct
component in the Christian community and to define a collective role for
monks in the total economy of salvation. An essential corollary in realizing
these ends was a reformulation of the traditionally negative ascetic view
toward the world in ways that envisaged its goodness and perfectibility.
Many aspects of Carolingian monastic life—ranging from involvement of
monastic communities in public administration, to concern for the man-
agement of monastic property, to the formation of prayer brotherhoods,
to the attempt to impose a common rule—make better sense when viewed
from this perspective than when treated as reactions to royal, episcopal, or
aristocratic pressures of various kinds.

It required neither a great leap of consciousness nor royal ordinances to
prompt the monastic world to see that the nurture of cultural activity
could be a powerful instrument in the cause of collectivization and social-
ization of monasticism. In fact, the efficacy of learning as an instrument of
personal spiritual advancement was well ingrained in the autarkic monastic
world. All that was needed was to extend learning's function to serve the
ends of collectivization and socialization. Mastering a common language,
writing and speaking according to standard grammatical rules, reading
and singing the office from uniform texts, seeking spiritual sustenance
from common sources, exchanging reactions to these texts, correcting
each other's views on the interpretation of texts, and sharing common vi-
sual symbols all served to knit the society of monks together and to make
visible and palpable their collective existence. Cultural endeavors also
served to develop essential skills promoting the socialization of monasti-
cism. Such activities prepared monks to serve teaching, pastoral, mission-
ary, and administrative roles, all vital functions permitting monks to claim
a share in the salvation of society as partners with other agencies in the
secular world.

The Carolingian record is replete with evidence that cultural enterprises
did serve these ends in the monastic world. That evidence compels one to
conclude that, in setting the context for Carolingian cultural life, modern
scholars must allow a large place for a unique influence on thought and
expression exercised by monks seeking a means to identify with other monks and trying to articulate a distinct role for monasticism in a world no longer satisfied with autarkic monastic communities, where an other-worldly troop spoke to no one but God and then only in an esoteric language appropriate to individual salvation.

These reflections on possible interrelationships between cultural life and the interests and aspirations of key groups in Carolingian society should serve as a reminder that Carolingian cultural activity in all its forms cannot be divorced from the realities of that age. That point is no less apparent when the search to define the context of Carolingian culture is shifted from particularized interest groups to more generalized aspects of Carolingian society. Such a shift of focus opens wide vistas related to political, social, and economic conditions as factors affecting cultural activity. Considerations of space preclude venturing into these areas in order to focus attention on somewhat more elusive facets of the Carolingian scene that influenced the shaping of cultural life.

The first such topic involves Carolingian religious sensibility and spirituality. In a capitulary issued in 811, Charlemagne posed a poignant question to his bishops, abbots, and counts: "Are we really Christians?" This query should serve as a reminder that a powerful concern of the Carolingian age was a search for the meaning of the Christian experience, both in a collective and an individual sense. That spiritual quest must be given a central place in any attempt to understand the context within which Carolingian cultural life evolved.

Contemporary scholars face formidable obstacles in assessing Carolingian spirituality as a factor influencing culture. Part of the problem lies in a modern value system that makes it difficult to envisage a constructive interaction between the realm of the spirit and that of the intellect. Another difficulty stems from the inadequate picture provided by current scholarship of the spiritual dimensions of the Carolingian world. As one scholar has put it, "the history of the development of Carolingian religious sensibility has yet to be written." Proof of that observation is evident in recent histories of Christian spirituality, which are uniformly thin and tentative on the essence of being a Christian in the Carolingian age. As a consequence, those investigating Carolingian thought and expression receive little help in attempting to weave spiritual factors into the contextual fabric that shapes their approach to cultural life.

There are grounds for arguing that this constricted view of Carolingian
spirituality is a by-product of the conventional approach to the Carolingian religious reformatio and the way cultural activity has been linked to that endeavor. Carolingian religious renewal has been treated primarily as a magisterial enterprise involving the imposition on society of norms formulated on high by ministerial kings and authoritative bishops, who called into their service agents equipped with the tools of learning that enabled them to extract the norms encased in a well-defined tradition. The specific terms of this legislated reform were given expression in capitularies, conciliar acts, episcopal decrees, canonical collections, liturgical manuals, homilies, and penitentials. From this body of prescriptive material, modern scholars have formulated a statement of what the Carolingian age perceived as the essence of being a Christian. With such a definition in hand, the main task remaining in terms of characterizing the spiritual climate of the Carolingian world has been to assess how a prescribed Christianity was received by the society whose salvation was being engineered. The record makes it painfully clear that the authoritarian reformers met almost insurmountable obstacles in persuading their world to accept and live by the prescribed norms of religious rectitude. From this fact it follows that Carolingian society in general was not very Christian and that the age was not particularly significant in the history of Christian spirituality.

It would be not only perverse but also erroneous to dismiss the Carolingian effort to canonize what it meant to be a Christian or to consider inconsequential the efforts of Carolingian authorities, backed by the learned world, to impose a mandated religiosity on a spiritually deficient society. However, overemphasis on that approach veils a deep-seated urge in Carolingian society to seek dimensions of religious experience beyond the acceptance of a few basic credal formulations and the observance of prescribed cult practices. A fuller awareness of that urge is absolutely crucial to the study of Carolingian cultural life because Carolingian spiritual seekers had a profound trust in learning as a source of spiritual fulfillment. Not ascetic practice, mystical illumination, or even magisterial prescription were sufficient in the search for holiness; books were fundamental. "Only letters are immortal and ward off death, only letters in books bring the past to life . . . and reveal everything in the world that is, has been, or may chance to come in the future," as Hrabanus Maurus put it in one of his poems. Alcuin avowed that in the presence of books, "nothing was lacking that was needed for religious life and the pursuit of knowledge." The value of books for spiritual life was more than the musings of a spiritual elite. The Admonitio generalis warned that faulty books led to bad praying among all Christians, a conviction echoed by Theodulf of Orleans.
in a capitulary directed to the clergy of his diocese, who were exhorted to remember that only reading and prayer were effective in repelling the devil and vice and in nurturing virtue and gaining eternal life.97

Perhaps the key to a greater sensitivity to the Carolingian quest for and anxiety about what being a Christian entailed lies in the quandaries posed by the Carolingian effort to appropriate and apply religious tradition. While many Carolingians would have agreed with Alcuin when he wrote, “I wish to follow the footsteps of the holy fathers, neither adding to or subtracting from their most sacred writings,”98 others were fully aware, as another author (probably Florus of Lyons) put it, that they lived in a “modern” age,99 which confronted them with religious problems unique to their time for which neither Scripture nor the Fathers offered clear answers.

Nowhere did those inconsistencies and contradictions become more evident than when Carolingian scholars grappled with dogmatic issues.100 The same Florus reminded contemporaries of the challenge facing “moder­nists”: it was easy for “the devoted and simple reader” to become confused by “the great and multiple arguments” of Augustine.101 The Carolingian age knew and appreciated the Augustinian idea that God’s plan unfolded over time, with each generation responsible for interpreting that plan to fit its particular situation.102 Some learned Carolingians might complain, as did Alcuin, that a scourge on their age involved those who took “pleasure in making up a new terminology for themselves and who [were] not content with the dogma of the holy fathers.”103 But others could also appreciate with equal conviction the spiritual gain that might be gleaned from such inventiveness, from heeding Irenaeus’s admonition that tradition “was not transmitted in writing, but by the living voice.”104 John Scottus Eriugena put it this way: “Just as the art of poetry, by means of imaginary fables and allegorical likenesses, develops moral and cosmological interpretations to rouse human minds . . . so theology, like a poetess, employs imaginary inventions to adopt Holy Scriptures to the capacities of the intellect.”105

It was apparently this same disturbing view that led to the charge that Amalarius of Metz drew his controversial views on the liturgy from within his own spirit.106 Gregory the Great’s strictures against the study of gram­mar on the grounds that the same language cannot praise both Christ and Jupiter107 haunted more than one Carolingian scholar seeking to reconcile pagan learning with Christian belief.108 There are suggestions in the sources that learned men, such as Alcuin, Theodulf, and Paschasius Radbertus, were uneasy with a legalistic and formalistic approach to Christian life; they envisioned a teaching church whose pastors would find within
their own spirits the words and actions required to heal tainted souls in a world beset by its own particular spiritual afflictions.

These random examples point to a deep-seated tension in Carolingian religious consciousness, rooted in a disturbing uncertainty about what it meant to be a Christian and how any member of Christian society could advance in holiness. Awareness of that tension should caution against assuming that Carolingian religious sensibilities and spiritual aspirations can be encapsulated in some kind of Tridentine formulation derived from and sanctioned by a tradition recaptured in a mechanical way by a learned resort to authorities. Rather, the deeply felt uncertainties about the essence of Christian life must be factored into any consideration of how culture was put to the service of religious *renovatio*, defined in terms ranging from instructing the simplest *rusticus* to unraveling the mysteries of the eucharist and the Trinity, from converting pagans to determining the proper use of images. Modern scholars must ask to what extent the spiritual concerns of learned souls seeking to be better Christians and to make their world more Christian conditioned the choice of literary and artistic authorities to which they looked, their interpretation of these sources, the emphases they chose to give to particular themes embedded in their authorities, the words and images they used to convey their ideas about tradition, and the way their guidance was received by the population of the Carolingian world.

The key to these riddles probably will not be found in capitularies and conciliar acts; the answer lies in the “tough” stuff in the Carolingian corpus of sources: scriptural exegeses, theological tracts, sermons, poetry, histories, letters, songs, iconography, building designs, liturgical texts, and a wide range of symbolic acts, associated with the affairs of daily life. No less crucial will be an effort to read these texts in new ways, especially from perspectives provided by modern concepts shaping theories of language and the sociology and psychology of religion. Although the answers about Carolingian religious sensibility are far from clear, one thing seems certain: if modern scholars do not keep the spiritual yearnings embedded in such sources central to their treatment of Carolingian cultural life, they are apt to overlook some of the prime forces motivating thought and expression and to miss some of the most significant originality of the Carolingian cultural achievement.

If any scholar were to follow the suggestion to give closer attention to Carolingian spiritual values as a factor affecting the context within which Carolingian cultural life unfolded, he or she would quickly be reminded of
another broad contextual issue that has a bearing on the Carolingian cultural world. The investigation of Carolingian religious sensibilities—or, for that matter, any other aspect of Carolingian life—would quickly reveal that there were complex problems surrounding written and spoken languages during the Carolingian age. Every Carolingianist has learned from frequent, often frustrating, recourse to the lexicons of Ducange or Niermeyer how imprecise and fluid language usage was among Carolingians trying to express themselves in Latin about almost any facet of their individual and collective lives. The Carolingian world itself was aware of its language problems, as evidenced especially by the well-documented concerns among its leaders with improving reading capabilities, establishing a common grammar and orthography, correcting faulty texts, finding means to transmit religious messages to audiences who spoke no Latin, and even improving the language employed in public administration.\textsuperscript{110}

This evidence points to a contextual situation of crucial importance to the history of the eighth and ninth centuries. The Carolingian world was faced with something bordering on a crisis in communication. That crisis was the product of the need to find a common mode of communication to serve what was envisaged as a political-religious-cultural commonwealth the members of which were becoming increasingly separated by language differences. The seriousness of that problem was dramatically revealed in the famous incident in 842, when “Louis [the German] and Charles [the Bald] came together in the city once called Argentaria, but now in the vulgar language called Strasbourg, and swore oaths, set down below, Louis in the Romance and Charles in the German language. And before they swore, they spoke to the assembled people, one in the German and the other in the Romance language.”\textsuperscript{111} This episode points up what investigators of the history of European languages have made clear. By the Carolingian age, spoken and written Latin was evolving along lines that placed barriers in the way of understanding and communicating a cultural heritage encased in classical forms of that language.\textsuperscript{112}

That same age was a crucial period in the development of diverse, increasingly exclusive branches and subbranches of spoken Germanic and Romance languages.\textsuperscript{113} A concern for bridging the language gap is evident in the Carolingian record: for instance, Charlemagne’s efforts to “learn foreign languages”\textsuperscript{114} his putting into writing of the ancient poems, preparing a grammar of his native language, and giving the months and the winds new names in his own tongue;\textsuperscript{115} Lupus of Ferrières’s dispatch of three of his pupils to Prüm to learn German, a step “so necessary nowadays that nobody except the idle neglect it”;\textsuperscript{116} and the ef-
forts to utilize spoken vernacular languages as vehicles of written expression.\textsuperscript{117}

Without going so far as does one scholar who recently argued that the Carolingians invented something called medieval Latin to resolve this communication problem,\textsuperscript{118} it seems imperative that modern scholars be sensitive to the fact that Carolingian cultural life evolved in a context marked by flux in written and spoken language and by a concern on the part of Carolingians that the media might determine the message. Modern scholars must forgo the luxury of taking for granted that even learned Carolingians understood each other with certainty and precision. Rather, they must assume that uncertainties about language colored every aspect of thought and expression. They must take into account that the way Latin was learned may have shaped how it was used. They must leave open the possibility that language difficulties colored the reception of ancient authorities. They must ask whether the way a particular author wrote was affected by his perception of the linguistic capabilities of the intended audience. They must inquire whether language problems limited the distance a learned person could go in pursuing any intellectual issue or aesthetic urge, especially one calling for a vocabulary of abstraction.

Such baffling issues, rooted in the larger context within which Carolingian culture evolved, demand from modern scholars a special sensitivity to language and communication techniques and strategies; perhaps their capacity to deal with these problems would be enhanced by greater familiarity with modern linguistic and communication theory.\textsuperscript{119} How blessed it might have been for modern scholars had Boniface and Alcuin set the world on course to what appears to be its ultimate language destiny by insisting that the Franks could not gain salvation without learning Anglo-Saxon!

In setting the context for Carolingian cultural life, it is always crucial to keep in mind that its many components were crafted by individuals. Modern scholars have certainly been aware of this aspect of Carolingian cultural activity; they have supplied their readers with careful assessments of various factors surrounding the external, public lives of the leading participants in Carolingian learning: their social status, training, offices, and connections. Dare one suggest that scholars should go further? Perhaps in setting the context of Carolingian thought and expression they should expand their treatment of individuals to include certain aspects of the human psyche to the extent that that elusive entity is known. This suggestion is
not intended to open a new frontier for psychohistory. The point to be made is much more modest. It is simply to propose that, in defining their contextual parameters, investigators of Carolingian cultural life might be well served by keeping in mind two rather simple considerations relating to human behavior. First, they should remember that there appear to be facets of the human psyche, relating to personal fulfillment, that condition behavior of all kinds. For example, people seem possessed of an urge to improve their status, seek beauty, laugh, establish intimate contacts with others, imagine, and locate themselves in time and place. Second, scholars should not forget that cultural activity defined in its broadest terms—reading, writing, talking, thinking, singing, and drawing—can serve as an instrumentality through which these psychic urges are unleashed and realized.

There are facets of the Carolingian cultural scene that suggest such personal psychic urges were instrumental in giving shape and tone to thought and expression. A quest for personal advancement certainly played a part in the uses to which a long succession of Carolingian poets—including Angilbert, Alcuin, Theodulf, Ermoldus Nigellus, Walahfrid Strabo, and Sedulius Scottus—put learning and artistry in their quest for the patronage of kings, bishops, abbots, and nobles. One suspects that inner urges released by learning had some part in shaping the flights of imagination encountered in Carolingian poetry, hagiography, history writing, manuscript illumination, vision literature, and even forgeries. Does it not require an interplay of learning and imagination to explain Walahfrid Strabo’s portrayal of Charlemagne, “the master of the mighty Roman people,” standing rooted to the spot in hell, while “opposite him was an animal tearing at his genitals,” his reward for defiling “his good deeds with foul lust”? Or the enchanting picture of St. Brigid hanging her laundry on trembling sunbeams, which bore their dripping burden as if it were attached to a strong rope? Or Sedulius Scottus’s eulogy to a wether?

An inner personal urge to laugh must have prompted the flashes of humor that lace otherwise somber Carolingian literature. Modern scholarship has demonstrated that the Carolingian learned world faced a serious and onerous task in fashioning suitable grammar textbooks, a task involving the reception and appropriation of Donatus, Priscian, and Martianus Capella and the selection and elucidation of suitable illustrative passages from classical authors in a way that, in Bede’s words (borrowed from Virgil), would allow learners “to pluck the flowers and fruits,” while remaining on the alert for the “chill snake lurk[ing] in the grass.” But it took an individual with both learning in grammar and a sense of humor to put
such weighty matters into perspective. Such was the author who lamented that because he had lost all hope in life and found his soul troubled, he took his grammar book to the market in order to sell it so that he could buy a couple of drinks, only to find that “no one would buy it or even look at it.” The learned John Scottus Eriugena must have released some kind of inner genie when he wrote his epitaph for Hincmar of Reims: “Here lies Hincmar, a thief and a mighty miser; one noble deed he managed, that he died.” It would take a congress of eminent psychiatrists to explain what prompted Hucbald of Saint-Amand to write a poem of 146 lines on baldness (Egloga de Calvis), every word of which began with the letter c.

When one reads Carolingian letters or poetry, it is hard to avoid concluding that an inner urge for affective ties added a dimension to learned discourse; as one author put it, “little verses” helped to fortify the force that “embraces dear ones divided in body but conjoined by love in their minds.” Some personal aesthetic sense certainly helped to give shape to such monuments to learning as Walahfrid Strabo’s De cultura hortorum or Ermoldus Nigellus’s description of the church and palace at Ingelheim.

These random examples suggest that Carolingian culture was shaped and colored by factors somewhat distant from the somber theme that dominates much of modern discussions, namely, culture as an instrument that permitted Charlemagne and his “splendid dynasty” to “cause innumerable peoples to achieve supreme salvation.” Carolingian cultural expression in all its forms had a human dimension stemming from the personalities of those involved in its development. Unless that dimension is given place in the contextual framework within which cultural activity is considered, modern scholars may be impeded from discerning some of the most fundamental features of the Carolingian achievement. Taking into account the psyches of intellectuals and artists as factors in cultural life has not deeply troubled cultural historians dealing with fin de siècle Vienna or Edwardian England. Why not utilize it as a contextual tool in seeking to enrich our understanding of the Carolingian renaissance?

In weaving a contextual tapestry capable of enriching the study of Carolingian cultural life one ultimately faces a disconcerting problem rooted in chronology in both its diachronic and synchronic dimensions. That problem can be formulated in terms of what most would probably agree is a fundamental proposition about historianship. The essence of reconstructing the past involves a double operation: capturing what the situation was at any given moment and charting what happened beyond that moment to
produce new situations along a linear continuum. To particularize that axiom, a comprehensible history of the phenomenon called the Carolingian cultural renewal must unfold in a way that illuminates the state of culture at any moment and describes and explains change over time.

A case can be made that modern scholarship has not met this condition. It has not fashioned an adequate reconstruction of the diachronic dimension of Carolingian cultural life defined in broadest terms. One would be hard pressed to direct readers to a synthetic treatment of Carolingian cultural life that would permit them to comprehend in a holistic way the difference between the cultural world of the early eighth century and that of the early tenth century. Equally lacking are studies that provide a panoramic picture of the cultural scene at any one moment.\textsuperscript{131}

As a substitute for a comprehensive history of Carolingian culture as it evolved over time, one has to be content with topical treatments of various facets of Carolingian cultural life, each arranged on a chronological basis: histories of education, theology, political theory, law, poetry, architecture, iconography, and so forth. Sometimes such treatments are lumped together in a single volume; more often each topic is the subject of a separate study.\textsuperscript{132} Such works make only a minimal effort to interconnect or synchronize the several changing strands of Carolingian cultural activity. Nor are their authors always careful in asking whether the topical categories into which they partition Carolingian cultural activity are entirely appropriate to the Carolingian world. Taken together, all of these works provide only pieces of a mosaic that do not fall together to constitute a meaningful design.

Why, it may be asked, has the immense scholarly effort devoted to Carolingian cultural activity failed to produce an effective intellectual and cultural history of the age? Why is there no treatment that charts the continuous movement in the world of culture viewed globally from some beginning to some end, while still allowing the film to be stopped at any point to frame a synchronic portrayal of the world of culture? Are the sources too meager? Are Carolingianists too specialized? Are they incompetent? Is Carolingian "culture" a concept so amorphous that its history is impossible? None of these explanations is very persuasive.

Rather, the difficulty lies in a contextual situation not always taken into account by historians of Carolingian cultural life. In a unique way and to an unusual degree Carolingian cultural activity was a creature of circumstance. Almost any cultural artifact of the era was the product of a unique and particular circumstance. Each such artifact makes sense only in the particular context that produced it. To paraphrase an expression recently
abroad in the political realm, the Carolingian cultural landscape was filled with a thousand points of circumstance, each of which constituted the essential context within which cultural life unfolded.

The reason why Carolingian cultural activity was so much a product of an infinite array of particular circumstances seems fairly obvious. Intellectual and creative activity developed in an ambience in which cultural life had no independent institutional basis, intellectuals and artists had no discrete status, there was no concept of an independent function for learning and expression, and there was no self-standing conceptual framework for the structuring of cultural endeavor. Schools were not conceived as institutions to promote creative cultural activities; they were places for teaching skills with a wide societal application. If schools contributed to cultural life, it was a consequence of some special circumstance. Masters were not intellectuals devoted by profession to the cultivation and advancement of learning. If their efforts advanced cultural life, it was because some unique circumstance provided such an outcome. Bishops, abbots, and abbesses were not founders, directors, and fund-raisers for advanced institutes or universities with clearly delineated cultural missions. They were individuals with multiple, diverse, and particular agenda who exercised their talents and spent their resources in the service of cultural life in order to respond to a particular situation at a particular moment. Libraries were not collections of books crafted to promote a preconceived vision of learning and its ends. They were fortuitously shaped collections that might serve the enhancement of cultural life if the circumstances permitted. In short, what counted across the entire Carolingian scene in terms of cultural activity were particular circumstances, discrete conditions, and special situations that might give impetus and shape to thought and expression.

It is this absence of an independent structural and conceptual framework for cultural activity that challenges modern scholars in their effort to fashion an account of Carolingian intellectual and cultural history that is cohesive both diachronically and synchronically. They have no institutional and conceptual template around which to structure their treatment of the Carolingian cultural effort. This lacuna is not a product of scholarly inadequacy; it stems from the fact that no such template existed in the Carolingian world. To write a holistic cultural history of the Carolingian period requires the ferreting out of the particular circumstances that produced every individual facet of cultural life and a concurrent effort to establish within a chronological framework linkages with other cultural "events" shaped by equally unique circumstances.
There are encouraging signs that modern scholarship is increasingly cognizant of the need to investigate Carolingian culture in the context of particular circumstances. It would be possible to compile an impressive list of recent studies of individual cultural figures, schools, libraries, scriptoria, texts, and monastic centers that emphasize the particular, localized contextual factors affecting each of these aspects of cultural life. It is becoming increasingly possible to take a position at a particular moment in the Carolingian age from which one can catch a panoramic view of the diversity of cultural activity occurring simultaneously and discern the complex network of interactions of varying degrees of intensity affecting cultural development in a global sense. Continued awareness of the diverse contextual situations shaping the development of Carolingian cultural life remains the best hope for progress toward a total history of Carolingian culture.

Raising the issue of the global configuration of Carolingian culture prompts one final observation on the context affecting Carolingian thought and expression. Anyone who is familiar with the history of the entire Mediterranean world in the eighth and ninth centuries cannot help being struck by contextual similarities in the Western European, Byzantine, and Islamic worlds that may have important cultural implications. There were changes of dynasties in each realm, each requiring special rationalization. There were highly charged struggles concerning the locus of authority in each society. There were religious reforms everywhere. There was a palpable quickening of learning in Anglo-Saxon England, Ireland, the Lombard kingdom, the Byzantine empire, the Muslim empire, and in Francia. There were building booms in Rome, Pavia, Constantinople, Baghdad, and Aachen. There were administrative reforms in many different centers.

Perhaps all these congruencies mean nothing in setting the context for Carolingian cultural life. But maybe, just maybe, they are signs of a historical season during which something was in the air that sparked new levels of human endeavor on a global scale. Pending a more profound inquiry, perhaps the point can best be formulated in question form. Was the quickening of Carolingian cultural life a part of a larger cultural movement whose contours were molded by a contextual framework embracing several civilizations? Having reached a particular stage in their historical evolution, did all of the heirs of the Roman Empire, of Greco-Latin culture, and of Hellenistic religious syncretism encounter a common set of challenges that could only be met by a return to a religious-cultural heritage formulated in late antiquity? With apologies for an impertinent para-
phrase, perhaps there would have been no Charlemagne without the Abbasids and the Isaurians. If so, then a rich harvest of understanding might accrue to scholars willing to explore Carolingian culture in a comparative context informed by simultaneous developments in cultural life in Byzantium and Islam.

In concluding this exploration of the context of Carolingian cultural life it should be said that there remain many other aspects of Carolingian society that deserve attention as factors affecting Carolingian cultural activity. In the original plan of this study the intent was to explore the implications for thought and expression of such additional contextual matters as these: the challenge placed before learning by the existence in the Carolingian world of what the anthropologists call elements of a primitive mentality; the tensions between elite and popular culture; the expanded spatial and temporal awareness resulting from the extension of the Carolingian political sway and from a changing historical consciousness; the regionalism and ethnic rivalries endemic in the Carolingian world; the dependence on memorization and orality in acquiring and transmitting learning; the utilization of authoritative texts in fragmentary form.

To keep the chapter within reasonable bounds it was necessary to trust that Heiric of Auxerre (ca. 841–975) spoke the truth when he wrote, “To have begun something is already a little part of completing it.” The purpose of the chapter was not so much to be all-embracing as it was to heighten awareness that the treatment of Carolingian cultural life might be enriched by expanding the contextual framework within which scholars approach it. Perhaps what has been said will serve as an invitation to scholars primarily concerned with Carolingian cultural history to expand their knowledge of the totality of Carolingian society in search of factors that influenced cultural activity. Equally important, perhaps these reflections will remind Carolingianists engaged in the investigation of any aspect of Carolingian society to be sensitive to the possibility that whatever they discover may have ramifications that can help advance the understanding of Carolingian cultural life in all its forms.

Notes

and the Continent in the Eighth Century (The Ford Lectures), p. 322. The same sentiment was expressed in a letter sent to the Frankish bishops from the Council of Frankfurt in 794; see Concilia aevi karolini, no. 19, ed. Albert Werminghoff, MGH, Concilia, pt. 1 (Hannover and Leipzig, 1906), p. 156.


3. In addition to the remarks on this subject in the preceding chapter, see, e.g., Richard E. Sullivan, "Changing Perspectives on the Concept of the Middle Ages"; and Sullivan, "The Carolingian Age: Reflections on Its Place in the History of the Middle Ages."


5. Eginhard, Vie de Charlemagne, chap. 33, ed. Halphen, p. 98. Such was probably not the fate of Charlemagne's library; see Bernhard Bischoff, "Die Hofbibliothek unter Ludwig dem Frommen."


10. Quoted above; see n. 4.


12. The expression "Carolingian renaissance" was first given prominence by J.-J. Ampère, Histoire littéraire de la France avant le douzième siècle, 3:31–33.

13. No attempt will be made to provide a full bibliographical guide to the extensive body of scholarship upon which the following assessment of the current contextual framework shaping the study of Carolingian learning is based.

14. Awareness of that "crisis" is clearly reflected in the following eighth-century sources: The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar, with Its
The Context of Cultural Activity


16. For example, in his Egloga the poet Moduin of Autun has an old poet rebuke an aspiring young poet in this fashion: “Publice nulla canis, nulli tua carmina digna” [you say nothing of public events, your poetry satisfies no one]; for that reason everyone, including “precipius . . . David,” spurns the aspirant’s “hideous verse”; text and trans. from Godman, Poetry, p. 192, lines 33–36.

17. For a full treatment of the Carolingian sense of “the norms of rectitude,” see Josef Fleckenstein, Die Bildungsreform Karls des Grossen als Verwirklichung der norma rectitudinis.


19. On the problem of recovering tradition in the early Middle Ages, see Yves M.-J. Congar, Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay; Karl F. Morrison, Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300–1140; La cultura antica nell’occidente latino dal VII all’XI secolo; and Norbert Kamp and Joachim Wollasch, eds., Tradition als historische Kraft: Interdisziplinäre Forschungen zur Geschichte des früheren Mittelalters.

20. Examples of such studies focusing on individuals include the following: Alain Stoclet, Autour de Fulrad de Saint-Denis (v. 710–784); Wolfgang Edelstein, Erudita und Sapientia: Weltbild und Erziehung in der Karolingerzeit: Untersuchungen zu Alcuins Briefen; Luitpold Wallach, Alcuin and Charlemagne: Studies in Carolingian History and Literature; Deng-Su I,

On grammar and rhetoric, see, e.g., James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*; and Louis Holtz, *Donat et la tradition de l’enseignement grammatical: Étude sur l’“Ars Donati” et sa diffusion (IVe–IXe siècle) et critique*.


The Context of Cultural Activity

Development of Doctrine, vol. 3: The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300); John Marenbon, From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre: Logic, Theology, and Philosophy in the Early Middle Ages; and Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy (480–1150): An Introduction, pp. 43–89.


On ecclesiology, see Morrison, The Two Kingdoms: Ecclesiology in Carolingian Political Thought; Congar, L’Ecclesologie du haut moyen âge de saint Grégoire le Grand à la désunion entre Byzance et Rome; and Brigitte Szabó-Bechstein, Libertas Ecclesiae: Eine Schlüsselbegriff des Investiturstreits und seine Vorgeschichte, 4.–11. Jahrhundert.

For the visual arts, see Wolfgang Braunfels, et al., eds., Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben, vol. 3: Karolingische Kunst, ed. Braunfels and Hermann Schnitzler; Jean Hubert, Jean Porcher, and Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, L’Empire carolingien; Florentine Mühlerich and Joachim E. Gaedcke, Carolingian Painting; Carol Heitz, L’Architecture religieuse carolingienne: Les Formes et leurs fonctions; Heitz and Jean Roubier, Gallia Praeromane: Die Kunst der merowingischen, karolingischen und frühromischen Epoche in Frankreich; Marcel Durlat, Des barbarcs à Pan milieu; Heitz, La France pré-romaine: Archéologie et architecture religieuse du haut moyen âge du IVe siècle à Pan milieu; and C. R. Dodwell, The Pictorial Arts of the West, 800–1200. Not available was “L’Art et la société à l’epoque carolingienne: Actes des XXIIIe Journées romanes de Cuxa.”

For brief overviews of music in the Carolingian era, see Susan Rankin, “Carolingian Music”; and Morrison, “Know Thyself”: Music in the Carolingian Renaissance.” For longer treatments, see Richard Crocker and


24. For examples of this interpretation, see Gustave Schnürer, L'Eglise et la civilisation au moyen âge, 2:9–177; and Jacques Paul, L'Eglise et la culture en occident, IXe–XIIe siècles, 1:256–92. It becomes increasingly difficult to sustain this position in the face of recent scholarship; for a convenient summary, see John J. Contreni, "The Tenth Century: The Perspective from the Schools." For fuller treatments, see Heinrich Fichtenau, Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts: Studien über Denkurst und Existenz im einstigen Karolingerreich; and Il secolo di ferro: Mito e realtà del sec. X.

25. For a succinct summary of this debate and a basic bibliography (including the reference to Ganshof's remark), see Contreni, "Inharmonius Harmony: Education in the Carolingian World," pp. 81–84. To Contreni's bibliography should be added the following: Anita Guerreau-Jalabert, "La 'Renaissance carolingienne': Modèles culturels, usages linguistiques et structures sociales"; Janét L. Nelson, "On the Limits of the Carolingian Renaissance"; Heitz, "Renaissances éphémères du haut moyen âge (VIIe–Xle siècles)"; and Lawrence Nees, A Tainted Mantle: Hercules and the Classical Tradition at the Carolingian Court, pp. 3–17 (with special emphasis on art history).

26. Considerations of space make it impossible to acknowledge in what follows all of the scholarly literature that has contributed to the points that will be made. Any reader interested in a basic reading list on the Carolingian world might turn to Theodor Schieder, ed., Handbuch der europäischen Geschichte, vol. 1: Europa im Wandel von der Antike zum Mittelalter, ed. Theodor Schieffer, pp. 527–632; or to Arnold Angenendt, Das Frühmittelalter: Die abendländische Christenheit von 400 bis 900, pp. 461–87.

27. For this point, see Sullivan, "The Carolingian Age," pp. 281–85, nn. 29–37. To the references cited there should now be added F. M. Clover and R. S. Humphreys, eds., Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity, and Jacques Fontaine and J. N. Hillgarth, eds., Le Septième Siècle: Changements et continuités/The Seventh Century: Change and Continuity.

28. The Carolingian world had this list well in mind, as is evident in a poem by Theodulf of Orleans; Theodulfi Carmina, no. 45, ed. Dummler, MGH, Poetae 1:543–44 (English trans. in Godman, Poetry, pp. 168–71).


32. Symptomatic of this difficulty is the fact that a scholar could recently write, “No one work covers this difficult transitional period.” See Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, p. 428. Some potentially fruitful suggestions are contained in the various essays in *I problemi dell'occidente nel secolo VIII*.


35. For some illuminating reflections on the relationship between power and culture, see Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1: *A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*.


38. These matters are treated in detail in Heinrich Hahn, *Jahrbücher des fränkischen Reiches*, 741–752; and Ludwig Oelsner, *Jahrbücher des*
fränkischen Reiches unter König Pippin. See also G. Wolf, “Grifos Erbe, die Einsetzung König Childerichs III. und der Kampf um die Macht: Zugleich Bemerkungen zur karolingischen ‘Hofhistoriographie.’”

39. Jörg Jarnut, “Chlodwig und Chlothar: Anmerkungen zu den Namen zweier Söhne Karls des Grossen.” It is not inconceivable that such an action resulted from uneasiness felt by Charlemagne upon reading a letter from Cathwulf written about 775 that raised the specter of failure because the Frankish king had too few columns to support the fortress of God; see Epistolae variorum Caroli Magni regnante, no. 7, ed. Dümmler, MGH, Epp. 4 (Berlin, 1895): “Paucas firmiter columnas, ut timeo, castra Dei recum habes sustenare” (p. 503).


43. For an overview of cultural activity at the Lombard court in the eighth century see Bezzola, Les origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise, 1:24–33; and Riché, Education and Culture, pp. 336–45, 399–415.


55. Angilberti . . . Carmina, no. 2, ed. Dümmel, MGH, Poetae 1:360: “David amat versus . . . David amat vates” (lines 2–3). The chapters by Lawrence Nees and Thomas F. X. Noble contained in this volume provide compelling evidence of the ways in which art and theological discourse were shaped to sustain the fitness of the Carolingians to rule.

56. An illuminating study might emerge from an effort to view this theme on the evidence provided in various forms of cultural expression, following the model so brilliantly carried out with respect to poetry by Godman, Poets and Emperors.

57. For examples of this tendency, see Hans Hubert Anton, Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit; Eberhardt, Via Regia: Der Fürstenspiegel
58. "Deficiet quorum sceptrum de semine numquam, / Donec in ignivoma
veniet rex nube coronans!" Walahfrid Surabo, De imagine Tetrici; text and
trans. from Godman, Poets and Emperors, p. 141. Hrabanus Maurus
expressed a similar sentiment in praising Louis the Pious; see De laudibus
sanctae crucis, PL 107:145–46: "Sicque eius sobolis laeta propago /
Succedens maneat sceptra tenendo, / Donec saecula sua iura tenebat / Et
terrae solidus permanet orbis." For a more recent edition with a French
translation of this passage, see Raban Maur, Louanges de la Sainte Croix,
p. 170.

59. On this issue in general, see, e.g., Riché, Les Écoles et l’enseignement; and
McKitterick, The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789–895,
pp. 1–154. Illustrative on individual bishops are the works of Dahlhaus-
Berg, Italiani, Heyse, Rissell, Devisse, and Savigni (cited n. 20, above). See
also Egon Boshof, Erzbischof Agobard von Lyon: Leben und Werk; Gerhard
Schneider, Erzbischof Fulco von Reims (883–900) und das Frankenreich; Dag
Norberg, L’Oeuvre poétique de Paulin d’Aquilée: Edition critique avec
introduction et commentaire; Raymund Kötje and Harald Zimmerman,
eds., Hrabanus Maurus: Lehrer, Abt und Bischof; Kötje, Die Bussbücher
Halitgars von Cambrai und des Hrabanus Maurus; introduction to Amalarii
episcopi Opera liturgica omnia, ed. John Michael Hanssens, vol. 1; Allen
Cabaniss, Agobard of Lyons: Churchman and Critic; Eugen Ewig,
"Beobachtungen zur Entwicklung der frankischen Reichskirche unter
Chrodegang von Metz"; and Heinz Dopsch and Roswitha Ruffinger, eds.,
Virgil von Salzburg: Missionär und Gelehrter: Beiträge des internationalen

60. Perhaps modern scholars concerned with the episcopal role in cultural life
have had their attention diverted by the complaints of Carolingian bishops
about the burdens placed on them by royal demands. For example, the
constrictive impact of royal demands on the intellectual life of bishops was
well expressed in a letter written by Claudius, bishop of Turin, complaining
about the adversities he encountered in attempting to write a commentary
on Paul’s letters to the Corinthians; see Claudii Taurinensis episcopi Epistolae,
no. 6, ed. Dümmler, MGH, Epp. 4:601, lines 16–22 (English trans. in
Pierre Riché, Daily Life in the World of Charlemagne, trans. McNamara,
p. 86).

61. A major problem facing those seeking to evaluate the role of the episcopacy
in any particular aspect of the Carolingian world is the lack of an adequate
synthetic treatment of the Carolingian episcopacy, comparable to such
treatments as Martin Heinzellmann, Bischofherrschaft in Gallien: Zur
Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert; or
Georg Scheibelreiter, Der Bischof in merowingischer Zeit. A promising
beginning in filling that lacuna is Michael Edward Moore, "A Sacred
Kingdom: Royal and Episcopal Power in the Frankish Realm (406–846)."

62. The studies on political theory, law, and ecclesiology cited in n. 21, above,
treat this issue in detail.
63. Treated in detail in Hermann Josef Sieben, *Das Konzilsidea der alten Kirche*; see also Moore, "A Sacred Kingdom," chaps. 1–3.


65. For an excellent summary of renewed episcopal collaboration in church councils, see Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit im Frankenreich und in Italien*, pp. 37–96.


For recent discussions of episcopal involvement in the dynastic change, see Werner Affelde, "Untersuchungen zur Königserhebung Pippins: Das Papstum und die Begründung des karolingischen Königstum im Jahre 751"; Stoclet, "La ‘Clausula de unctione Pippini regis’"; Enright, *Iona, Tara, and Soissons*; David Harry Miller, "Sacral Kingship, Biblical Kingship, and the Elevation of Pepin the Short"; and Matthias Becher, "Drogo und die Königserhebung Pippins."


On Boniface's difficulties see Jarnut, "Bonifatius und die fränkischen Reformkonzilien (743–748)"; and Heinz Joachim Schüssler, "Die fränkische Reichssteilung von Vieux-Poitiens (742) und die Reform der Kirche in den Teilreichen Karlmanns und Pippins: Zu den Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Bonifatius."

On the quest for episcopal solidarity, see Karl Schmid and Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Voraussetzung und Wirkung des Gebetsbundes von Attigny."

On the reforming councils, see Carlo de Clercq, *La Législation religieuse franque: Etude sur les actes de conciles et les capitulaires, les statuts diocésiens et les règles monastiques*, vol. 1: *De Clovis à Charlemagne (507–814)*; Ferdinand
Lot and Robert Fawtier, eds., *Histoire des institutions françaises au moyen âge*, vol. 3: *Institutions ecclésiastiques*, by Jean-François Lemarginier, Jean Gaudemet, and Guillaume Mollat, pp. 7–48; Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit*, pp. 37–96, 406-22; Saint Chrodegang; and Ferminio Poggiaspalla, *La vita comune del clero dalle origini alla riforma gregoriana.* Perhaps a better understanding of the mentality and collective aspirations of the Carolingian episcopacy could be gleaned from a close scrutiny of the legislative enactments of several prominent bishops; these texts are in the process of being edited by the MGH; see *Capitula episcoporum*, pt. 1, ed. Peter Brommer (Hannover, 1984). Brommer provides a list of existing editions of these texts (p. ix).

66. Morrison, *Tradition and Authority*, pp. 3–264, is the fundamental work on this issue.


68. For the text of Theodulf’s description of Wibod with an English trans., see Godman, *Poetry*, pp. 160–61, lines 205–12; the description of the despicable “Scottelus” follows, lines 213–34.


75. Bullough, “Aula renovata.”

76. That seems to be the implication of chap. 72 of the *Admonitio generalis*; see MGH, Capit., no. 22, ed. Boretius, 1:59–60. Suggestive on this issue are Riché, “Recherches sur l’instruction des laics du IXe au XIe siècle”; and McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*, pp. 211–70.
The Context of Cultural Activity


78. On laymen in the court circle of Charlemagne, see Bezzola, Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise, 1:88—119.


81. Ibid., no. 136, pp. 205—10.

82. Eginhard, Vie de Charlemagne, chap. 29, ed. Halphen, p. 82.


84. On nobles collecting art, see Riché, “Trésors et collections d’aristocrates laïques carolingiens”; and Herbert L. Kessler, “A Lay Abbot as Patron: Count Vivian and the First Bible of Charles the Bald.”

On libraries, see Riché, “Les Bibliothèques de trois aristocrates laïcs carolingiens.”


87. These issues are treated brilliantly with extensive bibliographies in the articles by Werner, Nelson, Josef Semmler, Boshof, Stuart Airlie, and Johannes Fried in Charlemagne’s Heir, ed. Godman and Collins, pp. 3—204, 231—74.

88. On Judith’s cultural talents and interests, see Bezzola, Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise, 1:162—63; and esp. Elizabeth Ward, “Caesar’s Wife: The Career of the Empress Judith, 819—829”; and Ward,
“Agobard of Lyons and Paschasius Radbertus as Critics of the Empress Judith.”

89. No attempt can be made here to provide an adequate guide to that scholarship. A general bibliographical orientation is provided by Giles Constable, Medieval Monasticism: A Select Bibliography. See also the bibliographies provided by Wallace-Hadrill, The Frankish Church, pp. 429–40; and Riche, Les Écoles et l’enseignement, pp. 418–40.

90. For example, Jean Leclercq, The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture.

91. Indicative of this problem is the slight attention given to monasticism as an institution in general manuals treating Carolingian church history; recent examples illustrating this point include Hubert Jedin, ed., Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte, vol. 3: Die mittelalterliche Kirche, pt. 1, Vom kirchlichen Frühmittelalter zur gregorianischen Reform, by Friedrich Kempf, et al., pp. 3–29, 62–196, 294–364 (pp. 3–25, 54–178, 258–319 in the English trans.); McKitterick, The Frankish Church (the term monasticism does not appear in the index to this study); Wallace-Hadrill, The Frankish Church, pp. 123–419; Paul, L’Eglise et la culture en occident, 1:103–21; and Angenendt, Das Frühmittelalter, pp. 401–19. The limitations on our understanding of Carolingian monasticism are made especially clear by such efforts at synthesis as Philibert Schmitz, Histoire de l’ordre de Saint Benoît, 1:15–134; Il monachesimo nell’alto medioevo e la formazione della civiltà occidentale; and Jean Décarreaux, Moines et monastères à l’époque de Charlemagne.

The most illuminating work done recently on Carolingian monasticism has been by Josef Semmler; see esp. the following: “Les Statuts d’Adalhard de Corbie de l’an 822” (with A. E. Verhulst); “Karl der Grosse und das fränkische Mönchtum”; “Episcopi potestas und karolingische Klosterpolitik”; “Pippin III. und die fränkischen Klöster”; “Mönche und Kanoniker im Frankenreich Pippins III. und Karls des Grossen”; “Benedictus II: Una regula—una consuetudo” (esp. important); “Le Souverain occidental et les communautés religieuses de IXe au début du XIe siècle”; and “Benediktinische Reform und kaiserliches Privileg: Zur Frage des institutionellen Zusammenschlusses der Klöster um Benedict von Aniane.”

However, Semmler’s studies do not provide a holistic picture of Carolingian monasticism. Fruitful new approaches to the place of monasticism in Carolingian society are suggested by Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich: Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung (4. bis 8. Jahrhundert); Otto Gerhard Oexle, Forschungen zu monastischen und geistlichen Gemeinschaften im westfränkischen Bereich: Bestandteil des Quellenwertes “Societas et Fraternitas”; Prinz, ed., Mönchtum und Gesellschaft im Frühmittelalter; Raymund Kottje and Helmut Maurer, eds., Monastische Reform im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert; Prinz, “Grundzüge der Entfaltung des abendländischen Mönchtums bis zu Karl dem Grossen”; Prinz, “Kirchen und Klöster als literarische Auftraggeber”; F. Bult, “Die Klöster Frankens bis zum IX. Jahrhundert”; Semmler,
The Context of Cultural Activity

99

"Le Monachisme occidental du VIIIe au Xe siècle: Formation und reformation"; McKitterick, "Le Rôle culturel des monastères dans les royaumes carolingiens du VIIIe au Xe siècle"; Jacques Stienon, "Quelques réflexions sur les moines et la création artistique dans l'Ocident du haut moyen âge (VIIIe-Xe siècle)"; and Oexle, "Les Moines d'occident et la vie politique et sociale dans le haut moyen âge."

92. One scholar put the point with special clarity in a recent work: "Le monachisme a déjà une longue histoire au moment où les rois francs soumettent à leur autorité la plus grande partie de l'Europe occidentale. Aussi la vie monastique est-elle, dans l'Empire, autant un héritage du passé que le fruit de la renaissance carolingienne"; see Paul, L'Eglise et la culture en occident, 1:103. The negative perspective on Carolingian monasticism is represented with particular vigor by such studies as Lorenz Weinrich, Wala, Graf, Mönch und Rebell: Die Biographie eines Karolingers; Karl Suso Frank, "Vom Kloster als schola dominici servitii zum Kloster als servitium imperii"; and Brigitte Kasten, Adalhard von Corbie: Die Biographie eines karolingischen Politikers und Klösterwiehers. Other examples include Karl Voigt, Die karolingische Klosterpolitik und die Niedergang des westfränkischen Königstums: Laienläbe und Klosterrinhaber; Prinz, Klerus und Krieg im früheren Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Rolle der Kirche beim Aufbau der Königsherrschaft; Joachim Wollasch, "Herrschaft des Abtes"; Kuchenbuch, "Die Klostergrundherrschaft im Frühmittelalter: Eine Zwischenbilanz"; Dieter Hägermann, "Die Abt als Grundherr: Kloster und Wirtschaft im frühen Mittelalter"; Herbert Zielinski, "Die Kloster- und Kirchengründungen der Karolinger"; and Jean-Pierre Devroey, "Ad utilitatem monasterii: Mobiles und Bedürfnisse von Gestion dans l'économie monastique du monde franc."


94. McKitterick, The Frankish Church, p. 158, n. 5.

95. For example, one notes the slight attention given to Carolingian spirituality in Jean Leclercq, François Vandenbroucke, and Louis Bouyer, La Spiritualité du moyen âge, pp. 91—122 (pp. 68—94 in the English trans.); and André Vauchez, La Spiritualité du moyen âge occidental: VIIIe—XIIe siècles, pp. 9—32. That this subject may be opening up for more serious study informed by new approaches is suggested by the essays contained in Segni e riti nella chiesa altomedievale occidentale; and Santi e demoni nell'alto medioevo occidentale (secoli V—XI); and by such studies as Sibylle Mähl, Quadriga Virtutum: Die Kardinälsjugenden in der Geistgeschichte der Karolingerzeit; J.-C. Poulin, L'Idéal de la sainteté dans l'Aquitaine carolingienne; Nikolaus Staubach, "Culmus divinus" und karolingische Reform; F. Chiovaro, et al., eds., Histoire des saints et de la sainteté chrétienne, vol. 4: Les Voies nouvelles de la sainteté, 605—814, ed. Riché, and


98. See n. 1, above.

99. *Sancti Remigii Lugdunensis episcopi De tribus epistolis Liber*, chap. 8, PL 121:1002. Although Alcuin might not have liked the implications of “modernity,” others were not especially disturbed. The anonymous “Hibernicus Exul” wrote with respect to the poetry of his day: “Priscis quae extant tempora praeterimus”; *Hibernici Exulcis Carmina*, no. 5, ed.
Dümmler, MGH, Poetae 1:400, line 10. And “Poeta Saxo” wrote in his poetic account of the deeds of Charlemagne: “Ob hoc, mirificos Karoli qui legeris actus, / Desine mirari historias veterum” (text with trans. in Godman, Poetry, p. 342, lines 653–54).

100. This point is brought out clearly by Pelikan, The Christian Tradition, vol. 3.

101. B. Augustini sententiae . . . colligente Amulone episcopo Lugdunensi, Praefatio, PL 116:106–7: “. . . ut devorus et simplex lector, ne magnis et multiplicibus praedicti Patris [Augustine] disputationibus fugetur, vel etiam profunditate ac perplexitate tantarum questionum deterrentur aut perturbetur.” That this was a real problem is clearly demonstrated by an appeal made to Alcuin by the sister and the daughter of Charlemagne, asking him to prepare a commentary on the Gospel of John that would help them to escape the confusion they faced in trying to cope with the writings of Augustine; see Alcuini Epistolae, no. 196, ed. Dümmler, MGH, Epp. 4:323–25.


104. Sancti Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis et martyris Contra Haereses Libri Quinque, bk. 3, chap. 2, PG 7:846: “Non enim per litteras traditam illam, sed per vivam vocem.”


108. For good summaries treating this concern, see Roberto Giacone, “Giustificazione degli ‘Studia liberalia’ dalla sacralizzazione alcuiniana all’inmonumentismo di Giovanni Scotti Erivgena”; and Riché, Les Ecoles et l’enseignement, pp. 247–84.

109. Suggestive on this point are Bullough, “Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven: Liturgy, Theology, and the Carolingian Age”; McKitterick, The Frankish Church, pp. 53–58; and Morrison, The Mimetic Tradition of Reform in the West, pp. 121–35.
110. These matters are central to all treatments of the Carolingian renaissance; good surveys are provided by Riché, *Les Ecoles et l'Enseignement*, pp. 47-118, 187-344; and McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*.


113. For a brief orientation, see Lot, "Quels sont les dialectes romans que pouvaient connaître les Carolingiens?"; and Riché, *Les Ecoles et l'Enseignement*, pp. 306-9. A fuller treatment is provided by Philippe Wolff,
The Context of Cultural Activity


116. *Servati Lupi Epistulae*, no. 70, para. 2, and no. 91, para. 5, ed. Marshall, pp. 73, 89; in thanking Markward, abbot of Prüm, for his efforts, Lupus wrote: “linguae vestrae pueros nostros fecistis participes, cuius usum hoc tempore pernecessarium nemo nisi nimis tardus ignorat” (letter 70).


118. Roger Wright, *Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France*.

suggestive of the issues posed for Carolingian scholars by these developments are the remarks made in the preceding chapter in this volume, and the bibliography cited there.

120. As brilliantly demonstrated by Godman, Poets and Emperors; also suggestive is McKitterick, "Royal Patronage of Culture."

121. From his *Visio Wettini*; the text and translation here is from Godman, Poetry, pp. 214-15. The critical edition of this work is by Dümmler, MGH, Poetae 2 (Berlin, 1884), pp. 301-33; for the text accompanied by an English trans., see D. A. Traill, *Walahfrid Strabo's "Visio Wettini": Text, Translation, and Commentary.*

122. From a poem by an Irish author, Colman; text and translation from Godman, Poetry, pp. 278-79.


128. From a poem by Walahfrid Strabo; text and translation from Godman, Poetry, pp. 216-17.


130. From the "Poeta Saxo's" account of the deeds of Charlemagne; text and trans. in Godman, Poetry, pp. 342-43.

131. The challenge faced in establishing a synchronic view of Carolingian learning is well illustrated in such recent works as Braunfels, et al., eds., *Karl der Grosse,* vols. 2-3; Margaret T. Gibson and Janet L. Nelson, eds., *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom;* Godman and Collins, eds., *Charlemagne's Heir,* pp. 489-687; and McKitterick, ed., *Carolingian Culture.*

132. A multiple-treatment example is illustrated by Laistner, *Thought and Letters*
in Western Europe, pp. 189–386. Examples of single-topic studies are cited in n. 21, above.

133. I claim no originality in applying this terminology to the Carolingian cultural scene; Bezzola, *Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise*, described Carolingian literature as "un littérature de circonstance" (1:128).

134. For suggestive guides to scholarly works illustrating this approach, see the bibliographies in Riché, *Les Ecoles et l'enseignement*, pp. 418–40; Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, pp. 428–39; Sullivan, "The Carolingian Age," pp. 295–97, nn. 54–57; and Ganz in chap. 8 of this volume, n. 54.
