

CHARLEMAGNE: THE MAKING OF AN IMAGE, 1100-1300

By

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My dissertation and all of my work is dedicated to my wife Shannon. Without her support none of this would have been possible. I would also like to dedicate this work to my daughter, Elizabeth, who was born the semester that I graduated. She has become an inspiration to me.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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The image of Charlemagne represents one of the most highly developed historical and literary legends of the Middle Ages. His representation ranges from the majestic to the bland; from grandiose to weak and from a saint to a despot. He exemplified the greatest of military heroes and stood as the champion of Christianity, while at the same time his character and the sources in which it appears illustrated many of the problems of an unstable feudal world. By the twelfth century, the former Carolingian King and Emperor represented the greatest attraction of any historical character of the medieval period. The image of Charlemagne extends from early Latin panegyrics such as *De gestis Karoli Magni* by the Monk of St. Gall of the ninth century to the grand epics and romance works of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries such as the *Chanson de Roland*.

At the center of this dissertation is a study of the representation of Charlemagne in twelfth and thirteenth century literature. The focus of my analysis is on a representative collection of sources that were produced in France, Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia. They date from 1100 to 1300. I focus on popular images of crusading, religion, and

kingship as linked with the portrait of Charlemagne. The emphasis is on the impact the image of Charlemagne had on crusaders' ideals, crusading activities, and views on Christian kingship.

The impact of the crusades forced three worlds into escalated conflict that would forever transform the political, cultural, and religious landscape of Europe and the Middle East. The impact on medieval literary genres was nearly as dramatic. From epic to romance, churchmen and poets of this period quickly incorporated the crusading themes into their work. The literature of this period represents a militant and religious culture that found its ethos and role models in the lives of former kings, emperors and conquerors and especially in that of Charlemagne. The crusading ethos dominated some of the most popular genres of that time and acted as propaganda for a culture that embraced chivalric values, and increasingly became a society that exported its militarism in the name of religion. My research has yielded a number of conclusions. I argue that the literary sources had a tremendous influence on Western views of crusade, kingship, and the creation of vernacular history. The deeds of Charlemagne served as a precedent for the crusades and an example for future kings.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“Charlemagne, claimed by the Church as a saint, by the French as their greatest king, by the Germans as their compatriot, by the Italians as their emperor, heads all modern histories in one way or another; he is the creator of a new order of things.”¹ As late as the 1820’s, the legend of Charlemagne for historians such as Sismondi represented the embodiment of an age-old ideal and a crucial part of modern European identity and ethnicity. Why was Charlemagne, a figure from the distant past, able to achieve such high status and command such enormous respect?

The image of Charlemagne represents one of the most highly developed historical and literary legends of the Middle Ages. Arguably, no figure, not even the illustrious King Arthur, was able to achieve the far-reaching, continent-wide appeal and popularity of Charlemagne. His representation ranges from the majestic to the bland; from grandiose to weak and from a saint to a despot. He exemplified the greatest of military heroes and stood as the champion of Christianity, while at the same time his character and the sources in which it appears illustrated many of the problems of an unstable feudal world. By the twelfth century, the former Carolingian King and Emperor represented the greatest attraction of any historical character of the medieval period. The image of Charlemagne extends from early Latin panegyrics such as *De gestis Karoli Magni* by the

¹ J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Histoire des Francais*, vol. 2 (Paris: Treuttel and Wurtz, 1821), p. 217; quoted in Robert Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France: A Thousand Years of Mythology*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), p. xvii.

Monk of St. Gall of the ninth century to the grand epics and romance works of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries such as the *Chanson de Roland*.

At the center of this dissertation is a study of the representation of Charlemagne in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century literature. The significance of the chronological bracket becomes obvious to anyone familiar with crusade history. The dissertation examines the popular images of crusading, religion and kingship as linked with the portrait of Charlemagne. The approach used is inter-disciplinary in that I use primarily literary sources to answer questions of a fundamentally historical nature. Many historians do not focus on literary sources when dealing with the image of Charlemagne. Ideas of religion, kingship, and crusading were common in many literary sources. Combining these sources with various historical sources, such as chronicles, allows historians to get a better idea of how and why the image was formed.

The crusading period (c. 1096-1291) is a crucial period in medieval history. The impact of the crusades of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries forced three worlds into escalated conflict that would forever transform the political, cultural, and religious landscape of Europe and the Middle East. The impact on the medieval literary genre was nearly as dramatic. From epic to romance, churchmen and poets of this period quickly incorporated the crusading themes into their work. The literature of this period represents a militant and religious culture that found its ethos and role models in the lives of former kings, emperors and conquerors and especially in that of Charlemagne. The crusading ethos dominated some of the most popular genres of that time and acted as propaganda for a culture that embraced chivalric values, and increasingly became a society that exported its militarism in the name of religion.

The focus of my analysis is on a representative collection of sources that were produced in France, Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia. They date from ca. 1100, just after the First Crusade, to ca. 1300. In an attempt to capture the multi-faceted alteration of Charlemagne's image depending upon the cultural context, I chose texts written in French, German, and Italian, as well as Latin. The relatively long period covered by this study is designed to provide sufficient room for comparison.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries are important in a number of respects. This is the period that C.H. Haskins in his famous book labeled the "Twelfth Century Renaissance." There was significant Church reform in this period (particularly concerning the investiture controversy). There was an increase in the translations of scientific and literary works of the Greek corpus and this was the time of the rise of the university. In addition, there was considerable political and social change. However, it is the literary development that is of interest to this research project.

Historiography

The representation of Charlemagne as a crusader, and ideal king, and the familial predecessor of the Capetian ruling family in the sources of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is quite common. The historiography of this period is extremely diverse and dense. My goal, of course, is to develop a viable historical perspective of the representation of Charlemagne as he appears in the most vernacular literary and historical works in Latin of the crusading era.

Because the research is centered primarily on the literature of the crusades and in some ways the crusaders themselves, it will be necessary to deal with a number of secondary materials concerning both subjects. The crusades have been well researched over the last fifty years and will serve as an important backdrop to the dissertation. Many

studies by Kenneth Setton, Carl Erdmann, and Jonathan Riley-Smith have made strong contributions in the field. Their work, along with many others, has demonstrated not only the importance of the field, but its complexity as well. However, most of the work tends to focus on the political and religious conditions rather than on the cultural and literary aspects.

Given the great popularity of crusade-related topics among students of the Middle Ages, there is surprisingly little work done on crusading propaganda. My dissertation attempts to fill that gap by examining literary works rarely used as historical sources by traditional historians. In doing so, my dissertation engages with current work in cultural history focusing on the influence of texts on social reality. In that respect, it is both an elaboration of and engages with the innovative approach taken by Paul Freedman in *Images of the Medieval Peasant*.² Freedman's approach combines traditional intellectual history with the newer cultural focus. Freedman uses literary and artistic sources to demonstrate their effect on perceptions and treatment of medieval peasants. The emphasis is on the impact the representation of Charlemagne had on crusaders' ideals and crusading activities. The image is used as a kind of propaganda for crusading. My interest is in the use and abuse of crusading imagery rather than the Crusades per se. As such, my work builds upon and contributes to current debates about literary work in shaping historical context.

In addition, there is little, if any, attention given to the role of the image of Charlemagne in that body of crusading literature. Many scholars who have studied the image of Charlemagne in the literature of the period see it as a portrait of a highly

² Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 295.

idealized past. On the other hand, the literary studies often fail to give the much-needed historical perspective. In some ways, the work of Gabrielle Spiegel has helped to bridge this gap.³ Her work on the development of medieval historiography during the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries is really key for my analysis on the use of the image of Charlemagne in different contexts. In particular, her research indirectly indicates that literary representations and “legends” were able to make their way into the vernacular and royal historiography of the Late Middle Ages.

Charlemagne is perhaps the most popular historical figure of the Middle Ages. He has been celebrated as king, emperor, the unifier of Europe, the founder of France, and the defender of Christendom. However, although there is a great amount of scholarship concerning the epic literature, there is not a concerted effort to isolate and analyze the Charlemagne aspect as it relates to the crusades. In addition, there has not been a study that looks at the various regions that the literature was produced and then compares and contrasts these images. It is important to approach the topic from an interdisciplinary perspective in order to gain a wider outlook. In a number of ways, the literary and historical image of Charlemagne created in the twelfth-century mirrored that of a glorified knight and crusader. The image was created by the society and culture that traveled to the Holy Land and participated in the crusades.

The history of Charlemagne has been analyzed from a number of different perspectives. He has been the subject of a number of biographies and histories, but most have tended to focus on his military exploits and his coronation. As a result, there is only minimal discussion of his legend. To some extent, the legend of Charlemagne is an

³ Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text; The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

entirely different subject than that of his real life. Historians have long been interested in the development and impact of the legend of Charlemagne in medieval Europe. As early as the 1890's historians were analyzing the myths and legends associated with Charlemagne. Among the most prominent was Gerhard Rauschen who, in his *Die Legende Karls des Grossen im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert*,⁴ analyzed the *Descriptio, Vita Karoli Magni* and various other texts associated with the Charlemagne canonization. Rauschen was one of the first to put the development of the legend into an historical context.

In the area of Charlemagne legend, some of the most important work came in the mid-twentieth century with the work of Robert Folz. One of the seminal books on the subject is his *Le Souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'empire germanique médiéval*.⁵ This is an exhaustive study of the memory of Charlemagne in the German Empire, drawing on literary and religious manifestations in sources from the ninth to the early sixteenth-century. The memory of Charlemagne is a combination of both history and legend and has connections to imperial as well as religious ideas. The study is somewhat limited in that it does not consider the whole of Europe but rather just the German case. Folz does not focus on the literary tradition, but annals, biographies, and various other sources and argues for a continuity. In his *Etudes sur le Culte liturgique de Charlemagne dans les églises de l'Empire*,⁶ Folz expands his work to other parts of

⁴ Gerhard Rauschen, ed. *Die Legende Karls des Grossen im 11. Und 12. Jahrhundert*, (Gesellschaft für rheinische Geschichtskunde, 7. Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1890).

⁵ Robert Folz, *Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'empire germanique médiévale*, (l'Univ. de Dijon, 7. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1950; rpt. Geneva: Droz, 1973).

⁶ Robert Folz, *Etudes sur le Culte liturgique de Charlemagne dans les églises de l'Empire*, (Fac. Lett. Univ. of Stasbourg, Série bleu, 115. Stasbourg: Impr. Des Dernières Nouvelles de Straasbourg, 1951; rpt. Geneva: Droz, 1973).

Europe and argues that by the end of the twelfth century, an extensive “cult” of Charlemagne existed in France, Germany and the Low Countries. After his canonization in 1165 by the Anti-Pope Pascal III, a number of prayers, masses, and feasts developed in honor of Charlemagne. I agree with Folz’s idea that the memory and legend of Charlemagne represented an illustration of Christian virtue. However, Folz sees the legends in Germany as more localized than the French tradition, whereas I would argue that they are a part of the broader context of Western culture.

The work of Folz was followed by others such as Karl-Ernst Geith’s *Carolus Magnus: Studien zur Darstellung des Grossen in der deutschen Literatur des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*.⁷ Geith analyzes a number of sources in which Charlemagne appears, such as the *Rolandslied* and the *Kaiserchronik* and such themes as *Karl und David* and *Kanonisation*. He discusses previous work done on the subject. This study is a fairly comprehensive analysis of the medieval German literature in which Charlemagne is an essential figure. According to Geith, the German sources almost always depict Charlemagne in a positive light. This is not always the case in the French and later Italian traditions. But again, this study is limited in scope as it only considers the German case.

The image or representation of Charlemagne is certainly dynamic and varies from region to region. The overly positive portrayal of the former Emperor in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries described by Geith did not always translate to other regions.

According to Karl Bender, many of the authors of the Franco-Italian texts chose to adopt

⁷ Karl-Ernst Geith, *Carolus Magnus: Studien zur Darstellung Karls des Großen in der deutschen Literatur des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*, (Munich and Bern: Francke, Bibliotheca Germanica, 19. 1977).

a more negative model of Charlemagne.⁸ A more recent study, Julianne Vitullo's *The Chivalric Epic in Medieval Italy*, confirms Bender's argument.⁹ Vitullo demonstrates that later (thirteenth to fifteenth century) epic works adopted in Italy often had a less than ideal image of Charlemagne. Henning Krause argued that the social ideology of the rising bourgeoisie and the unique political situation in Italy characterized by such elements as the ability to vote the Emperor out of power dictated the manner in which the representation of Charlemagne was imported.¹⁰ For the most part, although not exclusively, the negative imagery was a later, post-twelfth century, phenomenon.

Scholars have also used the image of Charlemagne or the example of Charlemagne in studies involving various topics such as kingship, religion, and the rise of court culture. Stephen Jaeger in his work *the Origins of Courtliness*¹¹ argues to a certain extent that courtly ideals were invented by medieval bishops for entertainment. In the work, Jaeger uses the precedents of Carolingian and Ottonian culture extensively. The image of Charlemagne and his court culture was idealized in the later period just as his supposed crusading exploits were.

Of course, it is not a novel idea to suggest that the sources are a more accurate reflection of twelfth- and thirteenth-century culture than that of their Carolingian subject matter. In fact, Richard Kaeuper has recently pointed out that, "Scholars have long

⁸ Karl Bender, "Les métamorphoses de la royauté de Charlemagne dans les premières épopées franco-italiennes," *Cultura Neolatina* 21 (1961), 164-74.

⁹ Julianne Vitullo, *The Chivalric Epic in Medieval Italy* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Henning Kraus, "Aspects de l'histoire poétique de Charlemagne en Italie," In *Charlemagne et l'épopée romane*, pp. 103-23.

¹¹ Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939-1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

recognized that these twelfth-century poems reflect society and issues of their time of composition, not those of the eighth- or ninth-century setting in which the action takes place.”¹² It should not be surprising that Charlemagne plays an important role in the literary development of a period so far removed from his own time, since he represented such an iconic position in French culture and history.

Many scholars looking at the image of Charlemagne have concentrated on the French literary corpus of the high and late Middle Ages. One area of the literary corpus that received particular attention is the *chanson de geste* (songs of heroic deeds). With nearly 100 surviving poems such as the *chanson de Roland*, *chanson de Jerusalem*, *chanson d’Aspremont* in which there is a crusading theme, this genre represents one of the most popular aspects of French medieval literature. In many of these works, Charlemagne is a principal character and comes to embody the ideal chivalric values of twelfth century knighthood.

In particular, the origins of the genre have fascinated and puzzled scholars for more than a century. As early as 1939, Grace Frank succinctly summarized the interests in the *chansons de geste*:

Who shall say what inspired the first author of a *chanson de geste* with the idea of writing a historical romance in decasyllabic *laisses*? His ultimate inspiration may have been a pilgrimage or a crusade, a Latin poem or a saint’s life in the vernacular, or merely an intense desire to tell a stirring tale. His proximate source may have been a song or a story, a monk, an inscription, a church chronicle, or some combination of these. All we know is that, whether his hero was Charlemagne or Roland or William, there can be no doubt that his poem soon became widely popular and much imitated. And if this poem were the ‘original’ of our *Chanson de Roland* – as it may well have been – one can readily understand why!¹³

¹² Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). p. 231.

¹³ Grace Frank, “Historical Elements in the Chanson de Geste” in *Speculum* 14 (1936) p. 212.

Frank's analysis of the interest in *chanson de geste* in general and the song of Roland in particular reflects the questions historians and literary scholars were interested in pursuing. Although the field has expanded greatly, modern-day scholars are still debating many of the same issues. In particular, the debate concerning origins and meaning is still prevalent today.

The study of the legend of Charlemagne in the *chanson de geste* may be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century with the work of Gaston Paris. The question of origins tended to be the first question asked by many nineteenth century historians. After all, understanding the birth of the *chanson* went a long way in completing one's understanding of one's own origins and that of the French State. Discovering the birth of the national consciousness was the goal of scholars all over Europe. They worked in the midst of an environment that embraced romanticism and nationalism in a way not entirely understood by today's scholars.¹⁴ Trapped in a world obsessed with nationalism and the origins of the modern state, scholars such as Gaston Paris utilized methodologies that would answer the most pressing concerns of the day such as national history, national origin and most importantly identity. In fact, Robert Morrissey contends that "Paris fashions a specifically French solution: he argues the Romance-language culture derives from both Germanic and Provençal cultures but rises above them and contains the seed of a French identity."¹⁵ Paris and other scholars working in the midst of intense nationalist movements saw in the figure of Charlemagne as the creation of the nation. In

¹⁴ Michael Zink, *Medieval French Literature: An Introduction*, trans. Jeff Rider, (New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), p. 25.

¹⁵ Morrissey, 289.

addition, it was through poetry such as the *chanson de geste* that the “collective” and “national” identity manifested itself.

In his *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne*, (1865), Paris proposed that a long oral tradition preceded the first written source of the *chanson de geste*. He believed that there existed oral epics called *cantilènes* that were more or less a contemporary of the military events they described. The *cantilènes* were numerous and fairly short and sewn together creating the *chanson de geste*. In addition, they were composed by bards who followed courts and followed the Scandinavian and Celtic customs that found their way into early medieval culture. Another scholar, Léon Gautier, agreed with many of the ideas put forth by Paris. However, in his *Epopées Françaises*, Gautier argued that the original *cantilenae* had been composed in German rather than Romance.¹⁶ In 1884, the Italian scholar Pio Rajna agreed that there may have been a German origin since ‘Germanic’ epics did exist during the Carolingian period and that since no *cantilène* is saved. He also maintained that the stories were not really ‘popular’ since they reflected the ideals of the warrior aristocracy.¹⁷

The first to challenge Gaston Paris’ thesis was Joseph Bédier. Bédier maintained that the *chansons* did not derive directly from the events narrated. Bédier believed that the epics had been invented by the *trouvères* of the High Middle Ages. He argues that they were first invented by monks to advertise pilgrimage sites. The stories were used to bolster the reputations of various sanctuaries and pilgrimage sites that housed famous relics. Bédier’s advocates have since maintained that there were no real epics before the

¹⁶ Urban T. Holmes, Jr, *A History of Old French Literature from the Origins to 1300*, (New York: F.S. Crofts & CO., 1938), p. 67.

¹⁷ P. Rajna. *Le origini dell’epopea francese* (Florence, Sansoni, 1884).

year 1000. In addition, they deny any connection between the oral tradition and actual historical events. The focus for these scholars is mainly the literary value of the poems, which they thought to be more important than the historical background revealed by Paris and his successors.

In the 1920's, Ferdinand Lot¹⁸ defended the 'traditionalist' interpretation by attacking Bédier's 'individualism' and by asserting "that the *chansons de geste* preceded and created the cult of epic heroes linked to sanctuaries on the pilgrimage routes rather than succeeding [them]"¹⁹ Ramon Menéndez Pidal²⁰ also defended the 'traditionalist' position by concentrating on the oral component of the chanson. He argued that the chanson "was not born from the imagination or the pen of its author in a definitive, perfect, and unchangeable state" and that "there was no authentic or correct text."²¹ To Pidal, each version or manuscript represented a performance and showed how the genre transformed generation to generation.

Another group of scholars shifted the emphasis of the debate about origins to the potential impact of early medieval Latin literature. The 'Latinists' maintain that in order to discover the antecedents of the *chanson de geste*, an analysis of the pre-existing Latin corpus is necessary. This group of scholars credits the Latin Literature, "with keeping alive the memory of historical events and, together with its classical models, providing a

¹⁸ Ferdinand Lot, "Études sur les Légendes épiques françaises IV: Le Cycle de Guillaume d'Orange," *Romania* 53 (1927): 449-73.

¹⁹ Zink, 28.

²⁰ Ramon Menéndez Pidal, *La Chanson de Roland y el neotradicionalismo (origenes de la épica románica)* (Madrid: Espansa-Calpe, 1959).

²¹ Zink, 29.

literary technique for their embodiment.”²² To such scholars, Latin sources such as, classical works, non-classical poetry, Biblical stories, and Saint’s lives had a considerable influence on the twelfth and-thirteenth century writers of the *chanson*. The authors were educated men familiar with the Latin tradition. Thus, the Latin tradition provided the background for content and technique for the birth of epic in the twelfth century. However, not all representatives of this group of scholars agree on the most influential sources. Some opt for epic Latin sources, while others insist on anecdotal works.²³

In the second half of the twentieth century, a number of scholars expanded the debate on the oral component of the *chanson*. Scholars such as Jean Rychner and Joseph Duggan have emphasized the number of possible variants the oral component adds. They argued that “...each perform...[represented] a new creation of a poem that does not truly exist in and of itself, independent of its performance.”²⁴ In his *The Song of Roland: Formulaic Style and Poetic Craft*, Duggan further argued that the ‘formulaic style’ is evidence of the oral character. This complicates the issue because, for Duggan, the written *chanson de geste* leaned in the later period towards the Romance ‘written’ genre of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. To Duggan, the ‘formulaic style’ was more prevalent in the early epic period, which indicated an oral component. A number of scholars have disputed that formulaic style is, “unique to oral literature” and claimed that is not even “proof of orality.”²⁵

²² Frank, 209.

²³ Holmes, 72.

²⁴ Zink, 30.

²⁵ Zink, 31.

Those scholars that have suggested that the *Chanson de Roland* and other sources within its category have a long orally transmitted past have contended that the true origins lay in a pagan-Germanic past.²⁶ They argue that the ethics and values are dictated by a Germanic shame culture, not by religion. However, in my opinion this interpretation is too narrow. In particular, I see the religious element as a critical element in the story's theme, which is usually entirely neglected, by those that would argue that it is a bi-product of a Germanic shame culture. Rather than guess about how old the stories are or might be, it is necessary to work with the written sources we have.

Lately, the argument has been advanced that *Chanson de Roland* as we know it, may in fact be an 'invention' of nineteenth century scholars. Andrew Taylor suggests that the categories in which contemporary scholars view Roland are based on nineteenth-century works, and are in essence post-medieval. This invention was a conscious attempt to find, "a direct expression of the national spirit, in a pure and original state..."²⁷ The pressing need in post-revolutionary France for a national epic provided the impetus for the interest in the poem. Taylor argued that the title attributed to the poem is entirely misleading. According to Taylor, what "we call the poem it contains the *Chanson de Roland*, accepting the title Michel first provided, one that occurs nowhere in the manuscript."²⁸ As a result, contemporary scholars who study the work are from the beginning affected by the perceived context of its compilation. Everything from the title

²⁶ An early example of this interpretation can be found in the work of George Fenwick Jones, *The Ethos of the Song of Roland*, (Maryland, John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963).

²⁷ Andrew Taylor, "Was There a Song of Roland?" *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*, 76 (2001) p. 34.

²⁸ Taylor, *Was There a Song of Roland*, p. 53.

to the production of the poem is colored by some of the previous nineteenth-century scholarship.

It is entirely possible, as scholars of more recent times have suggested that there is no single theory of origins that applies to all the poems of the *chanson de geste*. A more multi-dimensional view has been adopted by some in an effort to shed light on the background of the popular epics of the later Middle Ages. With this approach, it is necessary to examine each poem individually, while still considering the larger cultural background from which they were produced, in order to determine whether it contains historical references to a distant past.

Much like the study of the *chanson de geste*, the legend of Charlemagne preoccupied all of the scholars mentioned above. The character and representation of Charlemagne, because of the frequency and prevalence, is arguably the most important figure of medieval epic. Writing in the early twentieth century William Comfort confirmed this idea when he argued that,

...the figure of the great Emperor dominates to a great degree the whole body of the poetry which occupies our attention. It is with his epic personality and with his far-reaching activities that other persons and events are brought into relation. A study of the personages in the French epic necessarily begins with Charlemagne.²⁹

The most ambitious study of the legends and myths surrounding Charlemagne is Robert Morrissey's *Charlemagne and France: A Thousand Years of Mythology*.³⁰ The study traces the developments of legendary status from the ninth century works of Einhard and Notker to the development of medieval epic and romance to a

²⁹ William Wistar Comfort, "The Character Types in the Old French Chanson de Geste," *Publication of the Modern Language Association* 21 (1906), p. 282.

³⁰ Robert Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France: A Thousand Years of Mythology*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

‘remythologizing’ in the Renaissance and Reformation and finally, to the nationalist interpretations of nineteenth century scholars.

Sources, Theory & Methodology

There are a number of ways to approach the sources proposed for this study. Any analysis of the legend of Charlemagne and the epic tradition in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has to take into account the possibility that Gaston Paris’ arguments or a variant of his ideas concerning oral tradition might have some validity. As such, it is prudent to consider the work of modern theorists who deal with oral tradition. One of the most important names in the field is Jan Vansina. In his, *Oral Tradition as History*, Vansina discusses the epic tradition and the use of oral tradition as a source of history. Vansina sees Epic as “a narrative couched in poetic language, subject to special linguistic rules of form.” Many of the sources used in this study do fit the component definition of epic including “... a historical dimension...correspond [ing] to actual events of minor or major importance.”³¹

However, oral tradition is only a small component of the larger historical framework. It is not my intention to draw conclusions or even speculate as to a possible oral tradition or pre-history of the epic sources included in this study. I do not deny the relevance of this issue, but that it would significantly alter my conclusions. This is, without question, an important avenue of research, but simply not one that is the focus of this study. Therefore, I will proceed with the impression that the twelfth and thirteenth century texts that are available to historians and literary scholars are the products of their

³¹ Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, (James Curry, London; Heinemann Kenya, Nairobi, 1985), p. 25.

own time, and not a written version of long passed oral tradition. However, this is not to say that there are not previous models from Antiquity and the early Middle Ages that the twelfth and thirteenth century authors are not familiar. A combination of primarily Latin models certainly had an impact on the form and function of twelfth and thirteenth century literature. An ideal example is sources concerning the lives of saints. Although there are marked differences between twelfth century epic and hagiography, there are similarities in style and theme. Epic tends to be considerably longer and the concept of ‘heroism,’ unlike saint’s lives is virtually always the main theme.

I start from the premise that, as Paul Zumthor noted “literature simultaneously reflects and interprets a state of society.”³² Zumthor’s theoretical discourse is a much better fit for the present study. He covers a broad range of sources and deals with the continuities and broader tendencies of poetics. He also covers both medieval Latin and vernacular sources. He deals most significantly with twelfth century poetics and as a result to some extent with twelfth century culture. His questions for the historian are some of the same that will be the focus of this study. Those are; how did history determine the text’s mode of being? Was the relationship between the text and its public affected by the culture of the day? What was the author’s relationship to that culture and how did it affect the text? The author’s intent and reception, and the social function of the text are also critical for this discussion. Many of these functions included

³² Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett, (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 5.

“celebration or commemoration, instruction, and edification, moral-ethical exemplification, glorification and panegyric, propaganda and persuasion.”³³

All of these social functions certainly apply to the medieval epic. However, although modern scholars recognize epic literature as being closely associated with legend and fiction, this was not the case in the Middle Ages. Prior to the fourteenth century, most of medieval society would not have distinguished between epic and history, although it has been suggested that medieval readers and listeners, distinguished fact and fiction within literary sources. This distinction manifested itself through the style of a text, whether it was prose, which tended to hold more credibility, or verse which was more closely associated with fiction. According to Nicholas of Senlis, a thirteenth century translator of *the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, “...many peoples had heard recounted and sung (the story of Charlemagne’s expedition to Spain), but never has so many lies been told as by those singers and jongleurs who spoke and chanted it. No rhymed tale is true; all that it speaks is lies, for it knows nothing but hearsay.”³⁴ According to Zumthor, the thirteenth and fourteenth century marked a “...shift of perspective”³⁵ when dealing with society’s sense of history. Although a prose translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* is no more historically accurate than the *Song of Roland* in verse, it would be reasonable to conclude that twelfth- and thirteenth-century culture viewed the stories of Charlemagne as part of their collective memory and history and accepted them as true.

³³ Suzanne Fleischman, “On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages” *History and Theory*, 22, (1983), p. 282.

³⁴ Quoted in Gabrielle Spiegel, “Forging the Past: The Language of Historical Truth in Middle Ages,” *The History Teacher*, 17 (1984), p. 271.

³⁵ Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, p. 287.

In addition, there are a number of typologies to consider when dealing with literary genres of the high and late Middle Ages. According to Suzanne Fleischman, “twelfth- and thirteenth-century epics like historical drama of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, are acknowledged to have served a commemorative function: each performance constituted a ritual celebration of great figures of the past, a communal act of self-affirmation and identification. These historical genres functioned as the collective memory of a community that was largely unlettered.”³⁶ The sources and therefore the typologies in this study are somewhat limited because of space and time. The Middle Ages is a highly symbolic period.³⁷ Consequently, even with limited written sources, it is possible to gain a general sense of the culture of the period.

The logical place to begin the analysis is to look at the French sources associated with the representation of Charlemagne. The sources that came from France most likely represent the largest and most important body of evidence as well as the earliest sources to be considered. The amount of literature produced during this period is extensive. In addition, Charlemagne definitely plays a predominant role in most of the literature from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Charlemagne appears quite often in French medieval literature and especially in the *chansons de geste*. The *chansons de geste* typically fall into one of three categories. The first is the cycle of the king (*Geste du Roi*). The second group is the *Geste de Doon de Mayence*, and these stories deal with adventures associated with the king (Charlemagne)

³⁶ Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, p. 283.

³⁷ Maria Corti, *An Introduction to Literary Semiotics*, trans. Margherita Bogat and Allen Mandelbaum, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 17.

feuding with some rebellious subject or vassal. The third cycle is associated primarily with the stories about William of Orange and his family. There are of course some that do not fit any of these three categories. Many, if not most, of these stories that I will analyze in this dissertation have a strong crusading theme, such as the *Chanson de Roland*.

The next area that is critical to analyze is the corpus of German literature produced in the same period. Much of this literature appears later than the French sources and is, in fact, based on some of the same stories and texts. The sources of German literature are not as abundant as the French collections, but the German sources do mirror the French tradition in many important ways. For example, two principle sources, the *Rolandslied* and *Willehalm* have significant references to Charlemagne and are based on earlier French texts. In the former (based on the Song of Roland), Charlemagne is a prominent character, and in the later, his legendary image is often mentioned. In both cases, as in the French sources, the image and presence of Charlemagne is very strong. The *Kaiserchronik* represents a large chronicle of Roman and German Emperors to Conrad III and includes significant passages on Charlemagne. However, the image that comes from the German sources might also be a great deal narrower than that of the French, simply because there are fewer sources to develop a more complex image.

It will be necessary just as in the case with the French sources that numerous forms of literature will need to be studied in order to gain the most complete perspective of the representation of Charlemagne. Although the image of Charlemagne may not vary a great deal from the image seen in the French sources, there may be subtle differences that are important when considering the importance of the image, role of the image, intended

audience, and the ultimate source of that image. In the German tradition there is an apocalyptic dimension associated with Charlemagne which does not appear in French sources. For example, according to one Bavarian source, Charlemagne, is seated in his tomb, in Aachen, in a chair. Even in death, his white beard continues to grow and when the beard has circled the stone table in front of him three times, the world will come to an end.

Another area that needs to be analyzed is the literary body of work that appears in Italy during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The sources, like those from Germany, post-date the French sources of the early crusading period. In fact, many of these sources also post-date those sources being used from Germany as well. The Italian case is also much like the German phenomenon in that many of the sources are variants of earlier French ones.

Julianne Vitullo discusses the chivalric epic in medieval Italy and argues that the image of Charlemagne is a key element in some of the more prevalent Italian works. It appears from her study that Charlemagne's representation is quite complex and takes several forms. He is a strong king and leader while at other times he is depicted as weak and unjust. There is even one story where Charlemagne is forced into exile as a young man and ends up being raised by noble Saracens. The focus in Italy is on a variety of crusading sources and stories that reflect the complexity and importance of the Charlemagne image.

The “Construction” of the Image of Charlemagne and Its Development

The chapters of the dissertation are arranged both thematically and chronologically. However, preference will be given to theme and there will be some overlap in chronology

between sources of different chapters. Although the sources do come from various regions of Europe and this is an important aspect of the study, the chapters are not organized according to geographic region. The large number of French sources in comparison to other regions would render this approach inadequate.

Chapter 2, “Charlemagne and the *Milites Christi*: Making Myth into History,” with sources that range from the early to late twelfth century. The main sources for this chapter are the *Chanson de Roland*, *La Chanson d’Aspremont*, the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, and the German *Rolandslied* and the principal theme is crusade and holy war. As with the successive chapters, there will be other primary sources used, but these constitute the bulk of the analysis. Chapter 3, “Charlemagne and Medieval Kingship: The Making of an Ideal,” incorporates the sources *Le Couronnement de Louis*, *Willehalm*, as well as the sources from the previous chapter. The primary theme in this section is the building of the image of proper and legitimate kingship. Chapter 4, “The Unmaking of an Ideal: Charlemagne and the Feudal Order,” focuses on the problems of feudal relations, in particular, the often strained relationship between lord and vassal and between King and Duke. The main sources for this chapter are, *Girart de Vienne* and *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*. Chapter 5, “The Making of Royal History: The Convergence of Tradition and Myth,” analyzes *A Thirteenth Century Life of Charlemagne*, which is a portion of the *Grandes Chroniques*, the German *Kaiserchronik*, and the *Karlamagnus Saga* of Scandinavia. These sources are compilations of previous material reworked to give a pre-history and a legitimate authority to the rulers of the late thirteenth century. Chapter 6 is the section that contains the broader conclusions of the study.

A specific image of Charlemagne was familiar to the crusading generation of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. Charlemagne's legend had long outlasted the Carolingian Empire. However, Charlemagne's legendary status, at least to the initial crusading generation, in many ways, is well deserved. He accomplished as much, if not more, than many of the emperors of Rome in its glory days. Consequently, Charlemagne began to appear intermittently in historical sources from the time of his death (814) up to and including the First Crusade (1096-1099).

The historical image of Charlemagne depicts him as an ideal leader and warrior. This is the image that the first generation of crusaders took with them to the Holy Land. The image was then transformed and integrated into the corpus of crusade literature that is prevalent during the subsequent two centuries. It is during the crusading period that this image is most prevalent and popular. It is during this period, the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries that the most critical elements of the image and representation of Charlemagne were formed. However, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the crusading image was also part of a broader representation of Charlemagne as the ideal Christian king. In addition, there are a number of questions that are raised when looking at the representation of Charlemagne in this period. For example, is this image created before the First Crusade, or during, or immediately after? What is the interplay between 'the crusades' and images of 'kingship'? Is it the image created by the crusaders while on the journey and then brought back from the Holy Land or does it begin in Europe and then used as inspiration? Why are there also contradictory and negative images of Charlemagne? What social group or groups were responsible for its genesis? And what social group was the most likely audience?

The question of author and audience is one of the most significant and at the same time one of the most difficult. With such limited evidence, it is difficult to make definite conclusions. As Corti argues, “an author knows, as he did in the Middle Ages, that he has a definite public with a precise ideology, then his function as writer is also definite, he does not suffer the problem of having to discover it, of questioning his own activity: the work already contains in itself an image of the reader for whom it is destined.”³⁸ It is then possible to ‘see’ the audience through the work of the author or authors. In this case, the image or representation of Charlemagne could have several possible targets. One such target audience might have been the warrior aristocracy that would be best served by the lessons of religion, kingship, and warfare.

There is definitely a religious, political, and cultural importance to these images and representations. The research that I have done indicates that the image of Charlemagne at least in a political context represented a figure, and an idea, of authority and power. This ‘idea’ manifested itself into the proper or ideal image of medieval kingship. The frequent appearance of the image shows the mindset of a society and culture that revered its past leaders to the point that they helped transform them into mythical legends and saints. From a religious standpoint, there is little question that the image of Charlemagne was constructed with the idea that he represented one of the finest examples of Christian kingship and Christian heroism. However, this image is not consistent with all the literature that appears during the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. In fact, there are several chinks in Charlemagne’s armor and image, which seem to

³⁸ Maria Corti, *Introduction to Literary Semiotics*, p. 37.

appear more often in later works. In many ways, the making of the Charlemagne image occurs during the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. Naturally there is considerable influence from preceding centuries which serve as the foundation on which the image was built and with the crusading fever, that infiltrated European culture, as the catalyst that started the building process which is reflected in the *chanson de geste* and the other literary achievements of the period.

His image is multi-dimensional and multi-functional. My research concurs with portions of the work of scholars such as Robert Folz and Robert Morrissey, who see the image of Charlemagne as a portrait of a highly idealized past. Although I tend to agree with their conclusions, my focus is somewhat different. I contend that the literary sources had a tremendous influence on Western views of crusade and Holy War. The deeds of Charlemagne served as a precedent for the crusades. I do not believe that it is coincidence that the rise of epic literature, and to some extent romance, coincided with the Western crusades to the Holy Land. I argue that generally sources like the *Chanson de Roland* served as a source of propaganda. The stories were not considered literature or poetry, but rather as history. The crusading culture used this 'history' as both justification and inspiration. This idealized past helped instill a greater sense of duty among the early crusaders of the twelfth-century.

I also intend to argue that texts authored by educated churchmen have explicit messages concerning the relationship between *sacerdotium* and *regnum* (Church and State). In this context, Charlemagne is a model for twelfth and thirteenth-century leaders in that his image is an emperor or king whose main function is to protect and defend Christendom and the Church. There is a need in the twelfth-century, to borrow a phrase

from Hobsbawm, for “a continuity with the past.”³⁹ Writers for Capetian kings in the twelfth and especially the thirteenth century often chose to emphasize Capetian connections to Charlemagne in order to justify their kingship. By doing so, the Capetian writers institutionalized a history that placed Capetian kings such as Philip II and Louis IX as the successors of Charlemagne’s empire.

As far as the connection between the construction of the image of Charlemagne and the crusades, it is my contention that there is a definite relationship between the crusaders who traveled to the Middle East in 1096 and the substance and appearance of Charlemagne’s image in the literature and historical sources that followed. The importance of the legend of Charlemagne to the generation of the first crusaders and those that would soon follow on the second, third and fourth crusades convinces me of a direct correlation between the two.

³⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-7.

CHAPTER 2

CHARLEMAGNE AND THE *MILITES CHRISTI*: MAKING MYTH INTO HISTORY

Several twelfth-century sources embody an idealized image of chivalry, pilgrimage, and crusading. Some are part of the grand literary tradition born in the twelfth century that celebrate mythical and historical personalities, while others are pseudo-historical chronicles that glorify former kings and rulers and establish historical precedents for kingship and crusading. Most of them depict Charlemagne in a positive light, as the idealized military leader of Christianity. During the twelfth-century, a very distinct image was created and propagated. Charlemagne became the greatest of Christian warriors and the defender of Christendom.

Two of the most important developments in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries concerned the concepts of pilgrimage and crusade. A few decades before the First Crusade the phrases *milites christi* (knights of Christ) and *militia christi* (knighthood of Christ) were used in reference to warriors.¹ Previous to this period, they had only been used in reference to monasticism and to clergy fighting with “weapons of peace.”² Pope Gregory VII’s *militia Sancti Petri* included some of the first armed soldiers of the Church. With the emergence of new Church attitudes on ‘holy war’ and the emergence of a professional ethos of the new knighthood, the place and function of knights within medieval Christian society became clearer.

¹ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 118.

² Hans Eberhard-Mayer, *The Crusades*. 2nd edition, trans. John Gillingham, (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p 19.

Warring between Christians and Muslims had gone on for centuries prior to the First Crusade. The wars in Spain had been common since the eighth century and the wars in Sicily epitomize what Mayer calls a ‘proto-crusade.’³ The absence of an active papal cooperation separates the earlier conflict from the later crusades to the Holy Land. However, the wars in Spain would later become a substitute for crusading in the East. In the twelfth century some armies were split with “one part of the army for the eastern regions [that is, the Holy Land], another for Spain, and a third against the Slavs...”⁴ Members of these campaigns enjoyed many of the same privileges and indulgences as those that went to the Holy Land.

The image of Charlemagne as a defender of the Church actually predates the launching of the crusades in the East and the literary tradition of the twelfth century. One of the earliest instances is that of a text dated to about 1000, which recounts the Emperor’s trip to the Holy Land. Charlemagne engaged in diplomatic relations with Muslim leaders and guaranteed “protective rights in Palestine” for Christian pilgrims.⁵ The source written by a Benedictine monk, Benedetto de San Andrea del Soratte, is loosely based on a chapter from Einhard’s *Vita Karoli*. The story is recorded in the *Descriptio qualiter Karolus Magnus clavum et coronam Domini a Constantinopoli Aquisgrani detulerit qualiterque Karolus Calvus hec ad Sanctum Dyonisium retulerit*, which was dated between 1080 and 1095 and tells of another trip to the East by Charlemagne. According to the *Descriptio*, Saracen invaders attacked the Emperor of

³ Mayer, *The Crusades*, 18.

⁴“ The Chronicle of the Slavs by Helmold, priest of Boasau,” in *The Crusades: A Reader*, ed. S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, (Canada, Broadview Press, 2003), p. 271.

⁵ Steven Runciman, “Charlemagne and Palestine” in *English Historical Review* 50 (October, 1935), p. 619.

Constantinople and the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Charlemagne traveled to the region to lift the siege and rescued his Christian brothers from the Muslim onslaught.

In both sources, particularly in the *Descriptio*, Charlemagne is depicted as a pilgrim and defender of Christendom. Successful in his attempt to drive off the heathen armies, Charlemagne refuses the ‘worldly’ gifts offered to him, but requests that he be able to take some of the relics of the Passion back home to Aachen. He indeed received, ‘*spineam coronam et clavum frustumque crucis et sudarium domini cum aliis sanctissimis reliquiis – nam sanctissime matris domini semper virginis Marie camisia inerate et cinctorium, unde puerum Iesum in cunabulis cinxerunt, et brachium sancti Simeonis.*’⁶ One of the primary goals of the *Descriptio* is to explain the presence of certain relics in Saint-Denis. Particularly the relics associated with the Passion; eight thorns from the crown of thorns, a nail from the Cross, the Holy Shroud, one of Simeon’s arms, the clothes of Jesus child, and a portion of the True Cross. We are told that Charles the Bald transferred some of these relics from Aachen to Saint Denis. The source indicates, ‘*spineram domini coronam et unum de clavis, qui in carne eius fuerunt et de ligno crucis et alia quedam.*’ Among the relics that ended up at Saint Denis were the nail from the Cross, part of the crown of thorns, and the piece of the True Cross.⁷

The sources are important for a number of reasons, especially in relation to the Abbey of Saint-Denis, the Capetian monarchy, and the image of Charlemagne. The *Descriptio* creates a link between the Saint-Denis relics and the Holy Land. In addition,

⁶ Cited after A. Elizabeth, R. Brown and Michael Cothren. “The Twelfth-Century Crusading Window of the Abby of Saint-Denis: Praeteritorum Enim Recordatio Fururorum est Exhibitio” *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, (1986), p. 26, note 110.

⁷ Jean-Louis G. Picherit, ed & trans, *The Journey of Charlemagne to Jerusalem and Constantinople*. (Birmingham, Alabama, Summa Publications, Inc., 1984), p. v-vi.

this text linked Charlemagne and the Carolingian past to the Capetian Kings. This served as a way of legitimizing Capetian kingship, a problem discussed in more detail in chapter three. The representation of Charlemagne as a military leader and defender of the Church would become one of the most popular in the centuries to come. It is upon this image that twelfth century writers would build their version of events. Consequently, this image may be seen as mirroring the Crusading ethos and the development of the *milites christi*.

Charlemagne's heroic deeds took him from France and Germany to Spain and Italy. This is an important image and theme, since many of the works were written during the preparation and implementation of the First, Second, and Third Crusades. The early works such as *Roland* have the crusading spirit and ideology implicit in both text and story. Later works tend to be more explicit, directly referring to Charlemagne's campaigns as actual crusades.

There are a number of elements that are common to all sources dealing with the image of Charlemagne. The emperor's physical characteristics are often described in detail. He is also associated with a number of titles, most prominently that of King or Emperor. The figure of Charlemagne is associated with a number of positive adjectives and heroic epithets such as; 'great,' 'noble,' 'true Emperor,' 'mighty Emperor,' 'fierce-faced,' 'brave' and 'faithful.'

The most immediate and recognizable characteristic of the representation of Charlemagne is his physical prowess and his social status. Strength and skill are important attributes for any warrior and Charlemagne had a great deal of both. The issue of social status and knighthood is also a critical element. Marc Bloch and R.C. Smail

have both showed that there was a significant change in the way society viewed the concept and occupation of knighthood.

In the late eleventh and in the twelfth centuries, there were two important developments. First, knighthood became a social distinction, synonymous with nobility. The *milites* were recognized as a class, almost as a caste, of society. The reception into it of a young man of an age to bear arms was marked by a ceremony in which he assumed them, and in the literature of the twelfth century statements appear from which it is clear that only those men might become knights whose parents had been also of knightly, that is noble, birth.⁸

The combination of a ‘noble,’ ‘strong,’ ‘skillful,’ and ‘Christian’ warrior is most typical for the image of Charlemagne. Charlemagne is of course much more than just a prominent ‘noble,’ he is the King and Emperor who leads the armies. It is no surprise therefore that Charlemagne’s characteristics, both his physical attributes and personality (as a Christian leader), conform to the chivalric expectations of a twelfth-century audience. During the twelfth century, St Bernard of Clairvaux combined the ideas of knighthood and monasticism in his *De laude novae militiae*. It is also that period that “the crusader became virtually the exclusive type of true chivalry, and the crusader at that who was fired by single-minded religious zeal...”⁹

The twelfth-century sources, particularly the epic tradition were imbued with religious imagery. Charlemagne is a faithful man whose life has been about defending and extending Christianity. There are a number of churchmen who are portrayed in most stories and it is likely that churchmen were the authors of at least some of the sources involving Charlemagne. The focus of the theme involves aspects such as religious war, supernatural events, the appearance of angels, and the incorporation of the concept of

⁸ R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare, 1097-1193*, 2nd Edition, (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 106-107.

⁹ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984), p. 5.

indulgence. Religion is not only a major component of the stories, but an essential part of the creation of Charlemagne's image and character. Charlemagne seems to have a special relationship with God. His entire life has been committed to the service of the Church. In this respect, he epitomized the ethos of the twelfth-and thirteenth-century crusades. Marcus Bull argued that, "the reasons why arms-bearers from certain parts of south-western France (and very possibly from elsewhere) went on the First Crusade can be traced in patterns of behavior and sets of ideas which were principally molded by contacts with professed religion."¹⁰ Religion remained a major impetus from the First Crusade onward. This is reflected in the chivalric and crusading literature that became commonplace in the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. It would be difficult if not impossible to separate religion from the military goals in the sources. It would also be difficult to separate the representation of Charlemagne from religion and propaganda of the author, who more than likely was a churchman. Charlemagne's perceived representation that included military valor and piety served as the ideal role model for the crusaders.

Equally prominent in all the texts dealing with Charlemagne is his imposing physical stature. In the ninth century, Einhard had described Charlemagne as;

...strong and well built. He was tall in stature, but not excessively so, for his height was just seven times the length of his own feet. The top of his head was round, and his eyes were piercing and unusually large. His nose was slightly longer than normal, he had a fine head of white hair and his expression was gay and good-humoured. As a result, whether he was seated or standing, he always appeared masterful and dignified. His neck was short and rather thick, and his stomach a trifle too heavy, but proportions of the rest of his body prevented one from noticing these blemishes. His step was firm and he was manly in all his movements. He spoke distinctly, but his voice was thin for a man of his physique. His health was

¹⁰ Marcus Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade; The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970-1130* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), p. 20.

good, except that he suffered from frequent attacks of fever during the last four years of his life...He spent much of his time on horseback and out hunting, which came naturally to him [and] ... He wore the national dress of the Franks.¹¹

Einhard's physical description of Charlemagne became the basis for all subsequent references to the emperor, but twelfth-century authors added a number of elements to Charlemagne's image and character.

Roland

At the beginning of the *Chanson de Roland*, we first learn about Charlemagne's appearance.

Un falde stoed I unt fait tut d'or mer;
La siet li reis ki dulce France tient.
Blanche ad la barbe e tut flurit le chef,
Gent ad le cors e le cuntenant fier;
S'est kil demandet, ne l'estoet enseigner¹²

[There stands a chair of state, made from pure gold;
There sits the king who holds the fair land of France.
His beard is white and his hair hoary,
His stature is noble, his countenance fierce;
If anyone seeks him, there is no need to point him out.]¹³

Even at an age beyond 200, Charlemagne remains a glorious inspiration for his followers and an intimidating adversary for his enemies. Particularly interesting about this passage is the use of the term *enseigne*. This term is usually used as the name of the heraldic devices associated with a knight's weaponry. Here in *Roland*, it is an identifying

¹¹ Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, In *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, Trans. Lewis Thorpe, (London, Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 76-77.

¹² *La Chanson de Roland*, Texte présenté, traduit et commenté par Jean Durounet, (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1993), p. 66, lines 115-119.

¹³ *The Song of Roland*, trans., Glyn Burgess, (London, Penguin Books, 1990), p. 32.

insignia. It is something that separates Charlemagne from everyone else. The Saracen enemy clearly acknowledges Charlemagne as a man of courage and skill and an adversary nearly impossible to defeat. He is described as;

Carles repairet, li reis poesteifs

Li emperere od la barbe flurie,
Vasselage ad e mult grant estultie;
S'il ad bataill(i)e, il ne s'en fuirat mie.
Mult est grant doel que n'en est ki l'ociet!

En ceste tere ad estet ja . VII. anz.
Li emperere est ber e cumbatant:
Meilz voel murir que ja fuiet de camp;
Suz ciel n'ad rei qu'il prist a un enfant.
Carles ne creint nuls hom ki siet vivant.¹⁴

[...the mighty king (2133)
The Emperor with hoary white beard
Is full of valor and great daring.
If there is a battle he will not take flight;
It is a great pity that there is no one to kill him. (2605-08)

He has been in this land for seven years.
The Emperor is valiant and a fine warrior;
He would sooner die than abandon the field.
No King on earth would regard him as a child.
Charles fears no man alive. (2736-40)]¹⁵

Judging from such passages, there seems to have been a specific 'look' associated with knighthood and nobility. There also seem to be specific, visual signs of heroism, all in tone with what Maurice Keen saw as the hallmarks of knighthood and chivalry. First, a knight must be 'able-bodied' and show 'signs of valour.' Keen notes that, "the earliest sources that can fully and properly be called chivalrous are the *chansons de geste*."¹⁶

¹⁴ *La Chanson de Roland*, pp. 226, 262, 272, lines 2133; 2605-2608; 2736-2640.

¹⁵ *The Song of Roland*, Burgess, pp. 111, 115-116.

¹⁶ Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 10, 51.

The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle

By the middle of the twelfth-century, the story of Charlemagne's trip to the Holy Land, in order to rescue the Byzantine Emperor and the Patriarch of Jerusalem, had been associated with his military campaigns in Spain. The military exploits in Spain were grafted into the story of Roland, as illustrated by the so-called *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* (*Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi*). This text deals with a series of wars at the end of which Charlemagne conquered the whole of Spain and Galicia. Although referred to as a chronicle, the text is in fact written as a letter from the archbishop of Reims (a contemporary of Charlemagne) to Leoprand, the dean of Aachen. Of course, it is actually an invention of an imaginative twelfth-century churchman who must have been intimately familiar with *chansons de geste* and in particular with *Roland*. Scholars have long debated as to whom the real hero is, either Saint James or Charlemagne. It has been argued that the source was used to encourage pilgrimage to Compostella and as crusade propaganda. As some would expect, the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* is praiseful of Charlemagne and his campaigns in Spain. Charlemagne is the very perfection of kingship and imperial authority. The author refers to his campaigns clearly as a 'crusade.'

Early scholars such as Joseph Bédier have argued that the work cannot be viewed independently, but as a part of the *Book of Saint James* which has five parts or sections; of which the *Pseudo-Turpin* is the fourth part.¹⁷ Others have argued that, "it still could

¹⁷ *The Book of St. James* – Part 1 – the Sermons and Offices of St. James; Part 2 – The Miracles of the Saint; Part 3 – His Translation from Jerusalem to Compostella; Part 4 – The Pseudo-Turpin; Part 5 – A Guide for Pilgrims to Compostella

be maintained that it was redacted, *remanié* to fit into the *Book of Saint James*.”¹⁸

However, out of more than 100 *Turpin* manuscripts, none was found to pre-date the *Book of Saint James*. Most scholars date the original *Turpin* between 1140 and 1165, thus placing the text squarely in the framework of the twelfth-century reception of Charlemagne’s image and story.

Most longer versions of the *Turpin* contain a description of Charlemagne’s physical appearance, strength, activities at court, and knightly deeds.

This moreover is how that distinguished honoured emperor was: brown hair on him and ruddy countenance and a body fair and youthful,¹⁹ and he was pleasant to look at.²⁰ And there went eight feet such as a man of the longest feet of all of his time might have, to his height, and vast was his girth beneath his waist, and his middle was of a proportionate size.²¹ He had stout arms and shins and very powerful joints and he was expert in the battles of knights; he was very mirthful; his face was a foot long, he had lion like sparkling eyes, like the stone that is called carbuncle. Each of his eyebrows was a palm long,²² and whoever he might look on in anger that person used at once to tremble with fear. Eight spans were in the belt that used to go round him, not to count that what was over after fastening it.²³ He used to eat little bread but he used to eat a quarter of a sheep or a couple of hens, or a goose or a shoulder of pig or a peacock or a whole hare, and he used to drink a little wine jovially mixing water with it. He was of so much strength that he used with a sword stroke to cut through from the top of the head downward an armed knight seated on his horse together with the horse itself. He used to easily straighten out with his hands²⁴ four horse shoes at once. Another feat-of-strength of his was when a knight in arms and armour used to come and stand on his palm he used to raise

¹⁸ H.M. Smyser, “An Early Redaction of the Pseudo-Turpin (Bib. Nat. fonds lat. 17656, olim Notre Dame 133)” *Speculum* 11 (1936) no. 2, 279.

¹⁹ corpore decorus et venustus.

²⁰ visu efferus.

²¹ amplissimus renibus, bentre congruus.

²² supercilia oculorum dimidiam palmam habebant.

²³ praeter illud quod dependebat.

²⁴ facile extendebat.

him readily on his one hand. He was liberal in his gifts and upright in his judgment, and he was bright and sweet voiced in speech.²⁵

And though one might like to listen to more of his great deeds it would be burdensome for us to show them forth, as for example how he took knightly equipment from Galfridus Admiraldus, son of Toletus, when a youth at the palace of Toletus at a time when he was in banishment, and how he slew in fight for love of Galfridus the proud Barnatus, king of the Saracens and enemy of Galfridus, and how he protected many countries and cities, and how he ordained many abbacies and churches throughout the world, and how he covered the bodies and relics of many saints and martyrs with gold and silver, and how he went to visit the burial place of the Lord, i.e. Jesus Christ, and how he brought with him the tree of the Cross of Crucifixion.²⁶

For the most part, Charlemagne's appearance and skills represent an ideal illustration for Christian knights. However, the comments are also 'half-satirical' and may not be intended to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, God chooses Charlemagne because of his abilities. There are scenes in the *Turpin* that show that Charlemagne can be wrong or sinful. This is probably meant to emphasize the human weaknesses inherit in all men and is probably a hagiographical element intended to demonstrate the possibilities of redemption.²⁷ It may also be a strategy of contrasts. Charlemagne is a giant and there is a comical contrast between physical appearance and the frailty of his soul.

Aspremont

At the end of the twelfth-century, the representation of Charlemagne in many of the *chansons de geste* such as *Roland* continued to reflect an ideal image of crusading. This representation is best documented in the poem *La Chanson d'Aspremont*. The positive imagery and faultless physical characteristics of Charlemagne are extensive throughout.

²⁵ locutionibus loculentus.

²⁶ Gabháltasán Serluis Mhoir, *The Conquests of Charlemagne*, (London, Irish Texts Society, 1919). This is a translation of the Pseudo-Turpin's chronicle made from an unknown Latin original around 1400.

²⁷ Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France: A Thousand Years of Mythology*, 55.

The *Chanson d'Aspremont* is a story composed in the late 1100s in southern Italy, probably in Calabria or in Sicily during preparations for the Third Crusade. It is part of a series known as the *geste de roi*, which also includes *Roland*. In this story, Muslim powers from north Africa attack Italy with the intention of conquering the whole of Europe. Charlemagne is forced to defend Italy and with that, all of Christendom. After several diplomatic overtures in which both sides give the enemy the choice to submit and convert or to die, a number of battles ensue and the Christians under the leadership of Charlemagne are ultimately victorious. *Aspremont* is quite long, in fact, nearly three times the length of *Roland*. It is repetitive and overly rhetorical in places, but maintains and even enhances the crusade theme from *Roland*. The author is unknown, but he obviously was familiar with Italy and the legend of Charlemagne. Religious zeal, feudal loyalty, and scenes of combat dominate the action of the story. The poem may be based on reminiscences of the Saracen raids of in 813, 846, and 870, and some historians even believe that in *Aspremont* the legend of Charlemagne was confused with the history of the Ottonian expansion into the region.

In *Aspremont*, Charlemagne appears as ‘powerful, wise, fierce-faced, true,’ and one “who after God is greatest of them all!”²⁸ Throughout the poem, there is very little if any question as to Charlemagne’s ‘greatness.’ He is always “brave and strong and fierce of mettle.”²⁹ There are only a few scenes where a physical description of Charlemagne is given. One comes from a Saracen envoy, who visits the Emperor’s court early in the poem. The poet writes,

²⁸ *La Chanson d'Aspremon*, trans. Michael A. Newth, (London and New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), p. 5, line 99.

²⁹ *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, Newth, p. 16, line 566.

Balans manjue et regarde sovent
 Con Carlemainnes est fiers sor tolte gent.
 Barbe li vient desor espesement
 Ki don't li est crute novielement³⁰

[While Balan eats he cannot help but notice
 How Charlemagne stands out, his mark imposing;
 His beard is long, its texture thick and flowing;
 Compared to Carlon's he thinks how young his own is;]

In another instance, the author describes how Charlemagne and his men get dressed for battle. He says of Charlemagne;

Es vos le roi ricement acesmé
 Angele resanle del ciel jus avalé
 Car il estoit de cors grans et menbré
 De son escu fu tant bien afublé
 Que bien resanle que il soit ensi né
 Ne sanlapas chevalier enprunté³¹

[Behold our King so richly thus arrayed,
 Like an avenging Angel from Heaven's gates!
 Carlon is big, well-built and sturdy-framed;
 He bears his shield with such an easy grace
 It seems to all to be his natural state;
 Charles is no knight dressed up for mere display!]

The authors help to create an image of Charlemagne that is seemingly unbeatable.

Although he has all the important characteristics of a knight and crusader, his physical characteristics and abilities are exaggerated. The last line (*sanlapas chevalier enprunté*) seems also to be a veiled reference to tournaments. This would make sense chronologically since the rise of the tournament, as Maurice Keen points out “begins in that same period in which we have seen the concepts of knighthood and the ceremony of admission to the knightly order crystallizing into recognizable shape, the hundred years

³⁰ *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, Chanson de Geste Du XII Siècle, ed. Louis Brandin. (Librairie Honoré Champion, Paris, 1970), pp. 14-15, lines 427-430; English Translation by Newth, p. 13.

³¹ *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, Brandin, p. 136. Lines 4230-4235; English translation Newth, p. 104.

or so between the middle of the eleventh and the middle of the twelfth century.”³²

Aspremont was written in the wake of this movement. Certainly the audience would have recognized this connection, but also the author’s point in emphasizing that Charlemagne is much more than a tournament knight. In some ways, the author is putting Charlemagne in contrast to a knight involved in tournaments. In other words, tournaments were not viewed as real warfare. Charlemagne has the physical characteristics and skills of a knight and the religious convictions of a pilgrim. Charlemagne’s physical characteristics and social status play a major role in establishing his representation as one of knight, crusader, and defender of the Church.

The twelfth-century image of Charlemagne is not just one of warrior and defender of the Church. His role as the rightful leader of Christendom is also a common theme. His status exceeds all others’. In *Roland*, Charlemagne is a ‘great,’ ‘noble,’ and ‘just’ King of France. In *Aspremont*, Charlemagne is the ‘mighty,’ ‘true,’ and ‘powerful’ Emperor. He is the ‘bearer of fair France’s crown’ and even the ‘King of St. Denis.’ Saint-Denis had become connected with the French monarchy during the time of Suger in the mid-twelfth-century. The Abbey contained a number of important relics associated with the ‘Passion’ brought back to France by Charlemagne.³³ In addition, the past and future Capetian Kings would all be buried there.³⁴

Although there were no kings on the First Crusade, the subsequent campaigns almost always involved Western monarchs. The Second Crusade had the King of France,

³² Keen, *Chivalry*, 83.

³³ See *Descriptio...*

³⁴ There will be more on this aspect in Ch. 3. Particularly important in this area are the works of Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making 843-1180*; and Gabriele Spiegel “The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship,” in *Journal of Medieval Studies* 1, (1975).

Louis VII, and the German Emperor, Conrad III. The Third Crusade involved three of the most powerful monarchs of the late 1100s; Richard I of England, Philip II of France, and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. These three monarchs all had connections to the memory and image of Charlemagne. Barbarossa had Charlemagne canonized by the anti-pope Pascal III in 1165. This was an action taken by the Germans as a response "...to the efforts of the French kings to monopolize the Frank for themselves."³⁵ Although never recognized by Rome, this was widely popular in German lands and later spread beyond the Holy Roman Empire. The Capetian kings, including Philip II, continually sought connection to Charlemagne and the Carolingian legacy in order to legitimize their own rule. In *Aspremont*, there is a reference to Charlemagne that conjures an image of Richard. In the passage, a character says of Charlemagne that he is "the good, the worthy, he with the heart of a lion."³⁶ Having been composed just prior to the Third Crusade, this may well be a reference to King Richard. With the Norman influence in England, the epic and literary traditions were quite popular in England in the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. Later, in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries, Charlemagne 'Romances' would be popular.³⁷

Keen has argued that many aspects of the chivalric tradition are of secular origin. He cites William of Marshall, Geoffrey of Charny's *Libre de chevalerie* and Ramon Lull's *Libre del ordre de cavayleria* and argues that "the origins of knighthood is given in terms that are entirely secular." In general, "chivalry may be described as an ethos in

³⁵ Mattias Becher. *Charlemagne*, trans. David S. Bachrach, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2003), p. 141.

³⁶ *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, trans. Newth, p. 223, line 9376.

³⁷ See *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances*, ed. Alan Lupack, (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990).

which martial, aristocratic and Christian elements were fused together.”³⁸ This fusion in turn became the model for the crusade sources. Keen argues that the “interweaving of Christian with heroic and secular motifs becomes characteristic of the treatment of the crusade in chivalrous narrative and poetry.” If so, then the image of Charlemagne is an important key for understanding this process. He is, at once, the secular monarch who embodies the very perfection of knightly abilities and the Christian pilgrim who fights for and defends the Church. And as Keen contends, “one reason why the stories of Charlemagne and his peers made such a powerful impact upon the knighthood of the twelfth and succeeding centuries was because it was so easy for the men to relate the preoccupations of the Carolingian world and the events of Charles’s career, as they came to know them, to preoccupations and events of their own time, especially perhaps, to their crusading preoccupations.”³⁹ Crusading dominated many of the preoccupations of the twelfth-century man. Beyond the three major campaigns to the Holy Land, there were numerous other smaller expeditions.⁴⁰

Elements of the Crusade

In building the image of Charlemagne as a crusader icon, the authors incorporated a number of themes associated with the eleventh- and twelfth-century campaigns. The twelfth-century sources are filled with references to defending Christian lands,

³⁸ Keen, *Chivalry*, 11, 16.

³⁹ Keen, *Chivalry*, 55, 107.

⁴⁰ Between 1101 and 1186 there were nearly 20 appeals for major campaigns to the East. See Jonathan Phillips, *The Crusades 1095-1197*, (London: Longman Publishing, 2002), pp. 27-39; and Jonathan Riley-Smith, “The Crusading Movement and Historians,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 1-12.

indulgences, religious and apocalyptic imagery, Muslims as the enemy of God, and the liberation of the Holy Land.

It was not difficult to find a precedent for the image of Charlemagne. With the crowning of Charlemagne on Christmas Day, 800, he became the new Emperor of the 'Romans,' but even prior to this came a delegation from Jerusalem to present the keys to the city.⁴¹ The Christians of the twelfth-century "looked to Charlemagne as the protector of Jerusalem"⁴² Crusading Capetian kings from Louis VII to Philip II and Louis IX emphasized their connections to the Carolingian legacy. Liberating Holy Lands and defending Christendom from the Muslim world became an important part of the Charlemagne legacy. Constructing the memory of Charlemagne around the concept of protection, holy war and crusade allows the society and culture, and particularly the Capetian nobility who participated in the crusades of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries an immediate link to the greatest of all Christian kings and heroes.

The first and most obvious association with the crusades is the Muslim adversary. Within the corpus of epic literature, there is an emphasis on representing Islam as the enemy of Christendom. The sources share a number of characteristics when dealing with this issue. First, there is often, if not always, a misunderstanding of Islamic theology and beliefs. The Muslim religion is often characterized as the beliefs of polytheistic idol worshippers. On the other hand, the sources often praise the Muslim combatants as worthy warriors, with their only fault being that they were not Christian.⁴³ By the

⁴¹ Alessandro Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent*, trans., Allan Cameron, (Berkeley: London: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 75-76.

⁴² Philips, *The Crusades 1095-1197*, p. 100.

⁴³ This aspect parallels events recorded in some crusade chronicles. In particular, the *Gesta Francorum* records that after defeating a Turkish army, the author indicates that the Turks were so strong and their

thirteenth century, some Christian authors would go as far as to call them ‘chivalrous’ and ‘knightly.’ In *Roland* and *Aspremont*, the Saracens are presented at times as great warriors possessing tremendous courage and skill. The *Turpin Chronicle* shows the possibility of conversion, but little else positive or redeeming about the Saracen people. Charlemagne speaks to Agolant, the leader of the Saracens, in Arabic, which Agolant takes as a sign of respect. However, continually depicting the Muslims as ‘the enemy’ of God helps to emphasize the crusading cause and solidify the image of Charlemagne as a past crusader and the leader of Christendom.

There are a number of connections with the crusades and one of the most prominent is the idea of a cross-cultural crusading army. The emphasis is not so much on Frenchmen or Germans or Italians fighting the Saracens, but on the defense of Christendom. The description does not seem to be driven so much by ethnic or political motivations but religious. In *Roland*, the author goes out of his way to describe and emphasize this element of Charlemagne’s army. In describing Charlemagne’s army prior to the final battle the author says;

De Franceis sunt les premeres escheles.
Aprés les dous establisent la terce;
Encele sunt li vassal de Baivere:
Suz cel n’ad gent que Carles ait plus chere
Fors cels de France, ki les regnes cunquerent⁴⁴

[The first two divisions are of Frenchmen;
After these two they draw up a third.
In this are the vassals from Bavaria;...
There is no people on Earth whom Charles loves more,
Apart from the men of France who conquered his realms for him]

military abilities so skilled, that had they been Christian, there is not an army in the world that could defeat them.

⁴⁴ *La Chanson de Roland*, p. 296. lines 3026-3028; 3031-3032.

He goes on to say;

Naimes li dux puis establist la quarte
De tels barons qu'asez unt vasselage:
Alemans sunt e si sunt d'Alemaigne;⁴⁵

Naimes li dux e li quens Jozerans
La quinte eschele unt faite de Normans: ...
La siste eschele unt faite de Bretuns:⁴⁶

[Duke Naimes then drew up the fourth
From such barons as have great courage.
They are Germans and come from Germany;]

[Duke Naimes and Count Jozeran
Made up the fifth division with Normans; ...
They made up the sixth division of Bretons;]

The author goes on to describe armies and divisions from 'Poitevins,' 'Auvergne,' 'Frisia,' and 'Burgundy.' In this instance, diversity in ethnic terms is a positive value, because it is representative of a greater, more powerful, force. Christendom is best served by Charlemagne's leadership, in which he is able to mobilize an army that cuts across ethnic divisions.

In the *Pseudo-Turpin*, the author emphasizes that after hearing from the spirit of Saint James, Charlemagne assembled his army from all parts of his kingdom and forcefully attacked Spain.⁴⁷ Near the end of the *Turpin Chronicle*, the author indicates where the fallen Christian heroes and martyrs will be buried. This is another good example of the various backgrounds from which Charlemagne's army was assembled.

...Apud Belinum sepelitur Oliverus et Gandeboldus rex Frisie et Ogerium rex
Dacie et Arastagnus rex britannie et Garinus dux Lotharingie et alii multi. Felix
villa macilenta Belinum, que tantis hominibus decoratur! Apud Burdegalam in

⁴⁵ *La Chanson de Roland*. p. 296, lines 3036-3038.

⁴⁶ *La Chanson de Roland*. p. 298, lines 3045-3046, 3052.

⁴⁷ *Pseudo-Turpin*, 57.

cymiterio beati Severini: Gaiferus rex burdegalensis, Engelerus dux Aquitainie, Lambertus rex bituricensis, Gelerius, Gelinus, Rainaldus de Albaspina, Gauterius, Guillelmus, Beggo cum .v. milibus aliorum. Hoellus comes apud Nantas urbem suam cum multis Britonibus sepelitur.⁴⁸

[The noble count Oliver was buried in Belin and was Gandeboldus, the King of Frisia and Ogier the King of Denmark; Arastagnus, the King of Brittany; Garinus, the Duke of Lorraine; and a many other nobles. The castle of Belin was blessed and honored by so many noble princes. At Bordeaux, in the cemetery of Saint Severin these noble were buried; Gaifer, Duke of Bourges and of Aquitaine; Lambert King of Bituricensis, Gelin, Gelier, Renaud d'Aube Espine, Gautier, Guillelmus, and Begue, and 5000 others. Hoiaus, the Count of Nantes, was brought for burial to Nantes, his own city, together with many other Bretons.]

This is quite prevalent in *Aspremont* as well. The Christian armies come from several different areas and are all loyal to Charlemagne. Charlemagne is, in effect, leading Christendom into war with the Saracens. Upon hearing the news of the Arab invasion the author describes Charlemagne's reaction as one of anger and wrath. One of the first actions he takes is to call on his armies from all over his kingdom. Near the beginning of the poem, the author says;

Droit a Cologne manda roi Anseis
Il le secorje enviers les Arrabis
Oltre Aspremont li ardent son pais.

[To King Anseis of Cologne he writes to:
"Come help me against the Arab throng!
They burn my land in high Aspremont."]

He goes on to say;

Quant Carlemaines ot ensi exploitié
Par tantes tieres sont si brief envoié
Vient i roi, duc et princes proisié,
Por ostoier molt bien apparellié.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, ed. H.M. Smyser, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Medieval Academy of America, 1937), p. 90, (my translation).

⁴⁹ *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, p. 32-33, lines 974-976; 1003-1006.

[King Charlemagne has finished with preliminaries;
His letters sent to all his kingdoms and land
Bring back to him kings, dukes and worthy princes
Armed and equipped for war against the Infidels;]

Later while addressing the armies Charlemagne says;
De plusors teres somes ci asanlé;...

Point par les rens, si les vait confortant,
Molt belement les vait araisonant:
“Or cevalciés, Francois et Alemant
Flamenc et Fris et Englois et Normant,
Cil de Tolose et tot li Loherant,
Li Angevin, Li Mansel, Li Torant;
Car Dex et jo vos serai hui garant”⁵⁰

[We are here from many lands and states...
He rides the ranks, encouraging and talking,
Inspiring them, assuring and exhorting:
“Frenchmen, Alemans, so let us ride forward now!
You Englishmen, you Flemish, Frisians, Normans,
You Toulouse braves and you my Lorraine stalwarts,
Men from Manseau, Angevin and Tourangeaux:
God and myself will support you in this fight,”]

In the minds of most twelfth-century authors, there does not seem to be any question that Charlemagne is ‘French.’ In some cases, he is referred to as a Frank. However, the authors are not always clear in differentiating these two terms. It is implied that the ‘French’ stand a little higher than other fellow Christians.

Although the authors underscore the variety of ethnic backgrounds the Christians represent, the higher purpose is evident in the author’s tone and emphasis. It is not a Norman or Flemish army that takes the field against the infidel, but a Christian one. This is strikingly close to the same context as we see the armies of crusaders in the twelfth-century being presented. The First Crusade was largely a Norman/French campaign. However, in the First Crusade there was still a cross-cultural representation within

⁵⁰ *La Chanson d’Aspremont*, pp. 134, 141; lines 4179; 4383-4389.

crusader army.⁵¹ Overall, the subsequent campaigns tended to be more representative of the multi-ethnic society that existed in the Christian West. This element helps to underscore the representation of Charlemagne as the *de facto* leader of the Christian West.

The ‘Peace of God’ and ‘Truce of God’ movements may have also played a role in reducing the violence in the West and redirecting it under a united front during the crusades. There are differing interpretations among scholars on the role of these movements, especially the ‘Peace of God’ movement. Georges Duby argued in no uncertain terms that the crusades were a direct result of the Peace.⁵² By contrast, Marcus Bull argued that the “broad relevance of the Peace to the crusade is clear, for domestic stability in the West was bound to aid the recruitment and organization of the expedition.”⁵³ Nevertheless, there is an attempt among the twelfth-century authors of several sources to create an image of a united Christian West. This is a reflection of both the crusades and the idealized portrait of Charlemagne and his united Christian Empire.

There is within the sources a parallel with the idea of persecution and defense as well. The mentality that existed within Western society included the serious concern over the spread of Islam. Whether this was justified or imagined is a matter of debate. There is a lengthy discussion on how the Saracens have robbed the land, burned churches

⁵¹ Jonathan Riley-Smith *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 50. “On 3 May the storm broke over the community at Speyer, where Emich of Leiningen’s army had gathered. Emich marched north to Worms, where the massacres began on the 18th and then to Mainz, where he was probably joined by more Swabians under Count Hartmann of Dillingen-Kybourg and by an army of French, English, Flemish and Lorrainer crusaders” The bulk of the crusaders who participated in the First Crusade were Norman/French, but the concept of ‘Christendom’ tended to trump the importance of ethnicity.

⁵² Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. C. Postan, (London, 1977).

⁵³ Bull, *Knightly Piety*, p. 57.

and killed or made slaves of the Christians. This idea of mistreatment is reminiscent of the stories of pilgrims being persecuted before the First Crusade as well as from the later crusader states that were attacked by Muslim armies. The representation of Charlemagne fits well into the protection and defense mold. In *Aspremont*, the Archbishop Turpin describes Charlemagne as the ‘...defender of the Christians.’ In another passage, Charlemagne says of himself, “If Agolant defeats me in the fray then Christendom itself shall not be saved.”⁵⁴ The image of Charlemagne is one that is created to stand between Christendom and Islam. ‘Right’ and ‘justified’ Charlemagne eventually defeats the enemies of God and Christianity.

Interpretation and Adaptation of Roland

The Old-French *Roland* is a convincing parallel to the First Crusade and the twelfth-century mentality concerning Christian and Muslim relations, Holy War, as well as the importance of the representation and role of Charlemagne. However, perhaps more telling is the German reworking of the *Roland* story by a German cleric, Priest Konrad. The *Rolandslied* is the first major treatment of the crusade in medieval German literature. There are a number of parallels with the Old French version, but also a number of interesting differences as well.⁵⁵ The Old French version has no known author or authors and there on-going debates concerning the origin of the story. By contrast, we know that the *Rolandslied* does not suffer from any lack of knowledge concerning its author, origin, or context dates to c. 1170 and that *Pfaffe Konrad*, as the author names

⁵⁴ *Aspremont*, Newth, p. 98, 28.

⁵⁵ Karl-Ernst Geith, *Carolus Magnus: Studien zur Darstellung Karls des Grossen in der deutschen Literatur des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1977), pp. 90-92.

himself in the work, is was a court chaplain. In addition, there is a nearly complete manuscript that dates to the late twelfth-century.

Nearly twice as long as the original, the German version retains the basic narrative, but enhances some themes and subsequently eliminates others. Gone is any concern for the glory of France or any feeling of French patriotism, no matter how primitive, but retained and, in fact, enhanced is the crusade ideology. Gone are any implicit references to what could be construed as a ‘proto’ or ‘quasi-crusade’ and instead with Konrad’s version we have the actual use of the term ‘crusade’ itself. At one point Charlemagne’s character says of the Saracen enemy, “I’ll lead such as Crusade that they will regret ever having been born. They shall all perish shamefully.”⁵⁶ This type of crusade rhetoric pervades the entire text. One scholar argued that, “no other medieval work portrays so vividly the religious zeal, indeed one might call the religious fanaticism, that prevailed in many quarters after the Second Crusade.”⁵⁷ In fact, some scholars would argue that the *Rolandslied* is “imbued with an intense religious spirit foreign to the *Chanson de Roland*” and that the crusade rhetoric and imagery were additions by Konrad.⁵⁸ However, this position, in part, depends on the *Roland* story being a reflection of the Germanic ‘honor-shame’ culture that pre-dates the twelfth century production of the text. Although this has not been fully demonstrated by scholars, even with this point conceded, it is not enough to conclude that the ‘religious spirit’ of Konrad’s adaptation is new. The Oxford

⁵⁶ Priest Konrad’s *Song of Roland*, trans. J.W. Thomas, (Columbia, South Carolina, Camden House, Inc., 1994), p. 45.

⁵⁷ J.W. Thomas, Introduction to *Priest Konrad’s Song of Roland*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Horst Richter, “*Militia Dei*: A Central Concept for the Religious Ideas of the Early Crusades and the German *Rolandslied*” in *Journeys Toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade*, ed. Barbara N. Sargent-Baur, (Kalamazoo, Michigan, Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), p. 108.

Roland as well as the many other versions of *Roland* in the twelfth-century all emphasize the religious element. I would argue that the crusade imagery is already present in the French version of Roland story of the early twelfth-century and that Konrad's adaptation of the poem represents a more explicit use of the crusade theme. The crusade rhetoric is simply emphasized to a greater extent in Konrad's work. Konrad interpreted the Roland story of the twelfth-century the way it was intended – as a crusade. There are enough direct parallels between the two versions to conclude that Konrad viewed the French version as a crusade. In addition, there is Konrad's insistence that, using a French version, "he had added nothing and [took] nothing away – than with regard to his interpretation of events."⁵⁹ Konrad of course did add a great deal to the story. However, he did not invent the crusade theme.

It is difficult not to conclude that the Crusades had a tremendous effect on the work. It seems logical considering the date of composition, which c. 1170 "reflected with some accuracy a wide-spread fervor of the period between the Second and the Third Crusade."⁶⁰ In addition, the *Rolandslied* post-dates the proclamation of the crusade in Spain, the very location the events in the story are said to have taken place. In 1147, Pope Eugenius III gave permission to Emperor Alfonso VII to lead a crusade against Muslims in Spain. In fact, by this time crusading had expanded considerably to include areas outside the Holy Land. In the same year, 1147, the Wendish Crusade was proclaimed against the *Slavs* in the northern territories.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Walter Haug, *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: The German Tradition, 800-1300, in its European Context*, trans. Joanna M. Catling, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 78.

⁶⁰ J. W. Thomas, Introduction to *Priest Konrad's Song of Roland*, p. 5.

⁶¹ Mayer, *The Crusades*, p. 99.

This is all substantiated by the text itself. The rhetoric and actions of the main characters Charlemagne, Roland, and Turpin are consistent with other crusade epics and other various forms of crusade propaganda. In particular, the emphasis on indulgence and martyrdom draws strong parallels to crusade ideology. Early in the poem Turpin makes this clear when he tells the Franks before a battle that;

If you die, you will be martyrs
and secure a place in paradise.⁶²

Konrad's emphasizes the concept of martyrdom with increasing frequency throughout the text. On another occasion after a great battle and many Christian warriors are lost Konrad says;

Four hundred and ten Christians died and were received with angels' song in the holy place where those of God's children go who suffer martyrdom for His sake. Having served their Lord well, they were now rewarded with great honor.⁶³

There is an obvious parallel here between Konrad's emphasis on martyrdom and various crusade sources that also emphasize martyrdom and indulgence. There are numerous battle scenes throughout the *Rolandslied* and subsequent death scenes. The knights in Charlemagne's army are encouraged to strive for the greatest deeds on the battlefield and that the army's faith and efforts will be rewarded by God in the end. This helps to explain the anxious attitudes of many Christian knights who could hardly wait to fight with God's enemies on the field of battle. Their death in battle fighting for God should be mourned but also celebrated since they achieved a martyr's death. Fulcher of Chartres illustrates this well in the prologue of his chronicle of the First Crusade. He writes; "o quot milia martyrum in hac expeditione beata morte finierunt!" (Oh how many thousands

⁶² *Das rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad*, ed. Peter Wapnewski (Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1967), lines 1134-35.

⁶³ *Priest Konrad's Song of Roland*, trans. J.W. Thomas, p. 64.

met a martyr's blessed death on this expedition!)"⁶⁴ In fact, in the *Rolandslied*, Charlemagne is even admonished by an angel for grieving too much over the numerous dead knights. Instead, he is told to rejoice at their martyrdom.⁶⁵

In Konrad's version of the Roland story, there are several speeches and exhortations that are strikingly similar to crusade sermons. In particular, just prior to the climax, Karl (Charlemagne) gives a speech to his knights. Konrad writes;

“nu ir gotes helde,
got uorderot uch selbe,
er ladet uch in sine riche.
gehabet uch frumecliche:
swer sich zegote wil gehalten,
dem sint di porten uf getan
da er sinin herren scol sehen

uon den haiden stat gescriben da:
‘mors peccatoris pessima.’
der suntare tot ist fraislich:

mit fraisen sint si imir mere
in dem helle grunde,

der chunc Daudid

der scribet uns hiute uon diseme tage:
‘chunige der erde
stent uf wider ir herren,
sich samnent manige fursten
wider unsere herren Cristen.’
got mit sine gewalte
daz wir daz hiute rechen

der des himiles waltet uber al,
der zetailet si mit siner craft:

⁶⁴ *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, ed. Edward Peters, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 48.

⁶⁵ Jeffrey Ashcroft, “Pfaffe Konrad” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Germany Writers and the Early Middle Ages: 800-1170*, vol. 148, ed. Will Hasty and James Hardin, (New York: Gale Research, 1995), p. 123.

er tut unsich lobelichen sigehaft.
daz hail ist uon gote kom.⁶⁶

(“You are warriors of God, your Lord summons you and invites you to enter His kingdom, so conduct yourselves well. The gates of heaven will open wide for him who wants to dwell with God. What could be better? This is what is written concerning the heathens: ‘mors peccatoris pessima,’ which, means ‘the death of sinners is terrible.’ Those who do not confess their sins will suffer forever in the depths of hell. ... King David⁶⁷ spoke with to us of this present day when he said: ‘The kings of the earth will rise up against their Lord; many princes will join forces against our Lord Christ.’ With His power God has protected us so that we might now wreak vengeance. However, the righteous man may be swept away, not a hair of his head will be rumbled body and soul will dwell forever in God’s grace.”)⁶⁸

One scholar described this speech as “an exhortation to do battle, to fight to the death, to take revenge on the enemy, and to protect one’s own land and home, even though Karl’s particular intention is to justify the decisive battle of the holy war.”⁶⁹ The heroes, Charlemagne, Roland and the rest of the ‘twelve peers’ mark themselves with the sign of the cross just as crusaders had done. In addition, Konrad uses the German translation of the Latin phrase *Miles Christi* to refer to Charlemagne and Roland. He calls them ‘*gotes helden*’ and ‘*gotes degene*.’⁷⁰ However, Konrad’s warriors of God have an additional element that is absent in the *Chanson de Roland*. They are also presented as the *militia spiritualis*, a role heavily influenced by the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux and the

⁶⁶ *Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad*, ed. Peter Wapnewski, lines 7681-7723.

⁶⁷ For discussion of the appearance of Old Testament figures see; Geith, *Carolus Magnus*, pp. 100-105.

⁶⁸ This translation is adapted from a prose English version of the same speech in *Priest Konrad’s Song of Roland*, trans. J.W. Thomas, p. 94.

⁶⁹ Maria Dobozy, “The Structure of the Crusade Epic and the Function of the King,” *Neophilologus* 67 (1983), p. 92.

⁷⁰ Richter, “*Militia Dei*, p. 108.

crusading orders that developed after the First Crusade.⁷¹ The Christian knights are presented in the ideal combination of monk and warrior. Konrad describes some of their virtues as follows.

si heten all ain muot.
 ir herce hin ze gote stunt
 si heten zucht unt scam,
 chuske unt gehorsam,
 gedult unt minne.
 si prunnen warlichen inne
 nach der gotes suoze.⁷²

(They show unanimity, heartfelt desire to be with God,
 discipline and chastity, purity and obedience, patience and love,
 and a burning desire for God's sweetness.)

This element is particularly prevalent in the representation of Charlemagne. He is given a 'saint-like' status. This should not be surprising since it was just five years earlier in 1165, that he had been canonized by the Pascal III at the behest of the German Emperor (although never officially recognized). Even though the representation of Charlemagne in Germany did not enjoy the same lofty status as it did in the French lands or for the as long a period, the mid-twelfth-century (after canonization) through the fourteenth-century was a time when his figure reached its most prominent representation.⁷³ The *Rolandslied* is probably the best example of the idealized portrait of the crusading Charlemagne in all of medieval German literature.

There is one last factor concerning the *Rolandslied* and the Crusades that should be considered. Konrad not only names himself in the work, but also his reasons for producing the work. In the epilogue, Konrad names 'herzog Hainrich and the noble

⁷¹ Ashcroft, "Pfaffe Konrad" in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 148, p. 125.

⁷² *Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad*, ed. Peter Wapnewski, lines 3419-3425.

⁷³ Paul Salmon, *Literature in Medieval Germany*, (New York, Barnes and Noble Inc., 1967), p. 44.

duchess, child of a mighty king' as his patrons. Numerous scholars have concluded that these are Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony and Bavaria and his second wife Mathilda, daughter of Henry II of England.⁷⁴ Jeffrey Ashcroft and other scholars have argued that the tone of the story reflects Henry's ideology and desire to lead the Northern Crusade. This campaign, along with others outside the Holy Land, is rarely given the same amount of attention as the major crusades to the East. However, during Henry's time, between the Second and Third Crusades, Saxony did represent an area that had significant numbers of crusade participants.⁷⁵

There are numerous parallels between Henry and Charlemagne (Karl) as well. Henry, like many nobles and monarchs of the twelfth-century often emphasized his own personal familial connection to the Emperor.⁷⁶ He was the grandson of Lothar II, a descendant of Charlemagne. It is Charlemagne who calls for the crusade in the *Rolandslied*, not the Pope. With the strained relationship between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, it was Henry, not the religious authority that pushed for the Northern Crusade. In addition, Henry conquers and converts new lands to Christianity just as Charlemagne does in the *Rolandslied*.⁷⁷ Henry, also like Charlemagne, is compared with Old Testament kings. In the epilogue, Konrad compares Duke Henry with the Old Testament King David. He writes;

⁷⁴ Jeffrey Ashcroft, "Konrad's *Rolandslied*, Henry the Lion, and the Northern Crusade," in *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 22 (1986), pp. 184-208. See also Ashcroft, "Pfaffe Konrad" in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 148, pp. 121-130.

⁷⁵ Dieter Kartschoke, *Die Datierung des deutschen Rolandsliedes*, (Stuttgart, 1965).

⁷⁶ Albert K. Wimmer, *An Anthology of Medieval German Literature*, (Bristol, Wyndom Hall Press, 1987), p. 50.

⁷⁷ Ashcroft, "Pfaffe Konrad" p. 125.

Nune mugen wir in disem zite
 dem chuoninge Dauite
 niemen so wol gelichen
 so den herzogen Hainrichen.
 got gap ime di craft
 daz er alle sine uiande eruacht.
 di cristen hat er wol geret,
 di haiden sint uon im bekeret:
 daz erbet in uon recht an⁷⁸

(In these times there is no one so like King David as Duke Heinrich. God gave him the power to defeat all his enemies; he has honored Christianity and converted the heathens: that is his rightful legacy.)⁷⁹

There is very little about the *Rolandslied* that is not representative of twelfth-century crusader ideology and very little about the representation of Charlemagne (Karl) as anything other than the ideal crusader. One scholar argued that “Karl is the ideal ruler and crusader. Seeking neither wealth nor fame, he wants only to be an agent in carrying out the divine will; his strength comes from God.”⁸⁰ This is apparent throughout as Konrad continually emphasizes Charlemagne’s crusader characteristics. He is the “defender of Rome” and “the defender of orphans and widows.”⁸¹ Konrad has moved beyond the *Chanson de Roland* and explicitly tied the epic figure Charlemagne to the history of the crusades.

Propaganda, Crusade, and Charlemagne

By the twelfth century, the association between knights and the concept of pilgrimage was quite common. Pilgrimage had become a popular form of penance. In the minds of many, Christian knights displayed a combination of a number of

⁷⁸ *Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad*, ed. Peter Wapnewski, lines 9039-9047.

⁷⁹ *Priest Konrad’s Song of Roland*, trans. J.W. Thomas, p. 107.

⁸⁰ J. W. Thomas, Introduction to *Priest Konrad’s Song of Roland*, p. 5.

⁸¹ *Priest Konrad’s Song of Roland*, trans. J.W. Thomas, pp. 17, 38, 45.

characteristics such as courtesy, piety, faithfulness, bravery, skill, just to name a few. Stephen Jaeger argued that the eleventh and twelfth centuries gave birth to the courtly ideals that would become the most recognizable trademark of late medieval culture.⁸² With the advent of epic and in the wake of the Gregorian Reform and in the midst of the crusading movement, the ideal knight incorporated crusading and pilgrimage into his character. Pilgrimage and crusading quickly became two of the most important aspects of knighthood. Pilgrimage provided an outlet for much needed penance and spiritual growth and the crusades provided the proper outlet for the knight's skills in warfare – the defense and extension of Christendom.

Many of the twelfth-century sources seem to be more than just a celebration of chivalry, knighthood, and heroism. The authors, perhaps churchmen in many cases, the characters in the vernacular literature, and the intended audience, again presumably the noble class, were all reflections of the crusade. Churchmen preached the idea and nobleman and knights responded to the call by leading armies into harm's way.

Crusading propaganda took on many forms. Generally, the job of promoting and preaching the crusade fell to the papacy and lesser clergy repeating speeches and instructions from the Pope. In addition, after the First Crusade virtually all crusades were proclaimed by a papal bull or encyclical. During the twelfth-century, much of the focus of the Church was on the campaigns to the Holy Land. There are numerous charters and a wealth of documentary evidence concerning the crusades. However, the popular image of the crusades and knights who led them grew beyond the confines of papal proclamations. In this context, the legend of Charlemagne operated on several levels.

⁸² Jaeger, *Origins of Courtliness*, 3-16.

The image of Charlemagne in war is certainly an idealized portrait of what a crusader should be. In addition, his character has an understanding of his role as defender of the church and as God's chosen emissary. The stories and sources act as both history and edification for twelfth- and thirteenth-century Western culture. In addition, they emphasize the perceived threat the forces of Islam represented. In the age of the crusades, the Western leaders genuinely, rightly or wrongly, felt threatened by the increasing encroachment of the Muslim world. Perhaps the Western mentality on this issue is best reflected in the *Chanson d'Aspremont* when a Saracen envoy says to Charlemagne;

...emperere, faites moi escolter.
 Il sont trois tieres que jo sai bien nomer:
 Aise a non l'une et Europe sa per
 La tierce Alfrique, l'on n'en puet puis trover,
 Icés trois tieres departent par la mer
 Ki fait les tieres des illes deserver
 La mellor a mes sires a garder
 L'autran I fissent païen un sort jeter
 Les dos devoient a la tierce acliner.⁸³

[...emperor, listen well to me,
 There are three lands that I shall name:
 Asia is the name of one, and Europe is its equal.
 The third one is Africa;
 Here the three realms are separated by the sea,
 Which turns the lands into islands.
 The best one is for my lord to keep,
 As it was given to the pagans in the past.
 The two other realms must serve the third.]

The Western understanding of the medieval Muslim world view is present in this passage. It evokes the concepts of *Dar-al-Islam* (house of Islam) and *Dar-al-Harb* (house of war). It is also an indication of the mentality that there can really never be

⁸³ *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, p. 9, lines 243-251.

peace between the two worlds. The sources are also de-facto advertisements for crusade indulgences. In addition, martyrs are emphasized throughout the battle scenes and the authors leave no question as to their place in the afterlife. One of the defining features of crusade ideology is the concept of indulgence. The link between indulgence and crusade was first put forth by Pope Gregory VII. The idea was solidified shortly later with Pope Urban II's speech at Clermont in November of 1095. Those who fought against the infidel on a crusade and those who died in the process of fighting for God and the Church secured for themselves a place in paradise. There is an early implication of this idea in Roland when the archbishop Turpin seems to use the language of indulgence.

D'autre part est li arcevesques Turpin;
 Sun cheval broche e muntet un lariz,
 Franceis apelet, un sermun lur ad dit:
 'Seignurs baruns, Carles nus laissat ci;
 Pur nostre rei devum nus ben murir.
 Chrestientet aidez à sustenir!
 Bataille avrez, vos en estes tuz fiz,
 Kar a voz oilz veez les Sarrazins.
 Clamez vos culpes, si preiez Deu mercit!
 Asoldrai vos pur vos anmes guarir.
 Se vos murez, esterez seinz martirs,
 Sieges avrez el greignor pareis.'
 Franceis de[s]cendant, a tere se sunt mis,
 E l'arcevesque de Deu les beneist:

Par penitence les cumander a ferir.⁸⁴

[Archbishop Turpin, some way across the field,
 Spurs his horse and gallops up a hill.
 With these solemn words he calls upon the Franks:
 'Lord barons, Charles has left us here;
 For our king we must be prepared to die.
 Help us now to sustain the Christian faith.
 You will have to engage in battle, as you well know;
 Confess your sins, pray for the grace of God;

⁸⁴ *La Chanson de Roland*, p. 150, lines 1124-1139.

To save your souls I shall absolve you all.
If you die, you will be blessed martyrs

And take your place in paradise on high'
The Franks dismount and kneel upon the ground;
In God's name the archbishop blessed them.
As penance he orders them to strike.]

There are three important ideas in this passage. First, Charlemagne is clearly the feudal sovereign to which the Christian armies owe their allegiance. This is emphasized by the fact that it is a high ranking church official who is saying that all must be willing to fight and die for Charles. Second, the idea that those who die during the fighting will become martyrs is, in a broad sense, related to the crusade ideology that existed in the early twelfth-century. In addition, the third idea that fighting is a form of 'penance' is parallel to the idea that the crusades were an extension of the concept of pilgrimage. This last idea is probably the most critical. Crusade historians have long maintained that for contemporaries, the crusades came to represent a new kind of pilgrimage. The idea of an armed pilgrimage defined the crusade era and directly led to the creation of the crusading orders including the Templars, Hospitallers, and Teutonic Knights. *Roland* is a direct reflection of this trend.

In the *Pseudo-Turpin* there is discussion of martyrdom for soldiers who die in battle. However, by the end of the twelfth-century, the language and propaganda is even more explicit. For example, the author has Charlemagne say;

'Franc crestien, Dex vos tigne en vertu.
Or poés dire bien vos est avenue
Qu'en vos tans est icis besoinz creu;
Vos qui avés el grant pechié geu,
As cols doner al brant d'achier tolt nu
En esterés tolt cuite et absolu;
Si vos promet que n'I ait plait tenu;

Mais vengiés tost vostre pere Jhesu:
Sauf en serés u je sui descheu.⁸⁵

[‘Brave Christian knights, God keep you in His Strength!
Well might you say that you are lucky men,
That in your lifetime you can defend your faith;
You who were born in sin and wickedness,
For which you all are damned and your souls dead,
By striking blows with blades of steel
Your sins will be absolved and your souls blessed;
There is no doubt of this – you have my pledge;
Rise up at once sweet Jesus to avenge!
You will be saved...]

Certainly, one of the main reasons that there was such an overwhelming response to Urban’s speech at Clermont and the crusade sermons that would follow had to do with the offer of indulgences. The indulgence represents the importance of religious motivation on the part of crusaders. A number of historians such as Jonathan Riley-Smith, Marcus Bull, and many others have maintained for sometime that religion should be at the forefront of any discussion involving crusade motivation and inspiration. In fact, Bull states that “crusade ideology was predominantly religious in its inspiration.”⁸⁶ In addition, most scholars have argued that crusader motivations associated with gaining wealth are in fact myths. It tended to be quite expensive for knights to participate in a crusade. In addition, Pope Urban II actually prohibited men to take pay for joining a campaign.⁸⁷

Medieval crusaders were expected to have certain qualities such as courage, faith, bravery, military prowess, and leadership. Charlemagne is the historical and literary

⁸⁵ *La Chanson d’Aspremont*, pp. 27-28, lines 835-844.

⁸⁶ Marcus Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970-c. 1130*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), p. 6.

⁸⁷ Bull, *Knightly Piety*, 5.

embodiment of all of these and even more. The memory and legend of Charlemagne had been known in European culture since shortly after his death in 814; primarily because of early sources such as Einhard's *Vita Karoli* and Notker's *Charlemagne*. However, it is really the twelfth-century that the crusading culture added to the legend and created a kind of crusader icon. His image as crusader icon served as a model and form of edification for the twelfth-century *milites christi*.

In Roland, the earliest of the sources, there are no explicit references to a crusade. However, the language, symbolism, and motifs certainly seem to indicate that the author was informed about the crusading ideology and culture of the period. Michael Routledge argued that, "...it seems plausible that the poet [of Roland] was aware that his account would have a special appeal as propaganda."⁸⁸ In addition, perhaps the most important consideration is the audience. Routledge argues, "From the point of view of the audience – for we must not forget that these songs were written to be performed – they presented, in a palatable way exclusive to their milieu, the doctrine, information, and propaganda that was otherwise delivered by preachers, or diffused by clerks."⁸⁹

Not everyone could be at Clermont when Urban II preached his famous sermon on the necessity of the First Crusade. Bernard of Clairvaux could not reach everyone on his famous tours promoting the Second Crusade. Crusade ideology and propaganda made its way into European culture and society through various conduits, one of which was vernacular literature.

⁸⁸ Michael Routledge, "Songs" in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, ed. Jonathan Riley-Smith. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 91.

⁸⁹ Routledge, 111.

Charlemagne is described in *Aspremont* as ‘old,’ but also as ‘true Emperor,’ ‘King,’ bearer of ‘fair France’s Crown,’ and ‘fierce-faced.’ Like in Roland Charlemagne is the embodiment of what a knight and crusader should be. Robert Morrissey describes *Aspremont* as “an epic poem in which the most glorious image of a crusading Charlemagne fighting for the defense of Christendom...”⁹⁰ There is less of a vengeance motivation in this story and much more of an emphasis on the defense of Christendom. In fact, the mentality towards the forces of Islam in the post-First Crusade campaigns may well have been one of defense. They were a generation that was born during European control of the Holy Land. An attack on the crusader states may have been interpreted as the equivalent of an attack on the West.

The poem certainly has the religious tone of crusading as well. The Christian cause of the campaign takes precedence over all other aspects. In addition, it is explicit in the story that it is Charlemagne’s role to fight for and defend Christianity. Charlemagne tells his men;

‘Franc Chevalier,’ dist Carles al barnage,
 ‘Esgardés ore quel honte et quel damage
 Ont fait sor moi la pute gens salvage
 Qui sont issu et d’Alfrique et d’Arrage
 Et arivé en mon droit iretage.
 Venés od moi en cest pelerinage
 Qui n’I venra ni metra altre gage
 Culvers sera et il et son linage⁹¹

[‘My noble knights,’ says Charlemagne to his barons
 ‘Consider well the great shame and the damage
 which they have caused, this foul race and savage,
 Whose hordes have left Arabia and Africa
 And taken over the land my father handed me!

⁹⁰ Morrissey, 71.

⁹¹ *La Chanson D’Aspremont*, pp. 26-27, lines 864-871.

As pilgrims come with me and do battle!
 He who comes not nor pays his debt of vassalage,
 I call him a traitor, both he and his family lineage.']

Calling the knights 'pilgrims' implies a certain context. This is not just any war or battle, but the most important duty of every Christian knight. War, pilgrimage, duty, indulgence, and Muslim aggression, all vital factors of the crusade and all elements of the story of *Aspremont*.

The *Turpin* contains an explicit propagandistic feature similar to that of *Roland* and *Aspremont*. The *Turpin*, at first glance, may seem like a different type of source since it is not technically a work of literature. However, it was performed in the same manner as *Roland* or *Aspremont*. In addition, the tremendous number of manuscripts indicates that its contents would probably have been known to that class of nobility that would lead the crusades. Similar to that of *Roland* and *Aspremont*, the *Turpin* depicts Charlemagne as having a favored relationship with God. This relationship is readily apparent near the beginning of the story when St. James appears before Charlemagne and says,

...Quapropter tibi notifico quia
 sicut Dominus omnium regum terre potentissimum te constituit, sic ad
 preparandum ad me viam fidelium et liberandam terram meam de mani-
 bus Moabitarum ex omnibus te principibus elegit,...⁹²

[Wherefore, I want to notify you that
 the Lord who made you powerful above all earthly kings, so
 he has chosen you among all princes to prepare through me the path of faith and to
 liberate my land from the hands of Saracens.]

In the *Turpin*, the concept of a 'chosen' people or leader is quite common. Charlemagne is the most capable and most favored by God. The crusade rhetoric of the twelfth-century contained many of the same ideas and much of the same imagery. The crusaders were

⁹² *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, ed. H. M. Smyser, (The Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1937), p. 57.

called upon by God to liberate the Holy Land. Although Gaston Paris excludes the work from 'Poetic History' proper, it is not too much of a stretch to see in *Turpin* the same idealized image that exists in the works of poetry and acts as a propagandistic element of crusading culture. Morrissey describes this work as "...the account that represents Charlemagne as the model of the crusading king, an image that was later adopted for expeditions to the Holy Land." The work has been described on several occasions by more than one scholar as "a work of propaganda."⁹³

For the audiences, authors and storytellers, the stories were more than just entertainment. The sources go a step further and take on the façade of propaganda. Considering the importance of the crusades at the time and places the stories were composed, it is probable that they may have served as a source of inspiration. Shortly before and after the First Crusade, the propaganda effort took on many forms. It was not merely a Church and papal effort to maintain crusader enthusiasm, but rather crusading blossomed in the popular imagination at many levels of society. This popular view is largely represented in religious terms, but by no means restricted to papal sermons recruiting efforts. Popes and clergymen did travel around Europe preaching and recruiting for the Crusade. But so did Bohemond of Taranto, one of the hero's of the First Crusade who campaigned in France for a new crusade shortly after the first (c. 1106). There were at least eleven crusading songs that were produced for the Second Crusade. At least fourteen roundels at the Abbey of Saint-Denis depicted events of the First Crusade, martyrs, pilgrims, and yes Charlemagne.⁹⁴ Many of the other *chansons de*

⁹³ Morrissey, 51-52.

⁹⁴ Jonathan Philips, *The Crusades 1095-1197*, (Longman Publishing, London, New York, 2002), p. 65.

geste written in the twelfth-century have a crusading theme and Charlemagne as a major character. Thus, the image of Charlemagne becomes part of the propagandistic purpose – inspiring knights and future crusaders.

Of course, all of the stories and sources are complex, multi-dimensional, and difficult, if not impossible to categorize under any single interpretation or lexicon. However, considering that the sources are so closely connected with the crusades, it is probable that they were a source of propaganda. *Roland* is composed around or shortly after the First Crusade, the *Turpin* just after the Second Crusade, and *Aspremont* during the preparations for the Third Crusade. By the late twelfth- or thirteenth-century, the idea of knighthood involved the idea of crusading. This became part of the knight's duty. From a historical perspective, the stories not only serve as entertainment, but also as propaganda and inspiration for an eager audience familiar with and often involved in crusading. The sources are an important part of an on-going propaganda effort serving as a type of instruction or education for present and future crusaders. In this interpretation, the role of the image of Charlemagne is quite clear. He is the example, the model, and ultimately the ideal. He represents all that knights and crusaders should strive for. Most importantly, he is completely faithful and almost always victorious.

It is certainly no coincidence that these stories along with countless others have the crusades or crusading as a major theme and subsequently have Charlemagne as the main character. These poems reflect a great deal about the values, experiences, and expectations of society. In addition, they reflect an ongoing preoccupation with crusading and Holy War, and a preoccupation with the presence of an actual or perceived threat that the forces of Islam represented. This is clear at the end of *Roland* when

Charlemagne, after just winning a decisive battle against the Saracens and avenging the death of his nephew *Roland*, is called away to another crusade. Just as Charlemagne begins to sleep,

Seint Gabiel de part Deu li vint dire:
 ‘Carles, sumun les oz de tun emperie
 Par force iras en la tere de Bire,
 Reis Vivien si succuras en Imphe,
 A la citet que paien unt asise;
 Li chrestien te recleiment e crient.’⁹⁵

[St. Gabriel comes, God’s courier, to his side [and says]
 “Up, Charles! Assemble thy whole imperial army;
 With force and arms to Elbira ride;
 Help King Vivien where he lies,
 At Imphe, his city, besieged by Infidels;
 The Christians call and cry out for you”]

The life of the *militias christi* is an important reflection of the chivalric attitudes of the crusading culture of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century society. There is certainly a sense of sacrifice associated with the life of Charlemagne – and by association with that of the crusader. He witnesses first hand the price of war. Roland and most of those close to him die. However, he is duty-bound and must continue with the defense of Christendom. They are all difficult battles and wars, but Charlemagne seems to fit perfectly into this world. The Pope may be the vicar of Christ, but Charlemagne is the defender of Christianity.

It is difficult to categorize exactly what qualifies for propaganda when dealing with these sources. One scholar argued that, “Wittingly or unwittingly, there is a strong element of persuasion in this presentation of the duties and rewards of knighthood. Perhaps without any intentions in this direction, the *chansons de geste* thereby take on a

⁹⁵ *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. & trans. Glyn Burgess, (New York, Penguin 1990.), p. 210.

propagandist role...⁹⁶ Although, it does seem to be fairly explicit in some places. For example, the *Chanson d'Aspremont* was actually sung in the streets of Messina in 1190 before an army of crusaders.⁹⁷

The common theme throughout the sources and the mentality of the period, is the threat to Christendom and the need for crusade and defense. The legend of Charlemagne represents in the broadest possible terms, the ideal image of a warrior, leader, king, Christian, and crusader. The best possible propaganda for the crusade is history itself. Making the myth of Charlemagne into history establishes a precedent and acts as a source of inspiration and edification.

Conclusion

Considering the historical sources that connect Charlemagne to the crusades and combining them with the literary tradition that develops in the twelfth century, it is understandable to see how the legend and myths surrounding Charlemagne's *geste* were infused with the history and actual events.

By combining material from Einhard's biography, the Frankish Annals, oral tradition, various chronicles, previous epics the authors of the twelfth century were able to create a memory of Charlemagne as not just one of a former King and Emperor, but as a kind of proto-crusader as well. This is best reflected in many of the crusade sources themselves.

References to Charlemagne ranged from the historical to the miraculous. There are stories about witnesses reporting visions of Charlemagne in the sky as well as the rumor

⁹⁶ D.A. Trotter, *Medieval French Literature and the Crusades 1100-1300*, (Genève, Librairie Droz, 1988), p. 84.

⁹⁷ Morrissey, 73-74.

and legend that he came back to life. Ekkehard of Aura reported that shortly after the First Crusade was launched, some of the crusaders believed that Charlemagne had actually risen from the dead to lead the campaign.⁹⁸

Actually, Charlemagne had long established a presence in the Holy Land by sponsoring churches and hospitals in the region and for engaging in a long diplomatic relationship with a prominent leader, Haroun-al-Rashid. This seemed to be common knowledge during the time of the crusades. William of Tyre, the Catholic archbishop of Tyre in the kingdom of Jerusalem, reported in his chronicle that;

The good will between Harun and the Christians rested on an admirable treaty which the devout Emperor Charles, of immortal memory, brought about through the work of frequent envoys who went back and forth between them. The gracious favor of the at potentate was a source of much comfort to the faithful, so that they seemed to be living under the rule of the Emperor Charles rather than under that of Harun.⁹⁹

William who was writing his history in the 1160's and 1170's relied on his own experience, documents and records of the crusader states, and other related source material. He also mentions the gift of an elephant sent to Charlemagne by Harun, which seems to be a clear indication that he had access to Einhard's work as well.

Charlemagne also appears in one of the versions of Urban II's speech calling for the First Crusade. Robert the Monk reported that, Urban called upon the crusaders to look to their past and ancestors for inspiration. He says;

Moveant vos et incitent animos vestros ad virilitatem gesta praedecessorum vestrorum, probitas et magnitudo Karoli Magni regis, et Ludovici filii ejus aliorumque regum bestrorum, qui regna paganorum destruxerunt et in eis fines sanctae, Ecclesiae dilataverunt. Praesertim moveat vos santum Domini

⁹⁸ *Ekkehardi Uraugiensis Abbatis Hierosolymita nach der Waitz' schen Recension mit Erläuterungen und einem Anhang*, ed. Heinrich Haganmayer, (Tubingen, 1877), pp. 121-122.

⁹⁹ William of Tyre, *A History of the Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, trans. E.A. Babcock & A.C. Krey, vol. II, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 64.

Salvatoris nostri Sepulcrum, quod ab immundis gentibus possidetur, et loca sancta, quae nunc inhoneste tractantur et irreverenter eorum immundiciis sordidantur. O Fortissimi milites et invictorum propago parentum, nolite degenerari, sed virtutis priorum vestrorum reminiscimini.¹⁰⁰

[Let the deeds of your ancestors move you and inspire your minds to manly Achievements; the glory and greatness of King Charles the Great, and his son Louis, and of your other kings, who have destroyed the kingdoms of the pagans, and have extended in these lands the territory of the holy church. Let the holy sepulchre of the Lord our Savior, which is possessed by unclean peoples, especially incite you, and the holy places which are now treated with ignominy and irreverently polluted with the filthiness. Oh, most valiant soldiers and descendants of invincible ancestors, do not be degenerate, but remember the valor of your progenitors.]

In this short passage, the pope makes a number of important points. First, he refers to Charlemagne as an ancestor of those present at Clermont, immediately connecting them with the glory of an idealized Carolingian past. The reference to Charlemagne also serves as a legitimizing factor for those leading the crusade. Many of the leaders were conscious of the importance of this connection and emphasized their relation to Charlemagne. As Jonathan Riley-Smith writes, “most of the leaders could trace their ancestry back to Charlemagne and three of them, Robert of Flanders, Godfrey of Bouillon and his brother Baldwin, seem to have been particularly conscious of this.”¹⁰¹ In all cases, the connection was neither imagined nor legendary, but actually true.¹⁰² The two crusaders were true descendants of Charlemagne’s lineage. The biographer of

¹⁰⁰ *Recueil des historiens des croisades: publié par les soins de l’Academie impériale des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, vol. 3, *Speech of Urban II*, by Robert the Monk. In *Historiens Occidentaux*, (England, Gregg Press Limited), p. 728.

¹⁰¹ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade*, p. 112.

¹⁰² Robert’s family line connects to Charlemagne’s through Baldwin I, Count of Flanders in the late ninth century, and known as ‘Iron Arm.’ He was married to the daughter of Charles the Bald, Judith. The family of Godfrey and Baldwin have an even more direct connection to Charlemagne. According to Andressohn “both the paternal and maternal branch claimed descent from Charlemagne, an assertion which seems substantiated.” John C. Andressohn, *The Ancestry and Life of Godfrey of Bouillon* (Indiana University, 1947), p. 9.

Tancred, Ralph of Caen, stressed the connections to Charlemagne while discussing the establishment of the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, when in 1100 Baldwin, a descendant of Charlemagne, came to sit, as king of Jerusalem, on the throne of David.¹⁰³

Charlemagne also appears in the *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, an anonymous chronicle/history of the First Crusade. The author, believed by historians to be a participant, described the road the crusaders took to Jerusalem as being built by Charlemagne.

Fecerunt denique Galli tres partes. Vna pars
 Francorum in Hungariae intrauit regionem, scilicet
 Petrus Hermita, et dux Godefridus, et Balduinus frater
 Eius, et Balduinus comes Monte. Isti potentissimi
 Milites et alii plures quos ignoro uenerunt per uiam
 Quam iamdudum Karolus Magnus mirificus rex Franciae
 Aptari fecit usque Constantinoploim.¹⁰⁴

[The Franks separated into three armies.
 One entered the region of Hungary namely Peter the Hermit,
 and Duke Godfrey, His brother Baldwin, and Baldwin,
 the count of Hainault. These most valiant
 Knights and many others whose name I do not know
 Traveled the road that Charlemagne, the heroic king
 Of the Franks, had once caused to be built to Constantinople.]

The reference here is to the ‘imperial road’ from Constantinople to Sirmium.

Charlemagne is given credit for deeds belonging to the Roman Emperor. The author has extended Charlemagne’s actions to incorporate deeds from both long before and long after his actual life. There are similar references to Charlemagne and his exploits in Spain in the *Pilgrims Guide to Santiago de Compostela*. Here again, the creation of the

¹⁰³ Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁴ *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*. Ed. Rosalind Hill, (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., London, Paris, New York, 1962), p. 2.

image of Charlemagne is one of a proto-pilgrim and proto-crusader traveling and fighting in the region. At one point, the *Guide* reports that;

In sumitate uero eiusdem montis est locus quod dicitur Crux Karoli,
quia super illum securibus et dolabris et fossoriis
ceterisque manubriis Karolus cum suis exercitibus in Yspaniam pergens,
olim tramitem fecit signumque Dominice crucis prius in eo eleuauit, et tandem
flexis genibus versus Galleciam, Deo et Sancto Iacobo precem fudit.¹⁰⁵

[On the summit of this mountain is a place called the Cross of Charlemagne, because it was here that Charles, setting out with his armies for Spain, once made a road with axes, hatchets, pickaxes, and other implements, and first raised the sign of the cross of the Lord. And then, falling to his knees and turning towards Galicia, poured out his prayer to God and Saint James.]

There is a sense here that Charlemagne has paved the way for pilgrims traveling the route, just as he had done for the those traveling on the road to Constantinople. In a later section of the *Guide*, Charlemagne builds churches and his knights who died in battle are honored.

Item in Landis Burdegalensibus uilla quae dicitur Belinus uisitanda sunt corpora sanctorum martirum Oliueri, Gandelbodi regis Frisie, Otgerii regis Dacie, Arastagni regis Brittannie Garini ducis Lotharingie, et aliorum plurimorum scilicet Karoli Magni pugnatorum, qui deuictis exercitibus paganorum in Yspania trucidati pro Christi fide fuere. Item uisitanda sunt corpora beatorum martirum Facundi scilicet et Primitiui,

Quorum basilicam Karolus fecit.¹⁰⁶

[Then, in the lands of the Bordelais, in a town which is named Belin, one should visit the bodies of the holy martyrs Oliver, Gondebaud, King of Frisia, Ogier, King of Denmark, Arastain, King of Brittany, Garin, Duke of Lorraine, and many other warriors of Charlemagne, who after conquering the pagan armies, were slaughtered in Spain for their Christian faith.

Then, one should visit in Spain the body of the blessed martyrs Facundus and Primitivus, whose basilica Charlemagne built.]

¹⁰⁵ *A Pilgrims Guide: A Critical Edition*: vol. II. General editor Paula Gerson, (Harvey Miller Publishers, London, 1998), p. 26.

¹⁰⁶ *A Pilgrims Guide: A Critical Edition*: vol. II. General editor Paula Gerson. (Harvey Miller Publishers, London, 1998), p. 64.

There is considerable debate among crusade historians as to the exact nature of the military campaigns in Spain. The *Reconquista* is not typically placed in the same category as the crusades to the Holy Land. The campaigns in Spain did involve ecclesiastical sanctions, those who participated were granted remission of sins, and the campaigns had an international flavor (French participation). However, the “reconquest lacked the distinctive crusading indulgence, the wearing of the cross, and the intention of delivering the Holy Land.”¹⁰⁷ One argument that has been put forth is that after the initial crusades to the East, the Spanish *Reconquista* began to conform to the ideology of the crusade or in the very least, it became a substitute for a Crusade to the Holy Land. In the mind of many scholars, the twelfth-century campaigns in Spain were crusades in every sense of the term.

There are of course many other parallels between the *Reconquista* and the Crusades. One such parallel is the image of Charlemagne. The image that was created in the twelfth-century did not distinguish a great deal between the campaigns in Spain and those in the Holy Land. Charlemagne’s role as a member of the knighthood of Christ changed very little depending on the region in which he was being depicted. In Spain, as described in *Roland* and *the Pseudo-Turpin*, he defends and conquerors in the name of Christianity. This is also true for Southern Italy in *Aspremont* or for Jerusalem and Constantinople in the *Descriptio*.

One of the last sources to invoke the image of Charlemagne and his relation to the Crusades is Ambroise’s *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*. This ‘history of the holy war’ was written in the wake of the Third Crusade, at some point between 1194 and 1199. There is

¹⁰⁷ Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 19-20.

debate about whether the author, a Norman, was a simple jongleur or an actual cleric. Gaston Paris argued that the work lacked the sufficient level of learning that would be indicative of a cleric. Indeed the work reflects the ethos and narrative patterns of previous *chansons de geste*. But, recent studies have revealed a plethora of Biblical themes suggesting something more than popular learning.¹⁰⁸

Charlemagne first appears in Ambroise's *Estoire* in an early section of the work when the author is discussing 'Troubles for the Crusaders.' Intense bickering and disagreement among the leaders the crusaders has created some problems. He says of Charlemagne;

Quant li vaillant reis Charlemaines, qui tant conquist terres e regnes, ala josteier en Espaine Ou il amena la preuz campagne Qui fuvendu al roi Marsille Par Guenelon, don't France avile; E quant il refu en Sesoigne Ou il fist meinte grant besoigne, E il desconfist Guiteclin, E mist les Senes a declin, Par la force de maint prodome; E quant il mena l'ost par Rome, Quant Agolant, par grant emprise, Fu par mer arivée Rise, E[n] Calabre, la riche terre; E quant Sulie a l'autre guerre refu perdue e [re]conquisse E Antioche si fud assise, E es granz ostz e es batailles Sor les Turcs e sor les chenailles Don't tant I ot mortes e mates; L n'avoit esrifs ne barates, Lores a cel tens ne anceis, Qui erent Norman ou Franceis, Qui Peitevin, ne ki Breton, Qui mansel, ne ki Burgoignon, Ne ki Flamenc, ne qui Engleis; Illoc n'I aveit point de jangleis, Ne point de s'entreamponouent Mais tote honors en reportouent; C[il] erent tuit apelé Franc E brun e bai e sor e blanc, E par pechié quant descordouent, E li prince les racordouent, E erent tuit a une acorde, Si que poi I doroit descorde;¹⁰⁹

when the valiant King Charlemagne, who conquered so many lands and countries, went to campaign in Spain, taking with him the noble band who were sold to Marsile by Ganelon to the dishonour of France,¹¹⁰ and when he, Charlemagne, had returned to Saxony, where he did many great deeds and defeated Guiteclin,¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Ambroise's *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*, vol. II, trans. Marianne Ailes, (The Boydell Press, Great Britain, 2003), p. 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Ambroise's *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*, vol. I, text, ed. Marianne Ailes, (The Boydell Press, Great Britain, 2003), p. 137-138.

¹¹⁰ Reference to *Chanson de Roland*.

¹¹¹ Reference to Jean Bodel's *Chanson de Saisnes*, which tells of Charlemagne's campaign to defeat the Saxons under the leadership of Guiteclin.

bringing about the fall of the Saxons by the strength of many valiant men and when he led his army to Rome, when Agoland, through a great undertaking had arrived at Reggio in the rich land of Calabria,¹¹² when, in another war, Syria was lost and reconquered and Antioch besieged, in the great armies and the battles against the Turks and the pagan hordes, when many were killed then there was neither Norman nor French, Poitevin nor Breton, Mansel nor Burgundian, Flemish nor English; there was no malicious gossip nor insulting of one another; everyone came back with all honour and all were called Franks, whether brown or red, swarthy or white and when through sin they disagreed the princes brought them back into agreement with each other, and all were of one mind so that disagreement lasted little time.¹¹³

They were all called ‘Franks’ because they were all the same in God’s eyes – they were knights of Christ – they were all crusaders. Here, Charlemagne not only acts as an important precedent for holy war and crusading, but also as a unifying force for Christendom. It is also an indication of the importance of the crusade. The crusade cause takes precedence over all other internal quarrels that might exist between crusade leaders. This is, in part, a reflection of the impact the ‘peace of God’ and ‘truce of God’ movements had on the mentality of churchmen and western chroniclers.

By the end of the twelfth century, Western Christians had staged three major crusades to conquer the Holy Land. They had taken and then subsequently lost control of Jerusalem and most of the Holy Land. During the same period an image of Charlemagne was created and expanded. He had, by the end of the century, appeared in numerous epics, romances, histories, chronicles, and charters.

The image of Charlemagne is used as a broad exemplar for twelfth-century crusading. He used for precedent and propaganda. The legend of Charlemagne became

¹¹² Reference to *La Chanson d’Aspremont*.

¹¹³ Ambroise’s *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*, vol. II, trans. Marianne Ailes, (The Boydell Press, Great Britain, 2003), pp. 145-146.

the ideal to which all the *milites christi* could strive. In an age of pilgrimage and crusade, it was believed by most that Charlemagne sought to honor and defend Christendom.

CHAPTER 3

CHARLEMAGNE AND MEDIEVAL KINGSHIP: THE MAKING OF AN IDEAL

Among the many Carolingian coin types, there is a large denar minted at Aix-la-Chapelle. The legend reads; “XC:VINCIT:XC:REGNAT – KAROLUS MAGNUS IMPERAT (Christ triumphs, Christ reigns, Charles the Great rules)”¹ In the post-Carolingian world this may have represented the ideal society. A religious structure associated with the Christian savior and a political structure that featured the greatest of all Christian kings – Charlemagne. It is also an indication that Charlemagne has taken the place of ‘Christ the Emperor.’² The previous tradition had been XC: VINCIT : XC: REGNAT : XC: IMPERAT (Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat). It represented an ordered and hierarchical society that was ruled and defended by warrior kings. This society and particularly its kings represented important examples for twelfth- and thirteenth-century society. Using history and memory for inspiration, many writers of this later period saw Charlemagne as more than an important predecessor to the Capetian Kings and German Emperors. Twelfth-century culture created, in the representation of Charlemagne, an image of ideal Christian kingship. Charlemagne not only represented an ideal ruler; he also represented a legitimizing factor for later kings and emperors. The Capetians viewed Charlemagne as the progenitor of Francia itself.

¹ Sergio Bertelli. *The King's Body*. Trans. R. Burr Litchfield. (The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pennsylvanian, 2001). p. 16.

² Ernst Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1958), p. 3.

Any perceived or actual familial connection to Charlemagne helped to legitimize kingship throughout the high and late Middle Ages.

The construction of an ideal image of Charlemagne went beyond that of a heroic and chivalric warrior who leads his armies to victory over the forces of paganism. Within the corpus of twelfth- and thirteenth-century literary genres and political treatises, there are profound statements of kingship. There is an indication from historical and literary sources that certain attributes of kings were expected by society in general. Charlemagne filled this role as clearly as he did the role as an ideal crusader. This image is not separate from the crusader image, but simply another element of the broader image and representation. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century kings and important nobles definitely played a major role in the crusades.

Ideals about kingship involving Charlemagne are not entirely inventions of the twelfth-century. As early as the ninth- and tenth-centuries, various writers used Charlemagne as an example of proper and ideal kingship. This was certainly a prevalent theme throughout and after the Carolingian period. In the words of Jean Dunbabin,

the soul of the Carolingian political structure was the king. As defender of his people, he led the Franks into battle against their external enemies; as judge, he laid down the norms of justice, created peace between disputants, punished the wicked and avenged the weak; as Christian leader, he cared for the widows and orphans, he gave alms to the poor; as a shield of the church, he purged it from error, upheld its authority, protected its means and subsistence. At least according to the portraits presented by his courtiers, Charlemagne fulfilled all these expectations...³

This image of Charlemagne as the model of kingship was adopted and enhanced by later twelfth- and thirteenth-century authors.

³ Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making 843-11180*, 2nd ed., (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 5.

The post-Carolingian world of medieval society continually looked to the Carolingian past as an example and precedent for kingship. In particular, the image of Charlemagne is most often evoked in sources that concern ideal and legitimate kings. The more like Charlemagne, the better. If kings could connect their family line to Charlemagne, they tended to exploit it. A prime example of this concept is the nobles who helped lead the First Crusade – Robert of Flanders and Godfrey of Bouillon and his brother Baldwin already discussed in chapter two as well as later Capetian rulers like Philip Augustus and Charles I of Anjou. In particular, “Charles was to make much of the name he shared with Charlemagne; it seemed a matter of good omen to one so devoted to the acquisition of great titles.”⁴ Even the powerful King Philip II went to great lengths to connect his family line to that of Charlemagne. His mother Adela as well as his first wife Hainault was able to claim descent from Charlemagne.⁵

Defining Kingship and the Limits of Power

Medieval kings of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century exercised considerable power. In particular, the process of centralization in England and France allowed the monarchy to increase its power. Although this process varied considerably in both regions, by the twelfth-century both had powerful monarchs. Henry II in England exercised considerable influence on the continent as well as in Britain. Philip II helped to make France one of the most powerful kingdoms in the High Middle Ages. However, it would be several centuries before a monarch could exercise actual control over an entire realm. There

⁴ Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou: Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe*, (London and New York, Longman Publishing, 1998), p. 10.

⁵ Jim Bradbury, *Philip Augustus: King of France 1180-1223*, (London and New York, Longman Publishing, 1998), p. 220.

were indeed limits to the power of medieval kings. This period witnessed the development of common law, when Emperors and kings were often elected. It was the time of Magna Carta and a time when nobles and vassals often held as much power as their kings. Of course, it was also the time of powerful kings such Philip II who attempted to extend the monarchy's power and remove the nobility from the process of 'making kings' by institutionalizing the law of 'primogeniture.' It was also a time when kings were viewed as religious figures. One important example is the idea of the 'royal touch.' It was only in the twelfth-century, not the Early Middle Ages when monarchs became more closely identified as religious figures with the ability to heal or cure disease with a simple touch. Kings were often anointed in imitation of Old Testament figures and there was a significant development into what Kantorowicz called a political theology.⁶ Based on a number of literary and historical sources, the figure of Charlemagne plays a critical role in the process of defining medieval kingship.

The literary sources, especially epic, are ideal examples for exploring the image of kingship in the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. On a broad level, the sources are clear indicators as what an ideal king is, and what a 'bad' king is. However, there is a great deal more to be found in these sources as well. For example, the authors spend a great deal of time dealing with relationship between the nobility and the monarchy and between the monarchy and the church. The king's relationship with his vassals is as critical aspect of virtually all epics. Another feature that is prevalent in most twelfth-century epics is a concern for 'law' or more appropriately 'custom.' One last aspect is the personal qualities of the king or emperor, whether it is physical strength or religious

⁶ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 42-78.

piety. Taken together these characteristics help define the image of proper kingship in the twelfth-century.

Roland

As is the case with examining issues and themes such as holy war, crusade, chivalry, and knighthood, one of the best literary sources of the early twelfth-century for kingship is *the Song of Roland*. The image of the ideal king, emperor, and feudal lord is not a late development in the epic cycle of the *chanson de geste*. The portrait of Charles as the ideal Christian king is prevalent from the beginning of the legend. In *Roland*, the poet begins with “*Carles li reis, nostre emperere magnes*,” (Charles the king, our great emperor).⁷ The poet immediately makes clear the status of Charlemagne and emphasizes a role that the legend of Charlemagne would continue to occupy in the popular imagination of Western Christians for centuries to come.

The elements of kingship, feudal order, law and social relationships are quite complex in the *Roland* story. Charlemagne is presented as “the ideal king,” but the status of the monarch’s position is under constant threat from both internal and external forces.⁸ The internal problems stem from the feud between Ganelon and Roland and Ganelon’s eventual betrayal. The external problem is the threat of the Muslim army. The stability of the feudal order depends largely upon Charlemagne’s actions. In one sense, the poem is, as Morrissey argues, an exploration of “what threats and challenges can royal sovereignty as embodied by Charlemagne, here shown essentially having no defects, bear

⁷ *The Song of Roland*, Burgess, p. 164.

⁸ Becher, *Charlemagne*, 139.

and overcome? In short, what are the limits of the social order?"⁹ This is accurate, but perhaps somewhat incomplete. The story is also the presentation of a chivalric ideal in the character of Charlemagne. This chivalric ideal is an attribute that becomes institutionalized by the twelfth-century and a significant aspect of the representation of medieval kingship.

Charlemagne's strength as a warrior and crusader seems virtually limitless. The poet continually emphasizes this aspect before, during, and after the major battle scenes. He says of Charlemagne;

Li emperere est ber e combatant
 Meilz voel murir que ja fuiet de camp;
 Suz ciel n'ad rei qu'il prist a un enfant
 Carles ne creint nuls hom ki seit vivant¹⁰

The Emperor Charles is valiant and a fine warrior;
 He would sooner die than abandon the field
 No king on earth would regard him as a child
 Charles fears no man alive.

Elsewhere;

Li emperere par a grant poestet,
 .VII. anz tuz plens ad en Espaigne estet;
 Prent I chastels e alquantes citez.¹¹

The emperor in his great power
 Has been in Spain for seven long years,
 He has captured many a city and many a castle.

Equally impressive is Charlemagne's political command as a king. Since the poem is essentially a product of the twelfth-century, it is important to view Charlemagne's

⁹ Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, 46.

¹⁰ *La Chanson de Roland*, Durfournet, p. 272, lines 2737-2740.

¹¹ *La Chanson de Roland*, Durfournet, p. 264, lines 2609-2611.

character not so much as the successful eighth- and ninth-century king and emperor, but as a twelfth-century king.¹² As such, he should be seen as both a political and religious figure.¹³ As a political figure, Charlemagne, the king, acts as arbiter and judge when the dispute between Ganelon and Roland surfaces in the beginning of the poem. Quite often in France during the period in which *Roland* was written, kings took up the role of resolving disputes among feuding vassals.¹⁴ As a religious figure, Charlemagne rules by divine right and is endowed with special powers by God himself. The poet indicates throughout the poem the inclination that Charlemagne, beyond any other character, has a favored relationship with God. This is fairly explicit throughout the poem:

Karles se dort cum hume traveillet
 Seint Gabriel li ad Deus enveiet;
 L'empereur li cumandet a garder.
 Li angles est tute noit a sun chef.
 Par avisiun li ad anunciet
 D'une bataille ki encuntre lui ert;¹⁵

Charles sleeps like a weary man.
 God sent Saint Gabriel to him;
 He gives him orders to guard the emperor.
 The angel spends all night at his head,
 In a vision he announced to him,
 A battle to be waged against him;

The 'royal mystique' that manifests itself in literary sources such as *Roland* and other epics is part of a long tradition that dates at least to the Carolingian period. Charlemagne enjoys more than just a 'favored relationship' with God, he has divine protection. He is

¹² The version of the *Roland* story being used here is the *Oxford Chanson de Roland*, which is interpreted by most scholars as a copy of an earlier twelfth-century manuscript.

¹³ Percy Ernst Schramm, *Der König von Frankreich: Das Wesen der Monarchie vom 9. Zum 16. Jahrhundert*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, (Darmstadt, 1960), pp. 146-158.

¹⁴ Myers. *Medieval Kingship*, p.188.

¹⁵ *La Chanson de Roland*, Dufournet, p. 258, lines 2525-2530.

actually in contact with God through his dreams, much like many Old Testament prophets. Kings were often viewed on the same plane as Old Testament figures such as Kings David and Solomon. The culture of the twelfth-century continued and enhanced this tradition and sources such as Roland and other epics are obvious examples of this principle.

Another reflection in Roland is the extent to which the king depends on the nobility. Charlemagne, although king and emperor, relies heavily on his nobles for both political and military support. He draws significant strength and power from his vassals, in particular, the twelve peers. Charlemagne does not make all the important decisions by himself and he does not exercise absolute power.

Li empereres est par matin levét,
 Messe e matines ad li reis escultét.
 Desuz un pin en est li reis alez,
 Ses baruns mandet pur sun cunseill finer.
 Par cels de France voelt il del tut errer.
 Li empereres s'en vait desuz un pin.
 Ses baruns mandet pur sun cunseill fenir:¹⁶

The emperor arose early in the morning
 And heard mass and matins
 Then the king went over to a pine tree;
 He summons his barons to conclude his council.
 He wishes to be guided entirely by the men of France.
 The emperor goes over to a pine tree;
 He summons his barons to conclude his council,

From a royal perspective, this may be interpreted as a kind of weakness. He takes poor advice from his council. Roland, who fears another poor decision in a vain attempt to make peace, boldly addresses Charlemagne;

A voz Franceis un cunseill en presistes.
 Loerent vos alques de legerie;

¹⁶ *The Song of Roland*, Burgess, Penguin Books, p. 150, lines 163-169.

Dous de voz cuntes al païen tramesistes,
 L'un fut Basan e li altres Basilies.
 Les chefs en prist es puis desuz Haltilie.
 Faites la guerre cum vos l'avez enprise;¹⁷

You sought advice from your Franks

And they counseled you in somewhat reckless fashion.
 You sent two of your counts to the pagans,
 One was Basan, the other Basile.
 He (Marsile) took their heads on the hills beneath Haltile.
 Wage war, as you set out to do,

In addition, on two separate occasions, he trusts Marsile, one of the enemy leaders, when the Saracen leader has such a propensity to betray Charlemagne's trust, and he does not sense Ganelon's treachery until it is too late. Consequently, the Christian army is not properly prepared when they are brutally attacked. Charlemagne is, in effect, blind to the fact that Marsile is untrustworthy. Treacherous infidels have obviously deceived Charlemagne and the poet's sympathies lie with him and the Christian army. However, it seems unavoidable not to put some of the blame for the tragic outcome on the shoulders of great king himself. In this context, the poet exposes that Charlemagne has real weaknesses. Does this diminish his status as an ideal king? This veiled critique of the king may also be a clue as to the intended audience of the poem was noble rather than royal. Charlemagne, the king, discounts the advice of his nobles and the result is deadly for the Christian army.

The importance of the law and legal procedures or perhaps more accurately 'custom' is also a theme explored by the poet at the end of the story. Charlemagne does not have sufficient royal authority when it comes to Ganelon's trial. Although his

¹⁷ *The Song of Roland*, Burgess, Penguin Books, p. 170, lines 205-210.

judgment and position carries considerable weight, the ultimate decision is left to a council to which Charlemagne yields. Again, this may be a clue the intended audience of the poem. Customarily, the nobility would have been involved in the judgment of Ganelon. After defeating the pagan army, Charlemagne presents Ganelon for trial.

Des ore cumencet le plait e les noveles
 De Guenelun, ki traisun ad faite.
 Li emperere devant sei l'ad fait traire.
 'Seignors barons,' dist Carlemagnes li reis,
 'De Guenelun car me jugez le dreit!
 Il gut en l'ost tresque en Espaigne od mei,
 Si me tolit .XX. milie de mes Franceis
 E mun nevold, que ja mais ne verreiz,
 E Oliver, li proz e li curteis;
 Les .XII. pers ad trait por avoir.'¹⁸

Then the trial and the case begin
 Of Ganelon who committed treason.
 The emperor had him dragged before him
 'Lord barons,' said King Charlemagne,
 Place your judgment upon Ganelon
 He came with me in my army as far as Spain
 And robbed me of twenty thousand of my Franks
 And my nephew, whom you will never see again,
 Oliver too, the brave and the courtly.
 He betrayed the twelve peers for money.'

Ganelon and his supporters are eventually found guilty and put to death. Interestingly, when the trial begins, there does not seem to be any guarantee that Charlemagne will get his way. This may simply be a dramatic device used by the poet to add intrigue to the performance. However, with such an emphasis placed on the trial and the process, it is likely to have been more than a dramatic element. Although Charlemagne ultimately does get his way, there is an inherent respect for the process and proper 'custom' in his actions. It may also be interpreted as a feeling of impotence or lack of power, in that he

¹⁸ *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. Dufournet, p. 352, lines 3747-3756.

has little or no control as to the outcome of trial. However, issues of law and Charlemagne's influence may have been inherited from an earlier period. In particular, "Einhard seems always conscious of a ruler's devotion to law and justice as the constant criterion for his greatness. He presents Charlemagne as a great lawgiver and judge for his people."¹⁹ Unfortunately, there is no clear evidence that the author of Roland was familiar with Einhard's text. However, in the twelfth-century issues of 'custom' and 'law' were becoming more prevalent and the relationship between the monarchy and the law considerably more complex.

The poet of Roland presents a complicated picture of Charlemagne and twelfth-century kingship. God favors Charlemagne partly because of his personal characteristics and partly because of the position he occupies. There is a sense of holiness associated with the position of King and Emperor. There is a sense of legitimacy associated with Charlemagne's role and position – one that has been passed down from Constantine and Justinian to Charlemagne himself. As a sovereign, Charlemagne is an ideal knight who leads and participates in battles. He is a just king and lord, who does not exercise absolute power, and perhaps most important, he is extremely devout. There is never really a question as to his faith. In this respect, Charlemagne is a *rex christianissimus*. The religious element cannot be ignored, especially considering that the author may well have been a cleric and felt the need to emphasize this part of Charlemagne's character. It also indicates that in the twelfth-century, the ideal faithfully defended the Church. However, as pious and devout as Charlemagne is, there still seems to be a divide between

¹⁹ Henry A Myers, *Medieval Kingship*. In cooperation with Herwig Wolfram, (Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1982), p. 131.

the secular and religious authorities. Charlemagne is servant to no one, but God. As Richard Kaeuper points out; “we need only recall how dominant and even sacerdotal a role Charlemagne plays in the *Song of Roland* – blessing in Jesus’ name and in his own, conversing with his companion angels, convincing God to extend the daylight (in order to effect his revenge).”²⁰ Charlemagne does not answer to the archbishop Turpin; rather Turpin answers to him. This becomes quite clear near the beginning of the poem when Turpin questions one of Charlemagne’s decisions.

Turpins de Reins en est levét del renc
 E dist al rei: ‘Laissez ester voz Francs;
 En cest pais avez estét set anz.
 Mult unt oud e peines e ahans;
 Dunez m’en, sire, le bastun e le quant
 E jo irai al Sarazin espan,
 Sin vois vedeir alques de sun semblant.’
 Li empereres respunt par maltalant:
 ‘Alez sedeir desur cel palie blanc;
 N’en parlez mais, se jo nel vos cumant.’²¹

Turpin of Reims then rose from the ranks
 And said to the king. ‘Let your Franks be.
 You have been in this country for seven years;
 They have endured many troubles and toils.
 Give me, lord, the staff and the glove
 And I shall go to the Spanish Saracen
 To see what lies behind his outward show.’
 The emperor responds angrily:
 ‘Go and be seated on that white silk cloth;
 Do not say another word, unless I bid you to.’

Charlemagne may serve as the defender of the Church, but the churchmen are ultimately his servants. He is God’s emissary re-emphasizing the image of the king as both a political and religious figure. However, it may be a critique from the poet. It is relevant

²⁰ Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, p. 104.

²¹ *The Song of Roland*, Burgess, p. 172, lines, 264-274.

that the poet illustrates so vividly the king putting the churchman in his place. It is clearly at variance with contemporary texts, such as the *Norman Anonymous' Treatise*, but represents pretty well the developments of the early twelfth-century, especially the relations between kings and popes after ca. 1130. Perhaps more importantly, it reflects the mindset of the Norman barons, who controlled their bishops, a situation confirmed by the 1107 agreement between the Church and Henry I of England.²²

The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle

The representation of Charlemagne in *Turpin* is an extension of the picture presented in Roland. The Roland story is retold within the Turpin Chronicle along with Charlemagne's liberation of Compostella and eventual conquest of all of Spain. The crusading image is arguably more explicit here. Charlemagne remains the powerful crusading king who confidently leads his armies into battle against the enemies of Christendom. This is not surprising considering that by the time the *Turpin* had been written, the mid- to late twelfth-century, crusading had become well established in the culture of the High and Late Middle Ages.

Charlemagne is presented in line with previous kings and Roman emperors. However, Charlemagne's exploits, particularly in Spain are much more powerful and successful. After discussing the various cities that have been conquered, the author talks about what previous kings of the Franks had done in the region and then compares them to Charlemagne's successes.

Et post eius mortem multi reges et principes in Hyspania Sarracenos
expugnauerunt. Chlodoveus namque primus rex Francorum christianus, Chlotarius,
Dagobertus, Pippinus, Karolus Martellus, partim Hyspaniam adquisierunt, partim

²² David Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery; The Penguin History of Britain 1066-1284*, (London, Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 138-139.

dimiserunt. Sed hic Karolus magnus totam Hyspaniam suis temporibus subiugavit.²³

(And after their death, many ancient kings and princes were able to expel the Saracens from Spain. Clovis, the first Christian King of the Franks, and Lothar, Dagobert, Pepin, and Charles Martel conquered Spain, but abandoned part of it. But Charlemagne was able, in time, to subjugate all of Spain.)

There is a clear indication here that Charlemagne had surpassed all previous kings in his conquests and achievements. There is an implicit indication that previous kings had achieved a great deal, but that Charlemagne more than any other king has separated himself from the others. In the memory of twelfth-century culture, he represents the peak of Christian kingship. In addition, it is Charlemagne's service to the Church that is emphasized as well.

After liberating Compostella and all of Spain, Charlemagne builds new churches, monasteries, and nunneries. He distributes the finest gold and silver to the poor of many of the conquered cities. He appoints bishops and abbots to their offices. He converts non-Christians to the faith and distributes the new Christian lands among his many knights and nobles who have fought by his side.

His itaque gestis terras et provincias Hyspanie pugnatoribus suis, illis scilicet qui in patria manere volebant, Karolus dimisit: terram Navarrorum et Basclorum Britannis, et terram Castel-lanorum Francis, it Nageram et Cesaraugustam Grecis et Apuleis qui in nostro exercitu erant, et terram Aragonis Pictavis, et terram Alandaluf iuxta maritima Teutonicis, et terram Portugallorum Dacis et Flandris. terram Galicie Franci inhabitare noluerunt, quoniam nimis aspera illis videbatur. Nemo postea fuit qui auderet in Hyspania Karolum impugnare.²⁴

Charlemagne left Spain, while giving the lands and territories to his knights who wished to stay. To the Bretons, he gave the lands of Navarre and that of the Basques; and to the French, he gave the land of Castile, and to the Apulians, he gave the land of Nadre, Aragon, and Saragossa, to the Germans he gave the land of

²³ *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, Smyser, p. 60.

²⁴ *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, Smyser, p. 79.

Landaluf which is close to the sea; and the land of Portugal was given to the Danes and Flemish. The French did not wish to inhabit the Galician lands, because they saw them as too harsh. No one was able to fight with Charlemagne after this.

The *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* is not the only source to emphasize the generosity of Charlemagne; it is rather part of a larger corpus of works that places a premium on depicting kings in this manner. It also reflects the complex relationship between monarchs and their vassals in twelfth-century society.

Interestingly, although the Turpin contained an image of an ideal king in Charlemagne, it may have also been used as a critique of the Capetian monarchy in the early thirteenth-century. Prominent nobles in conflict with the monarchy commissioned a number of prose vernacular translations. Gabrielle Spiegel argues that these vernacular versions of the pseudo-history were political propaganda and an anti-Capetian polemic. With the increasing power of the monarchy under the reign of rulers such as Philip II Augustus, the French aristocrats in various areas including Flanders feared for their autonomy. The texts were used by the nobility as a kind of propaganda to emphasize their own familial connections with the Carolingian dynasty and the lack of connection that existed between Philip and the Carolingians, or more precisely between Philip and Charlemagne.²⁵ Charlemagne is presented as an ideal king in order to emphasize how opposite Philip and the Capetians are to that ideal.

The Capetian kings and the ruling families that were to follow were not oblivious to the powerful influence the Carolingian legacy had in the twelfth-century. In particular, the use of the name of Charlemagne is often used to imply legitimacy or to indicate a

²⁵ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Forging the Past: The Language of Historical Truth in Middle Ages," in *The History Teacher* 17, (1984), pp. 267-283.

legal precedent of some sort. This was quite common during and after the reign of Philip II Augustus.

Aspremont

The picture of twelfth-century kingship is no less complicated in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*. In this source, there is an ideal image of a valiant crusading king in the portrait of Charlemagne. However, there is also a rebellious vassal in the character of Girart, who often mocks Charlemagne and claims to have no loyalty or feudal obligations to the king. There is an emphasis on localized power and in some sense even an anti-royalist stance. In addition, there is the presence of a number of anti-clerical scenes throughout the poem. The century after the beginning of the 'Investiture Conflict' witnessed numerous dramatic episodes that illustrate the on-going conflictual relationship between church and state. This particular poem may be a reflection of the continued uneasy relationship between church and state that helped define the political and religious make-up of the High Middle Ages.

The roles of kings and vassals are laid out in a number of speeches by various characters. Despite the anti-clerical aspect and the 'royal-noble' feud with Girart, there is still a strong theme of 'duty' and 'order' in the story. In fact, Girart, although not a king himself, gives a speech on kingship in which he lays out all the duties of a proper king. He says to Charlemagne and others;

“Rices rois, sire, ne vos en doit peser.
 Icil om doit corone desirer
 Qui Deu voldra et croire et apeler,
 En sainte eglise servir et anorer,
 Les fauses lois abatre et oblier,
 Les bones lois essauchier et lever,
 Les orphenins et norir et garder,
 Les veves femes a salveté mener,
 Le felon ome de mal conseil oster

Et totes voies le doit fraindre et mater,
 Les gentix omes doit de lui acoster.
 La pora il les consaus recovrer
 Con l'on doit l'ame et le cors gouverner;
 Au poi prometre, al largement doner
 Puet a cascun le cuer del ventre oster
 Le felon ome qui enjure son per,
 Ki altrui serf vielt al sien atorner
 Et sainte yglise ardoir et violer,
 La povre jent cacier et defoler,
 Cil ne doit mie corone demander.”²⁶

(“Rich king, my lord, pray do not be disturbed!
 The type of man who seeks a crown on earth,
 Should look to God and in his faith be firm;
 He should both honor and serve the holy Church;
 He should cast out bad laws and break their curse,
 And champion good ones, and try to make them work;
 He should help orphans and feed them from his purse.
 Look after widows and their safety preserve;
 The wicked man he should try to convert,
 But none the less destroy if he grows worse;
 He should keep by his side men of good birth,
 For from their counsel he may find out and learn
 The way to govern his own soul and self first;
 To promise little and give much in return
 Will move the heart of everyone he serves;
 A wicked man who seeks his fellows' hurt,
 Who would rob churches, then violate and burn,
 Oppress the poor and tread them in the dirt,
 That sort of man should not for kingship yearn.”²⁷)

There are a number of themes in this short passage. First, there is an emphasis on faith and service to the Church. This is the most basic, but at the same time, the most important characteristic of any king. Second, there are obvious concerns for legal issues. This was another prominent theme during the twelfth-century. With the increased concern for the law, it became the king's duty to ensure that proper and good laws were

²⁶ *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, ed. Brandin, vol II, p. 34-35.

²⁷ *The Song of Aspremont*, Newth, p. 172, lines 7159-7178.

maintained and poor laws abandoned. Third, is the concern for widows and orphans, which seems to have become part of the standard statement about a king's duties in virtually every source examined. The last major theme in this section is the idea of keeping and using the nobility as councilors. The emphasis here is on power below the king. The passage indicates that potentially, the king can learn much from their council and advice. In fact, the language of the passage is an indicator that the model of the ideal prince is the counseling baron. He is the only one who knows how to properly 'govern' his soul and heart and he is the only one with the ability to exercise the proper self-discipline and self-control. Without the baron, the king is without the needed council. With the Baron, the king will be more successful and the kingdom more prosperous.

Girart gives a very similar speech at the end of the poem to one of his nobles (Florent) whom Charlemagne has made ruler of the region in southern Italy taken from the Muslim enemy. Ironically, it is Girart, not Charlemagne, who gives the speeches on proper kingship. However, it is Charlemagne who is the embodiment of the ideal king. The way Charlemagne deals with Girart, the rebellious vassal, is an important indicator of the problems kings faced in the twelfth-century. Charlemagne's power is far from absolute. Kings continually feuded and warred with lesser nobles for land and power. However, the poet indicates an important sense of order in the poem. In the beginning of the story, Girart pledges no loyalty to Charlemagne and does not plan to send military aid to the cause. However, Girart is eventually convinced of the higher cause and leads his knights to fight in the 'crusade.' It is only after Girart submits to Charlemagne, even if only for the present military campaign, that the Christian side is victorious.

Kingship, Legitimacy, and Social Order

There are a number of sources within the literary corpus that deal not only with kingship, but also with such issues as legitimacy and social order. What is the king's role in society; what makes a good king, and so forth. The image and representation of Charlemagne plays a major role in these sources without him actually being a main character in the stories. In fact, to understand fully the role and impact the Charlemagne legend had, it is critical to consider sources and stories where he is used only as a minor character or even as a rhetorical symbol.²⁸ There are two literary sources that are prime examples of this practice; the mid-twelfth-century French epic *Le Couronnement de Louis* and the German work *Willehalm*.

The Crowning of Louis

The *Couronnement de Louis* is an anonymous work that dates from about 1130-1140 and is the earliest epic from the William of Orange cycle. The story focuses on William's defense of Louis, the son of Charlemagne, and on William's heroic battles against the Saracens. Charlemagne is only a minor character in this story. He is quite old and can no longer live as he has in the past. However, he still serves as the model of authority and kingship.

On the surface, the *Crowning* appears to be a retelling of the coronation of Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious (778-840). However, a closer look at the contemporary events surrounding the Capetian monarchy in the mid-twelfth-century indicates a possible ulterior parallel. In the *Crowning*, Louis is crowned by Charlemagne when he is only 15. The historical Louis the Pious was crowned by his father when he

²⁸ For a more in-depth discussion of this see; Claude Thiry, "Charlemagne dans l'oeuvre des Grands Rhétoriciens," In *Charlemagne et l'épopée romane*. pp. 261-270.

was 36. However, in 1131, Louis VI crowned his son (the future King Louis VII) who was only 11 at the time. The character of Louis in the *Crowning* is really a composite of Louis VII and Louis the Pious. He conjures images of both at various times throughout the story.²⁹ Tradition and history in the twelfth-century remembered Louis the Pious as a weak king, which is preserved in the poem's character, but the coronation scene is more closely related to that of Louis VII. There are even parallels between Charlemagne and Louis VI (or Louis the Fat). Louis the Fat had a reputation for great prowess in battle and for bringing law and order to an unstable kingdom just as Charlemagne had once done. He destroyed the robber barons of the day and with the help of Abbot Suger, secured the crown for his son. In addition, “at the age of forty-six he (Louis VI) grew too fat to mount a horse.”³⁰ In the story, Charlemagne is described as “old and frail [and]...unable to ride.”³¹ In the *Crowning*, Charlemagne dies five years after the crowning of Louis. King Louis VI reigned for six years after having his son crowned. There are clearly intentional historical parallels in the story. These parallels are important evidence concerning twelfth-century views on kingship, the current Capetian monarchs (Louis VII), and Charlemagne. From the beginning, through to the end, the story serves as a lesson in kingship.

There are traditional themes throughout the story, such as knightly heroism, Christian-Saracen conflict, and the defense of the Church. However, this story is

²⁹ Nirmal Dass, ed. and trans., *The Crowning of Louis*, (North Carolina and London, McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2003), p.7.

³⁰ Dass, *The Crowning of Louis*, 7.

³¹ *The Crowning of Louis*. trans. Nirmal Dass, p. 25, line 365.

considerably more political than most of the *chansons*.³² The concept of legitimate kingship is prevalent throughout the source. William fights Saracens abroad and defends King Louis at home against rebellious vassals. “The glow of crusading remains, in other words, as William shifts enemies to fight against the misguided men who have failed to see the need for legitimate kingship.”³³ There are a number of themes associated with kingship with the poem. Themes such as divine right, hereditary succession, transition of power, legitimacy, and broadly, various models of kingship are contained in the poem. Within the story, the reader is given three models of kingship. Charlemagne represents the ideal monarch. He is legitimate, a skilled knight, defender of the Church, and just to all his people. William also represents the ideal, but lacks a major component – legitimacy. Louis, the rightful successor to Charlemagne, is a contrast to Charlemagne (and William) in virtually every aspect. He is weak, ineffective, and lacks the personality and judgment necessary for a king. There is an exploration of themes such as feudal order, primogeniture, and legitimacy as well. William has all the right skills and attributes to be a king, but would never think of usurping Louis’s power. William is much better suited than Louis to lead and be king, but he does not expect to be king, he understands, and accepts his role.

At the very beginning of the story, the author emphasizes the reputation and stature of Charlemagne and leaves little question as to his past exploits and ability as king:

Li mielde reis ot a nom Charlemagne;
 Cil aleve volentiers dolce France;
 Deus ne fist terre qui envers lui n’apende;

³² For more on this see Jean Frappier, *Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d’Orange*, 2 vols., (Paris, 1965).

³³ Kaeuper, *Violence and Chivalry*, 241.

Il I apent Baviere et Alemaigne,
 Et Normandie, et Anjou, et Bretagne,
 Et Lombardie, et Navare, et Toscane.³⁴

The greatest of all kings was named Charlemagne,
 Who magnified sweet France with all his heart:
 God did not make a land not bound to him.
 Bavaria and Germany are his,
 As are Normandy, Anjou, Brittany,
 Lombardy, Navarre, also Tuscany.³⁵

Charlemagne as in most *chansons de geste* is favored by God. All past and future kings are measured against him. The most immediate comparison in the story, is that of Charlemagne's son Louis, when the author makes it clear that he is no Charlemagne.

Charlemagne is offended by the meek nature of his son especially near the beginning of the poem when Charlemagne offers him the crown. He says;

“Filz Loois, veiz ici la corone
 Se tu la prenz, emperere iés de Rome;”³⁶

“My son, Louis. Behold, here is the crown.
 Take it, and become Emperor of Rome.”³⁷

Charlemagne goes on to tell him that only if he is worthy, should he take the crown and make it his own. Louis's timid nature takes over and he does not immediately reach for the crown. Charlemagne is enraged and says;

“Ha! las, dist il, com or sui engeigniez!
 Delez ma fame se colcha paltoniers,
 Qui engendra cest coart eritier.
 Ja en sa vie n'iert de mei avanciez.
 Quin fereit rei, ce sereit granz pechiez..

³⁴ *Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. E. Langlois, (Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, Librairie de Firmin Didot, 1888), p. 2, lines 14-19.

³⁵ *The Crowning of Louis*, trans. Nirmal Dass, p. 15, lines 14-19.

³⁶ *Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. E. Langlois, p. 5, lines 72-73.

³⁷ *The Crowning of Louis*, trans. Nirmal Dass, p. 17, lines 72-73.

Or li fasons toz les chevels trenchier,
 Si le metons la enz en cel mostier:
 Tirra les cordes et sera marregliers,
 S'avra provende qu'il ne puist mendiier."³⁸

"Alas! How have I been deceived!
 A paltry rogue must have slept with my wife
 And engendered this most cowardly heir.
 Never in his life will he be like me.
 To make him king will be the greatest sin.
 Thus, let us now cut off all of his hair
 And send him off to a monastery,
 Where he will pull ropes and be a warden.
 He'll deal with prebends so as not to beg."

The issue of 'inherited character' is critical to this passage. Louis is initially depicted as an outsider because he is 'not like Charlemagne.' If he is not like Charlemagne, he must be someone else's son and good for the monastery, where all bastards should go.

However, a quick sequence of events follows that eventually places Louis on the throne. Arneis of Orleans (really a traitor) agrees to become king until Louis is ready. William, the hero of the story, who has just returned from a hunt enters the church and immediately sees through the treachery. He kills Arneis and places the crown on Louis – the heir of Charlemagne – the rightful king. William, as essentially the 'king-maker' of the story, preserves and ensures the rightful succession of the monarchy. The idea that his son does not have the right attributes is insulting to Charlemagne and perhaps to a certain extent the author. However, his weakness does not seem to disqualify him as the rightful and legitimate king. And as Kaeuper argues, "... whatever the problems, whatever the personal qualities of the current king, the working principle of legitimate

³⁸ *Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. E. Langlois, p. 7, lines 90-98.

kingship is the essential key to an ordered society.”³⁹ Charlemagne, Louis, and William all seem to understand this important concept.

Once the issues of Louis’s coronation are dealt with, Charlemagne seeks to educate and train Louis in the art of ruling. He instructs Louis in a number of different areas such as the how to treat widows and orphans as well as to have reverence for the Church.

Charlemagne’s character says;

“... Loois,, sire filz,
Or avras tu mon reïame a tenir
Par tel convent le puisses retenir
Qu’a eir enfant ja son dreit ne tolir,
N’a veve fame vaillant un angevin;
Et sainte eglise pense de bien servir,
Que ja deables ne te puisse honir.
Tes chevaliers pense de chier tenir;
Par els seras onorez et serviz,
Par totes terres et amez et cheriz.”⁴⁰

... Louis, my good, noble son,
Now you shall come to govern my kingdom;
And may you hold it when it is your turn:
Never withhold the orphan from his rights,
Nor an Angevin mite from a widow.
Always remember to serve Holy Church,
So that the Devil may not bring you shame.
Forget not to hold and cherish your knights,
For through them you shall be honored and served.
Thus shall you be loved, cherished in the land.”⁴¹

There are specific duties that a king must carry out, in order to be a proper and successful monarch. The poetic and rhetorical device here is an important element. By having Charlemagne, the most respected Frankish Monarch, instruct Louis in the art of kingship, he is also instructing the reader or audience as well. As with the case of *Roland*, the

³⁹ Kaeuper, *Violence and Chivalry*, p. 241.

⁴⁰ *Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. E. Langlois, p. 9-10, lines 150-159.

⁴¹ *The Crowning of Louis*, trans. Nirmal Dass, p. 19, lines 150-159.

intended audience is an important issue. It may have in fact been a non-royal audience. However, it also may have included the ruling class of twelfth-century Capetian France. The character of Louis in the poem is comparable to most Capetian kings of the twelfth-century, since he was to be crowned while his father was still alive.

There are two important aspects of Charlemagne's statement. First, serving the church is obviously an important part of a king's duty. Second, honoring his knights is also a critical element. These two are recurring themes throughout all the sources and clear indicators of the twelfth-century expectations of their monarchs

There are a number of other themes that are prevalent in Charlemagne's instruction to Louis. Others that seem to be of particular importance are concern for the treatment of the poor, and issues of justice (and law). Charlemagne says to Louis,

“Quant Deus fist rei por pueples justicier,
 Il nel fist mie por false lei jugier,
 Faire luxure, ne alever pechié,
 Ne eir enfant por retolir son fié,
 Ne veve fame tolir quatre deniers;
 Ainz deit les torz abatre soz ses piez,
 Encontreval et foler et pleissier.
 Ja al povre ome ne t'en deit ennoier,
 Encontreval et foler et pleissier.
 Ainceis le deis entendre dt conseillier,
 Por l'amor Deu de son dreit adrecier;⁴²

When God made kings to rule over people
 He left no room for them to judge falsely,
 Nor be lustful, nor even sinful,
 Nor to banish orphans from their kingdoms,
 Nor to tax widows, even four deniers.
 Rather a king should strike down injustice,
 Smashing and stamping it into the earth.
 Now always be humble with the poor.
 Let not their pleas move you to great anger –

⁴² *Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. E. Langlois, p. 11, lines 175-185.

But you must lend them help with good council,
For the love of God, give them all their rights.⁴³

The author has Charlemagne indicate the presence of a divine influence over the man who rules. However, he is quick to emphasize that this position comes with a great deal of responsibility. The author makes it quite clear from the beginning that having the proper and rightful king is about honoring and protecting France. It was the twelfth-century Capetians who essentially had to ‘invent France,’ but it was also left to them to defend it as well.⁴⁴ This was the king’s job. The poet writes,

Reis qui de France porte corone d’or
Prodom deit estre et vaillanz de son cors;
Et s’il est om qui li face nul tort
Ne deit guarir ne a plain ne a bos,
De ci qu’il ait o recreant o mort:
S’einsi nel fait, don’t pert France son los;
Ce dist l’estoire: coronez est a tort.⁴⁵

The king who wears the golden crown of France
Must be prudent and valiant in his heart;
For if any man sought to do him harm,
No wood or plain could hide that wretched man:
The king would find him out and then slay him.
If he failed in this, France would lose honor;
History would call him “The Wrongly Crowned.”⁴⁶

Honor and legitimacy are prevalent themes in the *Crowning of Louis* and particularly in this passage. The rightful king has certain attributes and he is expected to behave in a certain manner. France as both the state and institution of the monarchy is at stake. For the poet, Charlemagne exemplifies ideal kingship; he is both legitimate and capable. The

⁴³ *The Crowning of Louis*, trans. Nirmal Dass, p. 20, lines 175-185.

⁴⁴ See Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making: 843-1180*, 2nd ed., (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁵ *Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. E. Langlois, p. 2, lines 20-26.

⁴⁶ *The Crowning of Louis*, trans. Nirmal Dass, p. 15-16.

case of Louis allows the author to contrast the ‘ideal’ (Charlemagne) with the legitimate, but ‘less than ideal’ (Louis). In the end, a clear picture of ideal kingship emerges in the memory of Charlemagne.

Willehalm

Ideas and images of kingship also went well beyond the scope of French literary and chronicle works of the period. Charlemagne was claimed by most of the West as king or emperor and as an ideal monarch. Outside France, the most developed legend and pseudo—history of Charlemagne came from the Holy Roman Empire. The Germans adopted and adapted many of poems and sources of the French tradition. In the German interpretation, Charlemagne (or Karl) was as much German as he was French, if not more so. German Emperors and nobility were often as obsessed with the legend of Charlemagne as much as their French counterparts. It was Emperor Otto III (r. 980-1002), who at the close of the first Christian millenium had the tomb of Charlemagne opened, only to report that Charlemagne was sitting upright on his throne while his beard and finger nails continued to grow. It was Emperor Frederick Barbarossa who pushed for Charlemagne’s canonization in 1165. In addition, “it was customary [for much of the High and Late Middle Ages] for German rulers to be twice crowned, first as kings of Germany at Charlemagne’s city of Aachen and then as Holy Roman Emperors in Rome, where, each time, the Pope bestowed the crown ‘anew.’⁴⁷ As a result, it is not surprising that many historical and literary sources that celebrate the legend of Charlemagne also view him as an ideal king and emperor. One important source that exemplifies this is the story of *Willehalm*.

⁴⁷ Charles E. Passage, ed. & trans. *The Middle High German Poem of Willihalm by Wolfram of Eschenbach*, (New York, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1977), p. 7.

Willehalm was written by Wolfram von Eschenbach in the early thirteenth-century. In the story, a Saracen woman converts to Christianity to be married to Willehalm – the story’s hero and main character, which causes a number of problems. The family of Giburc, the Saracen woman, seeks revenge for the insult, the main consequence of which is a devastating religious war where the Saracens are eventually defeated, but not before both sides suffer severe losses. The source and inspiration for *Willehalm* is a French poem of the *William of Orange* cycle. The original source, *La Bataille d’Aliscans*, dates to the mid- to late-twelfth-century. Most scholars date *Willehalm* between 1212 and 1220.⁴⁸

The story of *Willehalm* may at first seem completely inappropriate for this analysis, since Charlemagne is not even a character in the story. However, even though Charlemagne is not a character, his name and legacy still appears many times in the poem. Jeffrey Ashcroft points out that, “*Willehalm* contains seventy explicit references to persons or named objects which occur in the epic tradition of Charlemagne, ...and fourteen further references to the historical Charlemagne.”⁴⁹ What then is the context of his appearance? His role is as a basis for comparison. He is the image and ‘model’ by which all leaders and knights are judged. He is, again, the very model of knight, crusader, and king. When Wolfram describes Willehalm, he writes:

⁴⁸ Some scholars have suggested a later date, but most maintain that the second decade of the thirteenth-century is most likely.

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Ashcroft. “‘dicke Karel wart genant’: Konrad’s *Rolandslied* and the Transmission of Authority and Legitimacy in Wolfram’s *Willehalm*,” In *Wolfram’s ‘Willehalm’ Fifteen Essays*, ed. Martin H. Jones and Timothy McFarland. (New York: Camden House, 2002), p. 21.

Ane den keiser Karlen nie
So verder Franzoys wart erborn:⁵⁰

Apart from the Emperor Charlemagne
no such nobler Frenchman was ever born.”⁵¹

Willehalm is not the king, but he is the main figure of the story and the military leader of the Christians. Comparisons between Charlemagne and Willehalm (both depicted as Frenchman here), as well as between Charlemagne and King Louis occur throughout the poem.

Even the battles in which Willehalm fights are compared to Charlemagne’s experiences:

Ein dinc ich wol sprechen wil:
Dem keiser Karel waere ze vil
Dirre vluste zeinem male.
Die er tet ze Runzevale
Und in anderen sturmen sinen,

Let me say one thing: these losses, coming all of a sudden, would have been too much for the Emperor Charles. Those that he sustained at Roncevalles and his other campaigns could not be compared with mine in severity.⁵²

There seems to be an attitude on the part of the Wolfram, the author, that his audience will almost certainly understand the references to Charlemagne simply because his legend is such common knowledge. In particular, they would be familiar with the story of *Roland*. By this time, the story of *Roland* was widely circulated in German lands. In

⁵⁰ *Wolfram von Eschenbach. Willehalm*, Text der Ausgabe von Werner Schroder, (Berlin & New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2003), p. 3.

⁵¹ Adapted from Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Willehalm*, trans. Marion Gibbs and Sydney Johnson, (New York: Penguin Press, 1984), p. 19.

⁵² *Willehalm*, Gibbs & Johnson, 39.

addition, it is an indicator as to the importance of the Battle of *Alischanz*. For Wolfram, this may be an attempt to put his story on par with that of *Roland*.

In the story, Charlemagne is a common rhetorical device. He is a model of Christian kingship without actually being a character. When speaking of Louis the king, Wolfram says things such as “He who had been born of Charles now behaved in the manner of Charles...”⁵³ Louis’s familial connection to Charlemagne is something that had great meaning. It is an essential part of his identity. It is also an essential part of the crown. The person who wears the crown should have some connection to Charlemagne – an on-going theme in the twelfth and thirteenth century.

Wolfram says at another point, “The name of Charles was often mentioned, and it was said that the King should show that he inherited his courage...which was his by birth...”⁵⁴ Again, there is an issue of identity in the passage that says a great deal about the expectations of the king. The important idea here is that Louis could and should inherit certain characteristics from Charlemagne. Charlemagne’s rule and legacy continue through the blood of Louis. There is an explicit emphasis on the importance of ‘dynastic continuity.’ This ensured to a certain extent that *rex qui nunquam moritur* (the king never dies).⁵⁵ The concept of ‘royal blood’ held a great deal of power. In particular, the blood of Charlemagne, a warrior king, a saintly king, and a just king, represented great power for the culture of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century. The importance of this blood connection becomes clear in the story of Willehalm, when Willehalm challenges Louis

⁵³ *Willehalm*, Gibbs & Johnson, 99.

⁵⁴ *Willehalm*, Gibbs & Johnson, 98.

⁵⁵ Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, pp. 317-336.

and says, “If you do not [act] quickly then you are no son of Charles.”⁵⁶ This is obviously an accusation that Louis is not acting very ‘king-like,’ which is to say he is not enough like Charlemagne. It is also reminiscent of Charlemagne’s judgment of Louis in the *Crowning of Louis*. This is a common theme throughout the work.

For the most part, Louis again is presented as the anti-type for an ideal king. He does not have the skills or personality that his father possessed. However, the issue of legitimacy is still prevalent. Louis is the rightful king, and it is he who allows Willehalm to use the battle cry (Monschoi) and to fight under the imperial banner. One of the most important features of the story of Willehalm is that it addresses the need for historical continuity. Willehalm, who is a blood relative of Charlemagne, uses Charlemagne’s battle-cry (Monschoi), and also his sword (Schoiuse) to defend the empire and Christendom as Charlemagne had once done.⁵⁷ It is a transmission of power and legitimacy from Charlemagne’s generation to Willehalm’s generation of knights and crusaders.

The crusade parallels to the story are quite strong as well. There is no need for Willehalm to convince his men to take up the cross in defense of Christianity, since they already seem to be wearing it. Before a battle, Willehalm tells his men, “Comrades, you should bear in mind that you are wearing the symbol of Him who saved us from hell.”⁵⁸ The atmosphere of the poem is in part a religious conflict and in part, a love story, but the overall theme certainly has the feel of a religious crusade. Charlemagne’s legacy of

⁵⁶ *Willehalm*, Gibbs & Johnson, 97.

⁵⁷ Ashcroft, “‘dicke Karel wart genant’, p. 22.

⁵⁸ *Willehalm*, Gibbs & Johnson, 25.

kingship and crusading is both a legitimizing and inspirational feature in the story of *Willehalm*. As a rhetorical device, the representation of Charlemagne acts as a powerful symbol of legitimate kingship.

Suger, the Abbey of Saint-Denis, and the Cult of Kingship

Suger (c.1081-1152), the Abbot of Saint-Denis, is one of the most important figures of the twelfth-century. He oversaw the construction of the new Abbey at Saint-Denis, a project largely credited by many art historians and scholars as the earliest form of Gothic architecture.⁵⁹

The influence of the legend of Charlemagne on the ideas of kingship in the twelfth- and thirteenth centuries was prominent in a number of different areas. The first and probably most prevalent is that of the epic (*chanson de geste*) and romance traditions that followed. However, there was a parallel development outside of the literary arena in which the image of Charlemagne plays an immense role in defining kingship. Prime examples of this phenomenon are the relics and writings associated with the Abbey of Saint-Denis.

There was a complicated relationship between the Abbey of Saint-Denis and the history of the French monarchy and in particular the Capetian dynasty. Saint-Denis was one of the wealthiest abbeys in the West. It had benefited “royal generosity since the Merovingian period, with various Merovingian, Carolingian, and Capetian sovereigns having been buried there.”⁶⁰ Saint-Denis was believed to have been founded by the martyr Dionysius, a bishop of Paris. This Dionysius was later wrongly connected to

⁵⁹ Otto von Simpson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*, 2nd ed., (New York, 1962).

⁶⁰ Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. with introduction Richard Cusimano and John Moorhead, (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), p. 2.

Dionysius the Areopagite, an Athenian convert of Saint Paul mentioned in the book of Acts.

The Saint and the monastery were also quite prominent in the French literary tradition. “Of all the saints invoked by the *chansons de geste*, Saint-Denis is mentioned most often: by the twelfth-century the position of Saint-Denis as special benefactor of French kings is already part of popular legend.”⁶¹ In much of the literary corpus of France, dating from the mid-twelfth-century on, Charlemagne is often referred to as the ‘king of St. Denis.’

In the *Le Couronnement de Louis* upon announcing that Charlemagne has died a character says; “*Que morz est Charles li reis de Saint Denis*”⁶² (Charlemagne is dead, the King of Saint-Denis). In the *Song of Aspremont*, Charlemagne is referred to by a number of titles such as Emperor, bearer of fair France’s crown, and the King of Saint-Denis. In this story, the poet creates in the mindset of the Muslim enemy an understanding of the importance of Saint-Denis. One of the Saracen leaders says to his warriors before a great battle,

“Car cevalciés, franc chevalier baron.
Je vos metrai sempres Karle en prisson.
A Saint Denis iert coronés Eaumon.”⁶³

“Ride on good knights and brave barons.
Soon Charlemagne will be put in prison.
At Saint-Denis, Aumon will soon take his place.”

⁶¹ Gabrielle Spiegel, “The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship” in *Journal of Medieval History* 1, (1975), p. 58.

⁶² *Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. E. Langlois, p. 68, line 1461.

⁶³ Brandin, *La Chanson D’Aspremont*, p. 123.

To defeat Charlemagne would be to replace him as the king of ‘Saint-Denis.’ The Pope also recognizes the critical role Saint-Denis has played on behalf of the Christians. At one point in the story, Balan a converted Muslim describes to Charlemagne and the Christian army what to expect in the next battle.⁶⁴ The Pope praises him highly for his efforts.

Dist l’apostoles: “ Foy que doi Saint Denis,
Comunement devons nos estre amis.”⁶⁵

The Pope says: “Truly, by good St. Denis,
All must agree that this man is our friend.”

In the *Song of Girart de Vienne*, Charlemagne is referred to as the ‘King of Saint-Denis’ on eight occasions and twice as the ‘Lord of Saint-Denis.’ In addition, there are fifteen other references to the Saint and the Abbey. In the *Pélerinage de Charlemagne*, the story actually begins at Saint-Denis with Charlemagne putting his crown upon his head and making the sign of the cross.

Outside the epic tradition, the connections with Charlemagne and Saint-Denis are quite prominent as well. First, the relics at the Abbey were believed to have been brought back to France from the Holy Land by Charlemagne who had gone to liberate Jerusalem from the clutches of Muslim invaders.⁶⁶ Second, according to tradition, the banner of Saint-Denis and Charlemagne’s royal standard bearer – ‘the Oriflamme’ became one and the same by the later part of the twelfth-century. Specifically, it was during the reign of

⁶⁴ Balan is the characters name throughout most of the poem. However, once converted, he takes the name Witikin.

⁶⁵ Brandin, *La Chanson D’Aspremont*, vol. II, p. 37.

⁶⁶ This story is found in the late eleventh-century source the ‘Descriptio.’ This is short for the *Descriptio Qualiter Karolus Magnus Clavum et Coronam Domini A Constantinopoli Aquisgrani Detulerit Qualiterque Karolus Calvus Hec Ad Sanctum Dyonisium Retulerit*.

Philip II Augustus who carried the banner on the Third Crusade in 1190. Philip's son, Louis VIII helped legitimize Capetian rule by re-establishing a strong familial connection with Charlemagne's ruling family – the Carolingians. Philip could only claim lineage to Charlemagne and the Carolingians on his mother's side of the family. However, he married Isabella of Hainault who could claim lineage to the Carolingian line from both her mother and father. Their son Louis VIII (r. 1223-1226) was really the first Capetian to be able to claim Carolingian blood through both his mother and father. In addition, the practice of depositing a royal flag at the monastery of Saint-Denis begins with Hugh Capet. This flag was not the abbey's own, but one, which had belonged to Charlemagne. Legend, history, and poetry described it as a gift from Pope Leo to Charlemagne, in recognition of his imperial status as emperor of the Roman people.⁶⁷

Third, because of the conscious attempt on the part of Capetian kings, particularly of the twelfth-century, to connect with the Carolingian past there was the creation of a number of traditions and sources used to emphasize and authenticate the Capetian – Carolingian connection. The *Descriptio* already discussed briefly falls into this category, but there is another important source as well. There is a false charter, forged by Suger, attributed to Charlemagne known as the 'Donation.' In this charter, Charlemagne supposedly called a council at Saint-Denis at which time he commemorated the work of the Saint for protecting the empire from dangerous enemies. In addition, he "decreed that all kings, archbishops, and bishops should venerate the monastery as the *caput omnium ecclesiarum regni* and its abbot as Primate of France."⁶⁸ According to the charter,

⁶⁷ Spiegel, "The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship," p. 58.

⁶⁸ Spiegel, "The Cult of St. Denis and Capetian Kingship," p. 60.

Charlemagne also put an offering of gold on the altar of Saint-Denis as an act of homage. In the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, there is a very similar vision of Charlemagne's reverence to Saint-Denis. Charlemagne is shown to have bestowed upon the abbey many honors and gifts in addition to relics. In fact, in many of the long versions of the *Chronicle*, the authors incorporate the events in the false charter of Charlemagne including calling the council where Charlemagne "acknowledge[d] Saint-Denis as the prime see of France."⁶⁹ The reward for such an act of loyalty comes quickly for Charlemagne. "On the night after the council, Saint-Denis himself appears before Charlemagne in a dream and promises to intercede for the souls of those who have been or ever will be slain in wars against the Saracens in Spain or who shall give money to the church of Saint-Denis."⁷⁰ Even before Suger solidified the connection between royal historiography and the Abbey of Saint-Denis there existed an image of a strong connection between the ruling family and the ecclesiastical leadership at Saint-Denis. However, Suger does deserve a great deal of credit for elevating the status of the Abbey as well as the Capetian monarchy.⁷¹ This clearly demonstrates that the image of Charlemagne is directly influenced by the written sources of the twelfth-century and not by the traditions established in the ninth-century by Einhard.

Suger also wrote a book or biography of King Louis VI. Between 1140 and 1144, Suger wrote *Vita Ludovici Grossi regis (The Deeds of Louis the Fat)*, describing the reign of Louis VI who ironically was not one of the most prominent or powerful kings of the

⁶⁹ H.M. Smyser, "An Early redaction of the Pseudo-Turpin (Bib. Nat. fonds lat. 17656, olim Notre Dame 133" in *Speculum* 11, (April, 1936), p. 291.

⁷⁰ Smyser, "An Early redaction," p. 291.

⁷¹ Eric Bournazel, "Suger and the Capetians," *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis: A Symposium*, (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), pp. 55-66.

Capetian period. In this work, Suger comes across as a “staunch royalist” and one who sees the importance of hierarchy and monarchy.⁷² In addition, there are many clear ideas concerning kingship. Andrew Lewis argues that the image of kingship that emerges in Suger’s work is ‘traditional.’ There are three aspects that are clearly identifiable: “(1) the king as administrator of the kingdom; (2) the king as a figure with special religious associations or attributes; and (3) the king as protector of the churches and the ‘poor.’”⁷³ However, the aspect that Suger stresses more than any other is the last one – the king as protector of the church and poor. Not surprisingly, this is where Charlemagne figures into Suger’s ideology. Within Suger’s writing there are specific references to the former king and emperor. In the very first chapter, Suger makes a reference to Charlemagne in a discussion of Louis’s early years.

Gloriosus igitur et famosus rex Francorum Ludo-
vucus, Regis magnifici Phylippi filius, primeve flore etatis,
fere adhuc duodennis seu tredennis, elegans et formo-
sus, tanta morum probabilium venerabili industriam, tanta
amenissimi corporis proceritate proficiebat, ut et sceptris
futuris reipsa amplificatioinem honorificam incunctanter
promitteret et ecclesiarum et pauperum tuicioni spem
votivam generaret. Altus puerulus, antiqua regum Ka-
roli Magni et aliorum excellentiorum, hoc ipsum testa-
mentis imperialibus testificantium, consuetudine, apud
Sanctum Dyonisium tanta et quasi nativa dulcedine ipsis
Natam a puero eorum ecclesie amicitiam toto tempore
Vite sue multa liberalitate et honorificentia continuaret⁷⁴

(To begin, the splendid and renowned Louis, king of the French as son of the
stately King Philip, was distinguished and handsome in the very flower of early

⁷² Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. with introduction Richard Cusimano and John Moorhead, (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), p. 8.

⁷³ Andrew Lewis, “Suger’s Views on Kingship,” *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis: A Symposium*, (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), p. 49.

⁷⁴ Suger, *Vie de Louis vi Le Gros*, Éditée et Traduite par Henri Waquet, (Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1964), p. 5-6.

age, when he was hardly twelve or thirteen years old. He showed so much zeal in forming virtuous habits, and his graceful body was growing so tall that this future reign held immediate promise that the kingdom would be honorably enlarged, fostering hope that our prayers for the protection of the churches and the poor would be answered. This highborn stripling followed the ancient custom of Charles the Great and other excellent kings, evidence of which is contained in the imperial charters,⁷⁵ and clung to the holy martyrs of St. Denis and the monks with innate tenderness.⁷⁶)

When discussing the youth and lineage of Louis VI, Suger is careful to place the King in the same line as Charlemagne. It is not entirely clear what Suger meant by saying that Louis, “followed the ancient custom of Charles the Great.” He is not saying that Louis is a descendant of Charlemagne. He is making the case for the legitimacy of Louis’ reign based on custom and precedent. Louis is legitimate in Suger’s eyes, because like Charlemagne, he is a friend of the Church. One of the major themes of the book is to put the life of Louis in the same category as important kings from the Carolingian period. This, by extension, then places the Capetian monarchy of the twelfth-century directly in line with the perceived legitimacy of the Carolingian past.⁷⁷ In addition, it is important to note that Charlemagne is the only name mentioned among the ‘excellent’ kings who preceded Louis. This is clearly because of the forged charter housed at Saint-Denis. More than any other Carolingian or Merovingian king, Charlemagne, in the eyes of twelfth-century society, embodied the true countenance of French kingship.

In another instance, Suger is describing the conflict between Pope Pascal and the Emperor Henry. King Philip and his son Louis visit the Pope and Suger says,

⁷⁵ These charters were supposedly deposited at the Abbey of Saint-Denis.

⁷⁶ Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, Trans. with introduction Richard Cusimano and John Moorhead, (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), p. 24.

⁷⁷ Jean-Francis Lemarignier, *Le Gouvernement royal aux premiers temps capétiens, 987-1108*, (Paris, 1965), pp. 160-175.

Occurrit itaque ei ibidem rex phylippus et dominus Ludovicus filius ejus grantaner et votic, amore Dei majestatem regiam pedibus ejus incurvantes, quemadmodum consueverunt ad sepulchrum piscatoris Petri reges submisso idademate inclinari, quos dominus papa manu erigens, tanquam devotissimos apostolorum filios ante se residere fecit. Cum quibus de statu ecclesie, ut sapiens sapienter agens, familiariter contulit sosque blande demucens, beato Petro sibique ejus vicario supplicat opem ferre, ecclesiam manutenere, et, sicut antecessorum regum Francorum Karoloi Magni et aliorum mos inolevit, tyrannis et ecclesie hostibus et potissimum Henrico imperatori audacter resistere Qui amicie, auxilii et consilii dextras dederunt, regnum esposuerunt, et qui cum eo Catalaunum imperatoris legatis occurrere festinent, archiepiscopos et episcopos et abbatem Sanct Dionissi Adam, cum quo et nos fuimus, conjunxerunt.⁷⁸

(King Philip and his son the lord Louis came there with joy to meet him as they had promised. For the love of God they humbled their royal majesty before his feet, in the way that kings bow down with lowered diadem before the tomb of the fisherman Peter. The lord pope lifted them up and made them sit before him like devout sons of the apostles. In the manner of a wise man acting wisely, he conferred with them privately on the present condition of the church. Softening them with compliments, he petitioned them to bring aid to the blessed Peter and to himself, his vicar, and to lend support to the church. He asked that they follow the established custom of their predecessors, Charles the Great and other kings of the French, and make a bold stand against tyrants, enemies of the church, and above all the emperor Henry. They extended their right hands to him as a sign of alliance, aid, and council, and put the kingdom at his disposal.⁷⁹)

Custom and precedent are only rhetorical devices here. Charlemagne, because of the forged charter, is the only former king mentioned by name. Suger's point is that Philip and his son were friends and protectors of the Church and 'enemies of his enemies.'

Perhaps more importantly, Suger recognizes Charlemagne as a defender of Church. He also recognizes that Louis has inherited that role as the king of France. This is an

⁷⁸ Suger, *Vie de Louis vi Le Gros*, pp. 55-56.

⁷⁹ Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*. Trans. with introduction Richard Cusimano and John Moorhead, p. 48.

important indication that the idea of the King of France being the defender of the Church is not individual, but is a standard expectation of the position.⁸⁰ In other words, the King of France, no matter who it is, is expected to be the defender of the Church. This is probably not just Suger's position, but an indication of broader views on the king's roles. Charlemagne had begun the tradition, but now it has fallen to the Capetians of the twelfth-century. Much of the ideology concerning kingship and political power is present in the *chanson de geste*. However, in Suger's work, the political dogma is greatly enhanced.⁸¹

On one last occasion, Suger invokes the image of Charlemagne. This time the reference is associated with legal issues concerning the monastery of Argenteuil.

Speaking of the new Pope Honorius II, Suger says;

... Qui cum iusticiam
nostram de monasterio Argentoilensi, puellarum miserima conversacione infamato, tum legati sui Mathei, Albanensis episcopi, tum domini Carnotensis, Parisiensium, Suessionis, domini etiam archiepiscopi Remensis Rainaldi et multorum virorum testimonio cognovisset, precepta regum antiquorum Pipini, Karoli Magni, Ludovici Pii et aliorum de jure loci prefati nunciis nostris oblata perlegisset, curie totius persuasione, tam pro nostra iusticia quam pro earum fetida enormitate, beato Dyonisio et restituit et confirmavit.⁸²

... He recognized the justice of our claim over the monastery of Argenteuil which had been disgraced by the very wretched behavior of its young women. He examined the evidence presented by his own legate, Matthew, bishop of Albano, and by the lord bishops of Chartres, Paris, and Soissons in addition to archbishop Rainald of Reims and many other men. He also read through the charters of kings

⁸⁰ Georges Duby, "Le gouvernement royal aux premiers temps capétiens: À Propos d'un livre récent," *Le Moyen Age*, 72 (1966), pp. 543-550.

⁸¹ Michel Bur, "A Note on Suger's Understanding of Political Power," *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis: A Symposium*, (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), p. 75.

⁸² Suger, *Vie de Louis vi Le Gros*, pp. 216-218.

old – Pepin, Charles the Great, and Louis the Pious, and others – concerning our right over the place, which our messengers had presented to him. Then, aware of the justice of our cause and the enormously bad conduct of those women, he confirmed and restored the monastery to St. Denis on the advice of his entire curia.⁸³

This time a succession of kings is mentioned including Pepin, Charlemagne, and his son Louis. However, the invocation of charters and legal precedents that include some association with Charlemagne tended to be more forceful.

There are only three instances that Suger invokes the image of Charlemagne in this work. However, those particular passages are quite telling as to how Suger, and to an extent how some churchmen may have viewed Charlemagne in the twelfth-century. In each of the three instances, a specific theme or issue warrants the use of Charlemagne as an important precedent. The first episode deals with connections between the Capetian and Carolingian monarchies. This was a constant battle for a number of Capetian kings who often ruled amidst constant questions of illegitimacy. This perceived connection through Charlemagne acts as a legitimizing factor for twelfth-century French kings such as Louis VI. The second episode emphasizes one of the traditional roles of the monarchy as the defender of the Church. Again, Charlemagne is used as an ideal example to illustrate how a king should behave and what his priorities should be. Service to the Church is probably the most prevalent theme within literary and historical sources dealing with kingship. The last episode in which Charlemagne is referenced deals with a legal issue concerning the Abby of St. Denis and the Pope. Here false charters (probably produced by Suger) are referenced in an attempt to demonstrate legal rights over another monastery. Charlemagne is a primary reference for Suger's argument for an established

⁸³ Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*. Trans. with introduction Richard Cusimano and John Moorhead, pp. 126-127.

legal precedent concerning the role of the Abby of Saint- Denis. It should also be noted that Suger's tendency to use the memory of Charlemagne as both a model and legitimizing factor is not unique to the French sources. Otto of Freising in his *Gesta Friderici I imperatoris* (The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa) makes a number of similar references to Charlemagne as well.⁸⁴

Conclusion: Kingship and Memory

There are a number of conclusions to be drawn about the image of Charlemagne and the political make-up of the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. The relationship between *Regnum* and *Sacerdotium* was always a complex one in the Middle Ages and the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries are no exceptions to this phenomenon. Monarchs in a number of different areas attempted repeatedly to separate themselves from the Church. However, perhaps more than any other period, the expectations of kings were closely tied to religion. This is particularly true for the French kings who looked to Charlemagne as their progenitor and to his reign as king and emperor as a guiding principle for their own.

Politically, this period was in constant flux. In particular, in the later part of the period in question here, the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries witnessed the emergence of the French state. This process was accelerated by "the union of the two ideas of the sacred king and the holy country"⁸⁵ This process is invariably linked with the image and memory of Charlemagne. The memory of Charlemagne is paramount in the

⁸⁴ Otto of Freising and his continuator, Rahewin, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 117.

⁸⁵ Joseph Strayer, "France: The Holy Land, the Chosen People, and the Most Christian King," In *Medieval Statecraft and the Perspectives of History: Essays by Joseph Strayer*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1971), p. 302.

development of the beliefs that solidified the king as a 'sacred ruler.' Elements such as "the coronation oil [being] brought down from heaven, the healing of the scrofulous, the possession of the relics of Charlemagne, [and] the crusade tradition" all defined twelfth-century kingship and linked Charlemagne to that tradition.⁸⁶ In addition, throughout this period, there was a building sentiment in France that the French were God's new chosen people and that God favored the French king above all others, which is Suger's main theme. According to the tradition (and propaganda) created in the twelfth-century, the people of France have tended to be more devout and pious than most others and the French Kings have always acted as defenders of the faith gaining them special privilege in God's eyes.⁸⁷

The image of kings in this period comes from both historical and literary sources. In addition, the representation of Charlemagne is a composite of a number of different elements. However, the prevailing image and memory of Charlemagne in this period is that of the warrior king and defender of the Church. The idea that the king is the defender of the Church is the most prevalent characteristic displayed in the sources. This is an idea that, by the time of the crusades, became an institutionalized aspect of the crown. King Louis VII of France who issued a crusade charter in 1164 exemplifies this.

The first part of the charter reads;

In nomine sanctae et individuae Trinitatis. Amen. Ego Ludovicus Dei gratia Francorum Rex. Ad regiae dignitatis officium dignoscitur pertinere, Ecclesias Dei quae in regno nostro sunt constitutae, vigilanter custodire, ut quantum in nobis est praecaveamus ne interior quies, exterioribus molestiis vacillet, et his quorum manus celeres sunt ad rapiendum, murum deffensionis apponamus.

⁸⁶ Strayer, "France: The Holy Land, the Chosen People, and the Most Christian King," pp. 302-303.

⁸⁷ Francoise Gasparri, *L'Ecriture des actes de Louis VI, Louis VII, et Philippe Auguste*, (Geneva, 1973), pp. 15-25.

(In the name of the holy and undivided Trinity. Amen. I, Louis, by the grace of God, King of France. It is recognized that it belongs to the office of the royal dignity to vigilantly watch over the churches of God which are established in our realm, so that as it is in our power, we make sure that their interior quiet is not upset by external disturbances and also erect defenses against those whose hands are ready for plunder.)⁸⁸

The crusade charter here is just one example of theme that was prevalent throughout the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. The idea that it is essentially the duty of the kings to protect the church is not an isolated appearance. Virtually every source examined here, both literary and historical, mentions this idea of the king being the defender of the Church. This is not something that is a minor theme, but rather something that is explicit in the language and attitudes of the characters and historical actors.

The idea of the king as defender of the church, as one who protects widows and orphans, as one who upholds the law, and as one who is faithful and pious, are more than the main elements of kingship. There is, in fact, a broader connection to the concept of 'chivalry.' The 'chivalrous knight' has all the attributes mentioned above as well as numerous others. The king, ultimately a knight as well, is an extension of this same basic concept. In a sense, it is not so much that kings and knights act in service of religion and the Church, but that knighthood and kingship are religious services in and of themselves.⁸⁹ This in many respects is in the same tradition as the crusades. The crusaders are in many cases acting in the service of the Church, but the crusade itself is a religious act. The image and representation of Charlemagne is part of this broader ideal of chivalry. He is a knight, crusader, and a symbol of ideal and divine kingship.

⁸⁸ Corliss Konwiser Slack, *Crusade Charters 1138-1270*, English translations by Hugh Bernard Feiss, (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, Arizona, 2001), pp. 54-55.

⁸⁹ Keen, *Chivalry*, 61.

CHAPTER 4

THE 'UNMAKING' OF AN IDEAL: CHARLEMAGNE AND THE FEUDAL ORDER

There are a number of literary and historical sources of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century that depart from the traditionally positive view of Charlemagne. In many sources, particularly, but not exclusively, the *chansons de geste* of the rebel-baron cycle, Charlemagne is depicted in a manner that is far from ideal. No discussion of the image and representation of Charlemagne in this period in literary and historical sources would be complete without analyzing the negative portrait that exists in these sources. Even some of the traditionally positive sources already discussed in previous chapters contain elements of comical and negative imagery, which have been briefly discussed in the previous chapter on kingship. In these sources, the overall image is a positive one, but there are scenes that show faults and weaknesses.

In *Roland*, Charlemagne wins the major battles at the end of the poem and successfully avenges his nephew's death. However, he does lose Roland and many of his best nobles. Charlemagne is partially responsible for their deaths because of the poor decisions he has made. In *Aspremont*, Charlemagne is never completely reconciled with his rebellious vassal, Girart. Although the author never explicitly criticizes Charlemagne's inability to reconcile with his vassal, the implicit message certainly involves a fault on the part of Charlemagne and perhaps the French monarchy in general.

In the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, after demonstrating the superiority of his army through battle and feats of arms, Charlemagne is able to convince the Saracen leader, Agolant, along with his followers to convert and accept baptism. However, after arriving

at Charlemagne's camp, something unexpected happens. While Charlemagne describes the differences in clothing worn by priests, bishops, monks, and knights, Agolant notices another group. The author writes;

Interea videns Aigolandus .xiii. pauperes in quadam parte misero habitu indutos, ad terram residentes, sine mensa et sine lintheaminibus comedentes, parco potu et cibis utentes, interrogavit cuiusmodi homines essent.¹

Meanwhile Agolant sees thirteen paupers who were dressed in poor robes, who ate on the ground, without a table and without a table cloth and who had little to eat and little to drink. He asked about these men.²

When asked about these men Charlemagne says,

At ipse Karolus ait: Hec est gens Dei, nuntii domini nostri Ihesu Christi, quos sub numero .xii. apostolorum Domini per unumquemque [diem] ex more pascimus.³

At which Charlemagne answered: These are people of God, messengers of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we feed every day in the name of the 12 apostles of the Lord.

Agolant is insulted by what in his mind is disrespect shown to 'God's people.' He immediately refuses baptism, returns to his people, gathers an army and challenges Charlemagne to battle. Charlemagne immediately orders that the poor be properly clothed and fed, but it is too late for Agolant and all his followers that would have been converted that day; they all die in the ensuing battle, unconverted. The author chastises Charlemagne's actions and his inability to convert Agolant and the Muslim army.⁴ He uses it as a lesson for the reader/listener, warning that those who mistreat the poor – God's people, will answer for it on the day of judgment.

¹ *The Pseudo-Turpin*, Ed. H.M. Smyser, (The Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge, Mass. 1937), P 72.

² In most versions of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle the number given is 12 not 13. The number here is probably a scribal error.

³ *The Pseudo-Turpin*, Ed. H.M. Smyser, p. 72.

⁴ *The Pseudo-Turpin*, Ed. H.M. Smyser, p. 72, lines 24-35.

However, the critical, negative, and comical portraits of Charlemagne are not very prevalent in the sources already discussed. Sources containing an abundance of these elements really constitute a different category of epic and romance literature. Although there are less than ideal portraits of Charlemagne and critiques of kingship, this aspect, up to this point, has not been the major theme of the sources. It is really with the rebel-baron cycle and other various mid- to late-twelfth-century works that the attention Charlemagne's ideal image begins to show signs of flaws.

The Rebel-Baron Cycle

The rebel-baron cycle of the Old French epic has traditionally been interpreted as (anti-royalist) rhetoric reflecting the growing conflict between the nobility (aristocracy) and the monarch. The cycle included, and is sometimes used interchangeably with, the *geste of Doon de Mayence*, named for one of the major early works. Some of the characters have imaginary genealogical ties to Doon, but little more connects them. In addition, the works themselves have no real ties to one another other than their main character's opposition to Charlemagne. The tone is vehemently anti-royalist to the extent that nobles are concerned with the growing power of the monarchy as well as the abuse of power by corrupt monarchs. It is not, however, anti-royalist in the sense that the nobility is trying to dissolve the institution of the monarchy or even overthrow the king (Charlemagne). In fact, none of the stories that fit into this category ends with Charlemagne being removed from power. Instead, the rebel-baron cycle would be more aptly described as epics concerned with proper royal behavior. Many poems depict Charlemagne in terms that blatantly contradict the representation found in the cycle of the king as well as most historical sources.

The negative representation of Charlemagne seems to depict a corrupt and unjust monarch. It is intended to be critique of monarchs who take advantage of their position and behave inappropriately. Generally, the authors tend to be critical of Charlemagne and the monarchy on a number of different issues, mistreatment of faithful vassals tends to take precedence over all of them. As a consequence, the negative representation of Charlemagne may be viewed as an attack on the current Capetian policies.

From the reign of Louis VI through that of Philip II Augustus, kings continually imposed policies that restricted the power of the nobility and expanded the monarchy's control.⁵ The sources are clear indicators of some of the problems and issues that feudal monarchs and nobles faced during this period. The complexities of these problems are simplified for the stories. Typically, the reader or listener is presented with a kind of binary opposition monarchy vs. nobility. However, both sides tended to struggle with and against each other. Generally, the authors tend to be critical of the monarchy and identify with the struggles of the nobility. This is not surprising since the most probable audience for performances would have been the nobility. The character or image of Charlemagne in most of the stories is considerably different from those of the cycle of the king. Charlemagne is no longer the protagonist. He is not a villain, but is certainly far from being the hero.

The texts that fall into this broad category have many features in common with other sources in the category, but each is also unique and has defining characteristics that set it apart from the rest. For example, in *Huon de Bordeaux*, Huon is in conflict with Charlemagne for killing his son 'Charlot' who attacked Huon together with the traitor

⁵ Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making 843-1180*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 256-277.

Amauri, is sent by Charlemagne on a perilous mission to the court of the amir of Babylon to kiss his daughter, bring back a hair of his beard and four teeth, and to kill the chief guest present there. In addition, Charlemagne charges Huon to “bring back 1,000 falcons, 1,000 bears, 1,000 hunting dogs, 1,000 youths, [and] 1,000 maidens.”⁶ The amir’s daughter Esclarmonde befriends him, they fall in love and escape together under the presiding influences of Auberon, King of fairies. They experience magical and enchanted adventures, and return to further struggles in France, before Huon is settled in his inheritance. There is a great deal of fantasy and magic associated with this tale, but the conflict between lord and vassal, as well as the sense of duty for the vassal are clear and prominent. In contrast, in *Renaut de Montauban* Charlemagne’s son is killed by the rebellious vassal, but there are no fantastical adventures in far off lands, only a bitter war between Charlemagne and Renaut. After numerous battles and broken oaths, the two are finally begrudgingly reconciled, but the conflict remains.⁷

In many of the early stories the rebellious vassal has no just cause for his revolt. These stories always end with the defeat of the traitor and his repentance and reconciliation to the emperor. This is not the case in the later works such as *Girart de Vienne*. Charlemagne, the monarch, either breaks with feudal custom or treats his nobles and subordinates them improperly. In *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, a poem that does not belong to the rebel-baron cycle, Charlemagne is still presented in a manner entirely different than, for example, *Roland*

⁶ Quoted in William Calin, *The Epic Quest: Studies in Four Old French Chanson de Geste*, (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 166.

⁷ Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, p. 77.

The Song of Girart de Vienne and Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne

In *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* (the Pilgrimage of Charlemagne, also known as the *Voyage de Charlemagne*), historians are confronted with one of the earliest poetic works that depict him as less than ideal. This particular poem has troubled scholars for more than a century. It survived into the modern era in a single fourteenth-century manuscript that has subsequently been lost from the collection of the British Library.⁸ The first problem is that it is difficult to categorize the work. It does not really fit neatly into any of the traditional categories or poetic cycles. Nevertheless, it is usually put in the cycle of the king (the same group as *Roland*). Most scholars believe that the poet lived on the continent. The poem is quite short, only 870 lines in comparison to *Roland's* 4002 and *Aspremont's* 11,376. In addition, the date of this work is debatable – suggestions have ranged from the late eleventh-century to the late thirteenth-century. However, generally most scholars have assigned it to the mid-twelfth-century.

To some extent, the story parallels the events described in the *Descriptio*. Charlemagne visits Jerusalem and Constantinople and brings back important relics to France. The *Descriptio* was undoubtedly a major source of inspiration for the author. Versions of the story in the *Descriptio* were widely circulated and the composition of the *Descriptio* predates the *Pèlerinage*. However, the comical tone, lack of major battles, and depiction of Charlemagne set the *Pèlerinage* apart from the ‘epic-like’ descriptions and events in the *Descriptio*.

The *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* is one of the early sources to depict explicitly Charlemagne in comical manner. It is difficult to imagine that audiences could hear the

⁸ The manuscript has actually been missing since the late 19th century.

majestic description of Charlemagne driven by faith and honor in *Roland* and the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* and perhaps the next day hear about the pompous and arrogant king driven by his own ego in the *Pélerinage de Charlemagne*. In fact, Ronald Walpole, “conjectures that the jongleur who sang the *Roland* of a morning at the Lendit fair may have chanted the *Voyage de Charlemagne* in the afternoon.”⁹ However, it is nearly impossible to know how widespread the story was or if it was censured or purged by the Church as some scholars have suggested. Considering the number of manuscripts that have survived, it would be safe to assume that the story did not have the popularity of *Roland*. Although Charlemagne’s image is far from the noble crusading king, his status does not seem to be diminished. He is given proper titles throughout the poem. He is the ‘Emperor of France,’ ‘Charles the King,’ and ‘Charles the Brave.’

The poem itself can be divided into 4 sections. The opening passage set in France (at St. Denis), the preparation for the journey, to Jerusalem, and to Constantinople. The story begins with the wife of Charlemagne issuing a ‘type’ of taunt towards her husband that she has heard of another King Hugo of Constantinople who is superior to Charlemagne. Charlemagne, insulted by the idea that there is someone better, vows to find him. He tells his men that they are going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem – but on the way back will stop in Constantinople (the real reason for the trip). The Franks are outmatched by the sophistication and courtliness of their counterparts in Constantinople. The story is full of contradictions when it comes to Charlemagne. He is arrogant and selfish, but refuses great treasure from King Hugo at the end of the story. His pilgrimage to Jerusalem is really ploy, but God still seems to favor him.

⁹ John Grigsby, “The Relics Role in the Voyage de Charlemagne” *Olifant* 9, (Fall 1981): p. 30.

In the very first scene his arrogance is plainly displayed when Charlemagne proudly asks his wife,

“Dame veistes unkes hume nul desuz ceil
Tant ben seist espee ne la corone el chef?”¹⁰

“Lady, have you ever seen a man in the world
Wearing such a fitting sword and crown?”

She surprisingly suggests that there is another who has a greater presence than Charlemagne has. When Charlemagne does not get the answer he is looking for from his wife, he reacts in a fit of anger. The author says he was “*mult en est curecez*” (filled with wrath). He even threatens to have his wife beheaded if she does not tell him the name of the other king. Upon hearing that it is Hugo of Constantinople, Charlemagne lies to his knights and tells them that he wants to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but of course, the real reason for the trip is to meet Hugo on the way back to France. On the surface, it seems that the portrait of the confident warrior-king of Roland has been replaced by a self-centered and insecure monarch concerned with his own glorification. However, the image of Charlemagne in this work does not fit the typically negative portrait we see in most of the rebel-baron works.

The Song of Girart de Vienne is a much better example of a poem that reflects the strained relationship between the monarch and nobility. It is one of the few *chansons* that have survived with knowledge of its author intact. The author *Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube* composed the work around 1180, the beginning of the reign of Philip II Augustus in France. Very little is known about the author *Bertrand* who describes himself as a ‘noble clerk.’ Although most literary scholars believe, that he is also the author of at least one

¹⁰ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, (Birmingham, Alabama, Summa Publications, 1984), p. 1.

other work, *Aymeri de Narbonne*, as well.¹¹ In addition, it should be noted that a great deal of this poem can be traced to an older work. Most scholars believe that Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube added the description of the initial hostilities between Charlemagne and Girart as well as the conclusion.¹²

The story of *Girart de Vienne* can be divided into 4 major parts; (1) the youth of Girart (2) early Hostilities (3) the siege of Vienne (4) and the reconciliation. Girart instead of Charlemagne is the hero of the story. He is the ideal liegeman and lord, 'well-bred and brave,' the epitome of the courtly and chivalric ideal. On the other hand, Charlemagne is depicted as flawed and arrogant.¹³ Girart, although wronged by Charlemagne, remains a faithful vassal – he stands for feudal ideals broken by his own lord. Charlemagne is often depicted as being out of control. He gets angry very easily; he has problems controlling his vassals and advisors.¹⁴

This is a portrait of a flawed king, his actions are often selfish, and his leadership qualities are poor.¹⁵ It is, in fact, Charlemagne's actions that cause the war that claimed the lives of many great knights. Charlemagne selfishly plans to marry the woman whom he had promised to Girart. The author writes;

¹¹ In three of the four manuscripts containing *Girart of Vienne*, it is succeeded by *Aymeri of Narbonne*, which is a story concerning Aymeri, the son of one of Charlemagne's twelve Paladins. Aymeri accepts Charlemagne's challenge to reconquer the city of Narbonne from Saracens. There are epic battles and betrayal in the story. In addition, like Girart, there are also elements of the Romance genre in this work.

¹² Wolfgang G. van Emden, "problèmes de composition et de datation," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 13 (1970), p. 281-290. See also Alison Goddard Elliott, "The Double Genesis of *Girart de Vienne*" *Olifant*, 8 (1980), p. 131-160.

¹³ Jean Misrahi, "Girard de Vienne et la Geste de Guillaume," *Medium Aevum*, 4 (1935), pp. 1-15.

¹⁴ *The Song of Girart of Vienne by Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube*, trans. Michael A. Newth, (Tempe, Arizona, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), pp. x-xiii.

¹⁵ Bernard Guidot, "L'Empereur Charles dans *Girart de Vienne*," *Marche Romane*, 30 (1980), pp. 127-141.

Nostre enperere a la dame esgardee;
 molt la vit bele et gente et acesmee,
 les euz ot verz, la face coloree,
 et fu plus blenche que n'est nois sor gelee.
 "Deus" dist li rois, "seinte vierge ennoree,
 je ne truis fame en tote ma contree,
 une ne autre, qui me plesse n'agree;
 et ceste est tant et bele et acesmee
 c'onques plus bele ne pot estre trovee.
 Par ce Seignor qui fist ciel et rousee,
 ceste avrai ge a moillier espousee;
 Girart avra fame en autre contree."
 Se il le dist, ce fu verté provee:
 desor Girart est la perte tornee.
 Puis en fu fete grant guerre et grant mellee¹⁶

King Charles beholds the widow of the duke
 And sees her grace, her charms and beauty too:
 Her eyes are green, her face is fair of color,
 Her skin is whiter than snow on ice to view;
 He says: "By God and the blest Maid, in truth,
 In all my realm I've found no woman whom
 I ever liked more than the rest hereto,
 And yet, this one I find so fair and true
 That no one else could match her looks or mood;
 Now by the Lord Who makes the sky and dew,
 I'll take to wife this widow of the duke's!
 Girart shall find another somewhere soon."
 And as he wished, that was the way it proved:
 And what he gained young Girart had to lose;
 What awful war and feuding hence ensued, (1273-1287)

Ironically, Girart accepts the insult by Charlemagne because Charlemagne is his liege-lord and instead accepts the city of Vienne as a fief. Here, the author is able to contrast the two main personalities of the poem – Charlemagne and Girart. Charlemagne is the

¹⁶ *Girart de Vienne*, par Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube, publié par Wolfgang Van Emden, (Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1973), p. 59.

greedy and selfish monarch and Girart is the honorable noble and vassal who, continues to perform his duties, even in the face of continuous injustice.¹⁷ The author writes;

“Vez ci la dame o le viaire fier;
ceste prendrai, seu volez ostroier.”
Et dit Girart: “Sire rois droiturier,
grant tort me faites, a celer nel vos quier,
car ceste dame me donates l’autrier,
tote sa terre et s’annor a baillier;
mon seigneur estes, ne vos puis jostissier.”¹⁸

[Charlemagne says to Girart] “Behold this lady of visage fierce and fine!
If you agree I shall take her to wife.”
But Girart says: “My lord and King by right,
You do me wrong, and this I cannot hide:
The other day you said she was mine,
And mine to rule was all her realm likewise;
But I cannot challenge you, who are my Sire.”

After Girart gives a mild protest, he eventually steps aside and does not oppose the marriage of Charlemagne and his former bride-to-be. Charlemagne’s nobles convince him, as a show of good faith, to give Girart the city of Vienne as a fief. The widow then tricks Girart into kissing her foot (rather than the Emperor’s) in a show of fealty. This leads to the hostilities between the two, since Charlemagne will not punish his wife (as he is bound to do as Girart’s liege-lord). The war between Charlemagne and Girart lasts for several years including a seven year long siege of the city of Vienne by Charlemagne’s army. The involvement of the marriage and war caused partially by a woman makes this story difficult to compare to other epics. It clearly has elements of the romance genre, but retains the epic framework.¹⁹ This separates it from most other epics, but it still

¹⁷ George Beech, “A Feudal Document of Early Medieval Poitou,” in *Mélanges d’histoire médiévale dédiés à Robert Crozier*, vol. 1, (Paris, 1966), pp. 203-213.

¹⁸ *Girart de Vienne*, par Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube, publié par Wolfgang Van Emden, (Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1973), p. 66.

¹⁹ Wolfgang, Van Emden, “*Girart de Vienne*: Epic or Romance?” *Olifant* 10 (Fall 1984), pp. 147-160.

represents a reflection of the hostilities between the Capetian monarchy and the increasingly marginalized nobility.

The politics and role of gift exchange and feudalism in the Middle Ages is an ongoing debate among medieval historians.²⁰ Here, the concept is reflected in Charlemagne's gift to Girart of the fief of Vienne.

Et por Girart, que je ai forment cheir,
Li dong Vienne et 'annor a baillier;
Haut sont li mur et li fossé plenier,
La cité riche, qui molt fet a proisier,²¹

And for Girart, whom I prize,
I give him Vienne and all its shire;
Its walls are high and its moat is deep and wide
And the town is rich and much to be admired;

This is an important indicator that gift exchange was an important aspect of feudal relations.²² There are numerous historical parallels to conflicts between lords and vassals and kings and noblemen such as this. In particular, this entire scene episode between Charlemagne, Girart and the Duke's widow is quite reminiscent of the agreements between Count William V of Aquitaine and Hugh IV of Lusignan.²³ Widows of noblemen often remarried other noblemen especially if it was politically advantageous for both. However, just as the case between Charlemagne and Girart, the various secret

²⁰ See Stephen White's "The Politics of Exchange: Gifts, Fiefs, and Feudalism," in *Medieval Transformations. Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context*, ed. E. Cohen and M.B. de Jong, (Boston, Leiden, 2000); and Stephen White's "The Politics of Fidelity: Hugh of Lusignan and William of Aquitaine," in *George Duby: L'écriture de l'histoire*, ed. C. Duhamel-Amado, (Brussels, 1996), pp. 223-230.

²¹ *Girart de Vienne*, par Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube, p. 67.

²² Jean Subrenat, "Vienne. Fief ou alleu? (à propos de *Girart de Vienne*)," *Mélanges René Louis: La Chanson de geste et le mythe carolingien*, (Vézelay, Saint-père-sous, 1982), pp. 691-702.

²³ See: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/agreement.html> (visit of January 2006).

agreements about land exchange and marriage caused significant conflict between Hugh IV and William X.

Charlemagne's gift to Girart of the fief of Vienne may be appropriate in certain instances, but in the poem, it is overshadowed by what the poet views as a betrayal on the part of the king. During the remainder of the poem, the author maintains the image of Girart as a noble wronged by his sovereign lord. Girart, in many ways, remains a faithful and honorable vassal fighting for his rights. Girart actually unknowingly wounds Charlemagne into a joust with Charlemagne without even knowing it. He actually injures Charlemagne, but when he figures out that it is Charlemagne, he is overcome with guilt and a feeling of betrayal. He comes down from his horse to kiss the foot of Charlemagne and ask for forgiveness. On the other hand, Charlemagne is driven largely by motives of revenge. The author writes;

“Vasal,” dit Ch[arles], “molt m’a fet corrocier;
dolanz serai se ne m’en puis vengier.”²⁴

“Vassal,” says Charles, “he [Girart] has much angered me:
Without revenge I shall be filled with grief.

Girart's reasons for fighting the war are honorable and correspond to feudal custom. Charlemagne's are not honorable, but are rather self-serving. It is clear that the author favors Girart in this dispute. In addition, he clearly sides with the nobility over the monarchy. However, it is not clear why the author favors a noble over the famed emperor. One clue to this aspect might be the intended audience. If the author was writing for a noble audience rather than a royal one, then position would be understandable. If his patron was a noble who opposed or feuded with the current

²⁴ *Girart de Vienne*, par Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube, publié par Wolfgang Van Emden, (Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1973), p. 181.

Capetian monarch, then this might explain his opposition to royal authority. This is certainly not out of the realm of possibility since by 1180, when Philip II ascended to the monarchy, the Capetians had gained considerable power at the expense of the nobility. However, the author does not question the legitimacy of Charlemagne, nor does he indicate that he should be removed from power. Nevertheless, the author has no problem criticizing Charlemagne as the representative of a legitimate, but repressive monarchy. At one point Oliver, the best knight of Girart's, and Roland, the best knight of Charlemagne's, are about to do battle. The author has Oliver say,

je por Girart, le franc duc ennoré
vos por Charlon, qui est rois coronnez.²⁵

I for Girart, the noblest duke alive,
And you for Charles, who is a crowned king;

He indicates that Charlemagne is king by right because he was crowned. He also indicates that legitimacy does not necessary mean that the king will always act appropriately. The author consistently suggests that Girart is the better man. This is intended to be an example of the poor behavior often displayed by monarchs, especially in relation to their own vassals.

Contradictions of Kingship

The idea that the image of Charlemagne as the ideal king and crusader could change so quickly to an unjust feudal overlord is a problematic issue for historians. It raises a number of important questions.²⁶ What do the contradictory images and representations of Charlemagne mean? Do they reflect the uneasy relationship between

²⁵ *Girart de Vienne*, par Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube, publié par Wolfgang Van Emden, (Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1973), p. 186.

²⁶ H. Morf, "Etude sur la date, le caractère et l'origine de la *Chanson du Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*," *Romania*, 13 (1884), pp. 185-232.

‘church and state’ or does it have more to do with the evolving image of proper kingship? Is the most prevalent theme the relations between the nobility and the monarchy? All three of these issues play an important part in these sources.²⁷

With the crusade and pilgrimage themes being of only nominal importance, the remaining prevalent theme is the portrait of the king and his relationship with subordinate vassals. In various sources that depict Charlemagne negatively, there are a number of complex and sometimes contradictory images of kingship. The negative image is more than likely not so much a reflection of beliefs about the historical Charlemagne, but more contemporary (late twelfth-century) royal policies.²⁸

In the *Le Pélerinage de Charlemagne*, there are two immediate representations of kings pointed out by Charlemagne’s wife who compares King Hugo of Constantinople to her husband. Charlemagne after placing his crown on his head, rhetorically asks his wife if she knew of any man who possessed such a ‘fitting sword and crown.’ She responds by citing Hugo.

“Uncore en sai jo un ki plus se fait leger
Quant il porte corune entre ses chevalers:
Kaunt la met sur sa teste, plus belement lui set!”²⁹

“I know of one who has more presence than you
When wearing his crown amidst his knights:
It befits him better when he places it on his head”

²⁷ J.D. Niles, “On the Logic of *Le Pélerinage de Charlemagne*,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 81 (1980), pp. 208-216.

²⁸ J. Horrent, “La *Chanson du Pélerinage de Charlemagne* et la réalité historique contemporaine,” in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du moyen âge et de la Renaissance, offerts à Jean Frappier par ses collègues, ses élèves et ses amis*, (Geneva: Publications romanes et françaises, 1970), pp. 411-417.

²⁹ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, (Birmingham, Alabama, Summa Publications, 1984), p. 1.

It is this discussion that is the impetus for Charlemagne's trip to Jerusalem and Constantinople and a major theme of the poem, which is Charlemagne's attempt to find this so-called superior king. Although Charlemagne is pompous and arrogant, and often appears more comical than regal, the poet imparts his character with a number the most important kingly characteristics.³⁰ At the beginning of the poem, "Charlemagne is portrayed as the Carolingian theocratic monarch whose authority is based on terrestrial conquest and sanctioned by God."³¹ This is explicit when he says, "Uncor cunquerrei jo citez ot mun espez!" (with my spear I will conquer many cities).³² He has the proper title and the author no doubt sees him as the rightful Emperor. The poet even has Charlemagne's wife clarify her statement by saying that;

"Emperere," dist ele, "ne vus en curucez!
Plus est riche d'aver e d'or e de deners,
Mais n'est mie si pruz ne si bon chevalers
Pur ferir en bataile ne pur I encaucer."³³

"Emperor," she said "do not be angry with me because of this
Though he has more riches, gold, and silver than you,
He is not as valiant as you, nor is he as good a knight
For smiting in battle and for pressing hard the enemy."

However, the traditional images of kingship found in other poems of the cycle of the king are difficult to maintain in the *Pélerinage*.³⁴ There are no great battles. The Christian-

³⁰ J.H. Caulkins, "Narrative Interventions. The Key to the Jest of the *Pélerinage de Charlemagne*," in *Etudes de philologie romane et d'histoire littéraire offertes à Jules Horrent à l'occasion de son soixantième anniversaire*, eds. J.M. D'Heur and N. Cherubini, (Liège, 1980), pp. 47-55.

³¹ Jane Burns, "Portraits of Kingship in the *Pélerinage de Charlemagne*" in *Olifant*, 10 (Autumn, 1984): p. 166.

³² *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 1.

³³ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 3.

³⁴ S. Sturm, "The Stature of Charlemagne in the *Pélerinage*," *Studies in Philology*, 71, (1974), pp. 1-18.

Saracen conflict that fueled Western views of good vs. evil and Godly vs. pagan is absent from this story. What made an ideal image of the ideal king in *Roland* is simply not a major part of this work. The poet does make reference to previous conquests that have helped make Charlemagne the Emperor he is. For example, while in Jerusalem Charlemagne says to the Patriarch;

“Sire, jo ai nun Karle, si sui de France nez.
Duze reis ai cunquis par force et par barnez;³⁵

“Sire, my name is Charles, and I was born in France;
I conquered twelve kings by my might and prowess,

The representation of kingship in the figure of Charlemagne here is almost based entirely on previous exploits and reputation. However, the portrait of the ‘Carolingian theocratic’ monarch fades into something much more abstract. It is not explicit; the imagery is more implicit. Virtually none of this is based on his actions in this story. Instead, it is based on the imagery supplied by the author. For the most part, this image of kingship gives way to the notion of ‘religious kingship.’³⁶ It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the image of Charlemagne as a religious figure and Charlemagne as a political figure.³⁷

However, as comical as the theme may seem to be, the religious kingship reflected in the poem may be a reflection of the Old Testament model of kings. This is a concept that flourished in twelfth-century France and was an important theme in political ideology. Because of the prevalence of this thematic tool in various literary and historical sources,

³⁵ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 13.

³⁶ Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 273-302.

³⁷ Ernst Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study of Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), pp. 157-181.

it is likely that this image was often intentionally and unintentionally adopted by poets of various works. The religious element is the emphasis while Charlemagne is in Jerusalem.

Throughout many of the *chansons de geste*, Charlemagne travels and fights with his '12 Peers.' There is an obvious parallel with Christ and the twelve apostles. However, in the *Pèlerinage*, there is much more of an emphasis on comparing or in some cases equating Charlemagne with Christ. He is repeatedly referred to as the thirteenth member of the group, which may be "a willful association between this king and Christ."³⁸ In addition, Charlemagne is actually mistaken for Christ himself and his twelve peers as the apostles. Upon entering Jerusalem, the poet writes;

Mult est genz li presenz que reis Carles I offret.
 Entrat en un muster de marbre peint a volte:
 Laens ad un alter de Sainte Paternostre:
 Deus I chantat la messe, si firent li apostle;
 E les .XII. chaeres I sunt tutes uncore:
 La trezime est en mi, ben seelee et close.
 Cum Karle I entrat, ben out al queor grant joie:
 Cum il vit la chaere, icele part s'aprocet:
 L'emperere s'asist, un petit se reposet,
 Li .XII. pers as altres, envirunt e en costes;³⁹

The present that King Charles gives there is very valuable
 He entered a marble church with painted vaults:
 Inside there is an alter dedicated to Holy Paternoster
 God celebrated mass there, and so did the Apostles;
 And all twelve seats are still there:
 The thirteenth stands in the center, well sealed and closed off.
 When Charlemagne walked in, his heart was filled with joy:
 When he saw the seat, he went up to it:
 The Emperor sat down in it and rested a little,
 And so did the Twelve Peers on the other seats, all around him;
 No man had ever sat there before, and no one since.

³⁸ Burns, "Portraits of Kingship in the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*," *Olifant*, 10, p. 171.

³⁹ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 11.

The situation is somewhat confusing since neither Charlemagne nor his men seem to know the significance or the symbolism associated with the church and the thirteen seats. They are simply sitting in order to ‘rest’ and gaze at the beauty of the artwork of the Church. In fact, one scholar, John Grigsby, describes Charlemagne and his men as

... having blundered into a sacred place. He behaves like a country bumpkin, or tired tourist, in the magnificent church where walls are covered with fine mosaic images. True to his egotistic conduct toward his wife back at Saint Denis, he steps around, or brazenly removes, the barriers closing off the Holy Seat where Christ presided over the Last Supper.⁴⁰

However, the poet does not explicitly criticize Charlemagne’s behavior. In fact, the poet goes out of his way to indicate that no one had ever done this before or since. The poet puts the Emperor on virtually the same level as Christ himself. Charlemagne occupies the earthly realm and reigns as the earthly king just as Christ had once done.

Charlemagne seems to fall in line with previous great kings extending from the Old Testament to the Christian era. The underlying message may be that, without their knowledge, Charlemagne and his ‘peers’ are destined to imitate the experience of Christ and his apostles. In a way, the poet is extending the Biblical genealogy of kings forward to the twelfth-century. The genealogy of the Gospel of Matthew connects Abraham to David and eventually David to the house of Joseph and Jesus. The poet has brought this forward and connected Charlemagne to this tradition. This connection between Charlemagne and Christ himself is emphasized even further when a witness sees Charlemagne in the Church. The poet writes;

Uns judeus I entrat, ki ben l’out esgardet:
Cum il vit le rei Karle, cumencat a trembler:
Tant out fer le visage, ne l’osat esgarder:
A poi que il ne chet, fuant s’en est turnet,

⁴⁰ John Grigsby, “The Relics Role in the Voyage de Charlemagne” *Olifant* 9, (Fall 1981): p. 24.

E si muntet d'elais tuz les marbrins degrez,
 Si vint al patriarche, prist l'en a parler:
 "Alez, sire, al muster pur les funz aprester;
 Orendreit me ferai baptizer et lever!
 Duze cuntes vi ore en cel muster entrer,,
 Oveoc euls le trezime, unc ne vi si formet.
 ar le men escientre, co est meimes Deus!"⁴¹

A Jew who had watched attentively walked in;
 Upon seeing King Charles, he began to tremble:
 Charles' face was so proud that he did not dare look at him:
 He almost fell down; then he turned and took flight;
 He climbed up the marble steps all at once,
 And hurried to the Patriarch; he then began to speak to him:
 "Sire, hasten to the church to prepared fonts:
 I now want to be baptized and cleansed!
 I just saw there twelve counts walk in this church

And with them was a thirteenth: never did I see such a handsome man;
 By my faith, it is God himself!

The Jew, who believes that Charlemagne is God, immediately approaches the Patriarch in hopes of being baptized. Charlemagne in this case inspires a spontaneous conversion, perhaps just as Jesus had once done. However, it is not just the Jewish man who is moved by Charlemagne's appearance. The Patriarch is also impressed by the commanding presence of the Emperor. After being introduced to the Emperor the Patriarch says;

Sire, mult estes ber:
 Sis as en la chaere u sist meimes Deus:
 Aies nun Charles Maines sur tuz reis curunez!"⁴²

"Sire, you are very valiant indeed;
 You have sat in the very seat where God himself sat:
 Therefore call yourself Charlemagne, greatest above all crowned kings!"

⁴¹ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 11-13.

⁴² *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 13.

In this sequence of events, Charlemagne is clearly presented as more than a man. He is actually mistaken for God himself. In most previous portraits of kingship, Charlemagne is simply favored by God above all other kings. He is deserving because of his devotion, his abilities, and his service. However, the situation here is unique. This portrait in the *Pèlerinage* in the Jerusalem scenes seems to present a picture of a more divine kingship.

This portrait of sacral and divine kingship seems, at first glance, to be in stark contrast to the image of Charlemagne for the remainder of the poem. After leaving Jerusalem with a collection of relics given by the Patriarch (the very same relics that will end up in the collection at Saint Denis), Charlemagne proceeds to Constantinople to meet King Hugo. This of course was the original purpose of the voyage. The poet writes that Charlemagne arrived at the city on ‘a strong ambling mule’ following an ‘ancient path.’⁴³ While in Constantinople, Charlemagne gets what he originally desired – a chance to compare himself to King Hugo.

In Constantinople, the poet describes the extravagance of the palace and how Charlemagne is very impressed by the riches. The wind actually makes the palace revolve. When this happens, the Franks, including Charlemagne, cannot even remain standing. The poet presents the Franks in a manner of significantly less culture and sophistication than their Eastern counterparts. However, although even Charlemagne himself is impressed with the palace and the riches, he sees no strong warriors to challenge the Franks. In addition, King Hugo himself describes Charlemagne with great reverence. The poet writes;

Li reis regardet Carle; veit le cuntenant fer,
Les braz gros et quarrez, le cors greile et delget.

⁴³ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 23-26.

“Sire, Deu vus garise! De quei me conuset?”
 Respont li emperere: “Jo sui de France net;
 Jo ai nun Carlemaines, Rolland si est mis nés;
 Venc de Jerusalem, si m’en voil retorner;
 Vus e vostre barnage voil veer volenters.”
 E dist Hugun li Forz: “Ben ad set anz e melz
 Qu’en ai oi parler estrange soldeers,
 Ke issi grant barnages nen ait nul rei suz cel.”⁴⁴

The King looks at Charles and notices his proud mien,
 His arms strong and well-formed, his body slim and slender.
 “Sire, may God help you! How do you know me?”
 The Emperor answers: “I am from France;
 My name is Charlemagne, and my nephew is Roland:
 I come from Jerusalem and I want to return;
 I would gladly visit with you and your court.”
 And Hugo the Strong said: “At least seven years ago, or more,
 I heard foreign soldiers say
 That no king on the face of the earth wields as much power as you.

King Hugo shows Charlemagne and his men a great deal of respect. The ‘legend’ of Charlemagne is apparently prevalent from within the story as well as outside it. This representation of Charlemagne does change quite quickly though. After being given lodging by Hugo, Charlemagne and his men, before falling asleep, boast and ‘jest’ of their ability to perform great physical challenges. Charlemagne boasts of his strength to cut through Hugo’s best knight wearing two hauberks and that he could drive a sword into the ground so deep that no one could retrieve it. Roland says he could overpower and destroy the palace with King Hugo’s own ‘Olifant.’ Oliver boasts that he could have sex with King Hugo’s daughter 100 times in one night. The others in Charlemagne’s party follow suit and make similar boasts and claims, which involve the destruction of portions of Hugo’s palace.

⁴⁴ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p.25-27.

A spy reports the outrageous and treacherous boasts to King Hugo. Hugo is insulted by the claims made by Charlemagne and his men. He confronts Charlemagne and calls him a ‘fool.’ He decides that he is going to make Charlemagne and his men accomplish the jests or he will have them killed. Charlemagne is described as being ‘afraid for his life’ after hearing of Hugo’s intentions. Charlemagne explains, to no avail, that ‘jesting’ is simply a part of Frankish custom and not intended as an insult.

In a short time, the image of Charlemagne has changed dramatically from one who is compared to Christ on earth on the one hand and, on the other, one who faces death for his drunken misbehavior. Jane Burns has argued that the “evidence [here] suggests that Charlemagne’s trial in Constantinople functions, to some degree at least, as a kind of Last Judgment, rather than as a mere test of his royal and political power.”⁴⁵ This seems fairly accurate, since it is through the trial that Charlemagne and the Peers must prove their worth. However, there does not seem to be much drama associated with the eventual outcome of the ‘trial.’ After hearing of Hugo’s demand that Charlemagne and his men perform the jests, he and his men pray to God with the aid of the relics obtained in Jerusalem. The poet writes;

Atant es vus un angele que Deus I aparut,
 E vint a Carlemaine, si l’ad releved sus:
 “Carles, ne t’esmaer, co te mandet Jhesus;
 Des gas qu’ersair desistes, grande folie fud:
 Ne gabez ja mes hume, te cumandet Christus.
 Va, si fas cumencer, ja nen I faldrat uns!”
 L’emperere l’entent: leez et joiant fud.⁴⁶

At that time there came an angel sent by God;
 He went to Charlemagne and raised him up:

⁴⁵ Burns, “Portraits of Kingship in the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*,” *Olifant*, 10, p. 172.

⁴⁶ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 57.

"Charles, fear not, so Jesus tells you;
 The boasts that you made last night were great madness:
 Never again make fun of any man, thus Christ enjoins you.
 Go ahead, start carrying them out; not a single one will fail you!"
 The Emperor hears him well: he is happy and joyful.

And indeed, with divine aid, all of the miraculous 'jests' are accomplished by Charlemagne and his men. Burns goes on to argue that the portrait of kingship here is in a sense 'apocalyptic.' The outcome of the trial leads to another kind of coronation – a 'final coronation.' Here, Charlemagne not only survives the trial, but in the end proves himself as a ruler who has surpassed all others. He is not just God's chosen advocate, but he is elevated to a Christological status that puts him on the same plane as Christ himself. This really complicates the relationship between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*. In this representation, Charlemagne becomes a kind of 'Priest-King.' In fact, Charlemagne, in virtually every epic poem, is presented as the representative of Christ more so than the pope or any other churchmen. In the very least, he is favored by God above all others. The poet writes, "Deus I fist grant vertut pur amur Carlemaigne."⁴⁷ (God performed a great miracle for the love of Charlemagne). At the end of the poem, Charlemagne is presented to the reader/listener as being above Hugo and all other earthly kings. Charlemagne is given the status of divine kingship. Hugo says:

"A feiz, dreiz emperere, jo sai ke Deus vus aime;
 Tis hom voil devenir, de tei tendrai mun regne;

"By my faith, worthy Emperor, I do know that God loves you;
 I want to become your liegeman; from you shall I hold my kingdom;

Charlemagne replies;

"Sire," dist Carlemaines al rei Hugun le Fort,
 "Ore estes vus mis heoms, veant trestuz les voz;

⁴⁷ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 67.

Hui devums faire feste, barnage et grant deport,
 E porterum ensemble les corunes a or.
 Pur la vostre amistet prest sui la meie en port.”
 “E jo, sire, la meie,” dist Hugue, “al vostre los:
 ferum processium la dedenz cel enclos.

Karlemaines portat la grant corone a or,
 Li reis Hugue la sue, plus basement un poi:
 Karlemaines fud graindre de pplein ped et .III. pouz.⁴⁸

“Sire,” Said Charlemagne to King Hugo the Strong,
 “You have now become my liegeman, in the presence of all your people,
 Today we must celebrate, feast and have great entertainment;
 And we shall wear our gold crowns side by side.
 I am ready to wear mine out of friendship for you.”
 “And I, mine,” said Hugo, “in your honor:
 We shall have a procession in there, in the cloister.”

Charlemagne wore his great crown of gold,
 King Hugo his, a little lower:
 Charlemagne was one full foot and three inches taller.

The imagery concerning the kings and where they stand in relation to one another could not be more explicit. Charlemagne stands ‘taller’ and Hugo wears his crown a little ‘lower.’ The image here corresponds directly to much of the tradition of medieval iconography, in that, the most important figures are depicted larger than everyone else. Charlemagne is clearly the most important figure in the poem.

However, it is important to consider the possibility that the descriptions of Charlemagne in comparison to Christ are intended entirely as ‘satire’ and that the entire poem should not be viewed as a positive image of divine kingship, but as a comic parody of the Song of Roland and other epic works.⁴⁹ A number of scholars have suggested that

⁴⁸ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 67-69.

⁴⁹ A view espoused by D.D.R. Owen, “Voyage de Charlemagne and Chanson de Roland,” in *Studi Francesi*, 11 (1967), p. 468-472.

the poet is, in fact, mocking Charlemagne, the relics, as well as the monarchy.⁵⁰ The lack of surviving manuscripts does suggest the possibility that the poem was suppressed in favor of the events as described in the more popular and less satiric *Descriptio*. The tone of the poem certainly does not have the heroic or epic feel of *Roland* or *Aspremont*. In addition, most scholars have consistently interpreted the poem as a critique or parody of the epic image of Charlemagne and perhaps the twelfth-century French monarchy. However, some more recent work has taken a serious look at the image of sacral kingship. Julianne Vitullo has maintained that “despite the initial portrayal of the emperor as frivolous, when he arrives in Jerusalem the Patriarch greets him as the divinely elected ruler of the world...[and throughout the poem]... the emperor’s office retains its sacral authority.”⁵¹ I tend to agree with this position. The author emphasizes Charlemagne’s divine favor throughout the second half of the poem. The focus on ‘sacred kingship’ during Charlemagne’s visit to the East is likely a theme the author wished to convey to the audience. In the end, with limited sources, anything beyond the text itself is debatable. No doubt, that historians and literary scholars will continue to examine this enigmatic work and continue to debate its meaning and significance.

At first glance, one would not think that *Girart de Vienne* would suffer from these same issues of contradiction. After all, it is Girart who is honorable knight and vassal and it is Charlemagne who is the arrogant king and unjust feudal lord. However, in many ways the model of kingship found in *Girart de Vienne* is as complex and contradictory as

⁵⁰ John Grigsby, *The Gab as a Latent Genre in Medieval French Literature*, (Cambridge, Mass., The Medieval Academy of America, 2000). See also J. Grigsby, “The Relics Role in the *Voyage de Charlemagne*” *Olifant* 9, (Fall 1981): p. 20-34. J. Grigsby, “A note on the Genre of the *Voyage de Charlemagne*” in *Essays in Early French Literature Presented to Barbara M. Craig*, ed. N.J. Lacy and J.C. Nash, (York, S.C., French Literature Publications, 1982), pp. 2-7.

⁵¹ Julianne Vitullo, *The Chivalric Epic in Medieval Italy*, p. 25.

that found in the *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne*. Although the author certainly sympathizes with Girart over Charlemagne and most certainly the nobility over the monarchy, he still depicts Charlemagne as a ‘great king.’ It is not so much Charlemagne’s actions in the story that create this sense of contradiction, but the many of the author’s own descriptions of the king.

Before the regrettable incident with Charlemagne’s marriage to the woman promised to Girart and before the major hostilities begin, Charlemagne is described in entirely positive terms. At one point, a noble kneels before Charlemagne and says;

“Cil Damedeu qui en croiz fu penez
Gart Ch [arlemene], le fort roi coronné
Le meillor prince de la crestienté”⁵²

“May God our Lord, Who bore the pain of the Cross,
Protect our crowned and strong King Charlemagne,
The noblest Prince in Christendom’s domains.”

All of Charlemagne’s vassals are faithful to him and continually strive to serve and please their king. However, what is surprising is that even during the feud and war between Charlemagne and Girart, Charlemagne is still described in positive terms. Charlemagne is continually described as a ‘fine king,’ a ‘true’ and ‘powerful emperor,’ as ‘fierce,’ as ‘wise’ and as the “Lord of St. Denis.”⁵³ Even when Charlemagne is captured by Girart’s men, most treat him with a great deal of honor and respect. The problem here seems to be how to deal with the issue of legitimacy. Girart exemplifies this when Aymeri says;

“Biaus oncle, car l’oci!
Pran en la teste tot maintenant ici!
Si remendra la guerre et li estris.

⁵² *Girart de Vienne*, par Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube, publié par Wolfgang Van Emden, (Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1973), pp. 80-81.

⁵³ *The Song of Girart of Vienne by Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube*, trans. Michael A. Newth, (Tempe, Arizona, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), p. 109.

-- Ne place Deu," Girart li respondi,
 "que rois de France soit ja par moi honniz!"⁵⁴

"Fine uncle, kill him here!
 Cut off his head right now with your sharp steel,
 And then this war and this dispute may cease!
 Girart replies: "May God forbid the deed!
 A King of France shall not be harmed by me!

Although at war with Charlemagne, Girart still respects Charlemagne for his position and his past exploits. Girart is given two opportunities to kill Charlemagne and in both instances he refuses. Girart's goal is not to overthrow Charlemagne or the monarchy, but to preserve his own honor and the rights of the nobility.

Throughout the poem, it seems as though the author is uncertain as to how to deal with these contradictions. Girart is at war with Charlemagne, but refuses to kill him. Charlemagne is the rightful king, an able military leader, and great knight. However, in this particularly case, he is also in the 'wrong.' He has broken feudal custom and dishonored one of his own vassals. Consequently, Charlemagne is given a broad range of strengths and weaknesses. As a result, he is perhaps more human than the figure we encounter in *Roland* and the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*. His representation ranges from generous and conciliatory to spiteful and antagonistic.⁵⁵

Beyond France

The popularity of the crusading epic the *Song of Roland* led to numerous adaptations of the work in other regions. Two cases of particular interest here are Italy and Germany. The most famous adaptation is probably the *Rolandslied*, a German adaptation by Priest Konrad. Konrad doubled the length of the original Roland and

⁵⁴ *Girart de Vienne*, par Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube, publié par Wolfgang Van Emden, (Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1973), p 283.

⁵⁵ *The Song of Girart of Vienne by Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube*, trans. Michael A. Newth, p. xv.

magnified the ideal of image of Charlemagne as a crusading king. In contrast, the critique of Charlemagne that exists in some French literary sources and in particular the rebel-baron cycle was not adopted by the German poets of the twelfth and thirteenth century.⁵⁶ For various reasons, the German poets adopted stories such as Roland, which depicted Charlemagne in an overwhelmingly positive light. This furthers the argument that the French poems are a reflection of political problems between the monarchy and the nobility since these same problems did not exist in the same way in the German Empire. As a result, these stories concerning rebel-barons and flawed monarchs tended not to be as popular in the German lands. However, the Italian tradition, which is a later development, beginning in the mid- to late-thirteenth-century, does adopt the French model of representation of Charlemagne almost wholesale. In other words, there are both positive and negative portraits of Charlemagne. There are often different themes in the Franco-Italian poems and Charlemagne's portrait ranges from ideal and mythical to burlesque and foolish. They often "present the king of France as corrupt and selfish, [and] there is always an alternative, a 'real' leader, who comes from a noble family but displays more virtue and skill than the emperor. Neither the methods nor the goals of the Carolingian epic hero change drastically in their transplantation to northern Italy."⁵⁷ Although in Italy, the French feudal structures did not exist, there are many feudal customs and values that did exist, especially in the North.⁵⁸ This is even more prominent in the fourteenth and fifteenth-century works. Men such as Roland and Ogier (of

⁵⁶ Karl-Ernst Geith, *Carolus Magnus: Studien zur Darstellung Karls des Grossen in der deutschen Literatur des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*, (München: Francke Verlag Bern, 1977).

⁵⁷ Julianne Vitullo, *The Chivalric Epic in Medieval Italy*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ Karl Bender, "Les métamorphoses de la royauté de Charlemagne dans les premières épopées franco-italiennes," in *Cultura Neolatina* 21 (1961), p. 164.

Chevalerie Ogier) become equal if not superior to Charlemagne. In addition, they are presented as the defenders of the Christian world more than Charlemagne.⁵⁹ However, as with most French cases, there is reconciliation between nobles and king, and the authors often reemphasize Charlemagne's status as *le mior rois* (the best king).⁶⁰

The Crusades

The action and themes of the epic works of the twelfth-century implicitly and explicitly espouse the crusade ideology that permeated Western culture, and particularly France, during this period. In works such as *Roland*, *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, and *Aspremont*, I would argue, the theme is a crusade, so the emphasis is expected. However, many sources outside the *geste du roi* often contain implicit references and themes associated with the crusades. This is the case with *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* and *Girart de Vienne*. The crusades are such a prevailing theme and the ideology so widespread within twelfth- and thirteenth-century culture that it is difficult to remove it entirely from the literary corpus, even if the theme does not directly involve a crusade. The two works discussed in this chapter are ideal examples.

Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne

The theme of the poem does not directly include the crusades. There are no battles or any fighting between Muslims and Christians. There are no Muslim characters in the poem. Charlemagne and his men do not even take weapons on their journey. However, interestingly enough there are still references that connect Charlemagne to crusading. As

⁵⁹ Julianne Vitullo, *The Chivalric Epic in Medieval Italy*, pp. 23-24.

⁶⁰ Julianne Vitullo, *The Chivalric Epic in Medieval Italy*, p 28.

Charlemagne is about to leave Jerusalem for Constantinople, he has an interesting exchange with the Patriarch. The poet writes;

L'emperere de France I out tant demuret,
 Li patriarche prist, si l'en ad apelet:
 "Vostre cunget bael sire, si vus plaist me donet:
 En France, a mun realme, m'en estut returner;
 Pose at que jo n'i fui, si ai mult demurret,
 E ne set mis barnages quel part jo sui turnet
 Faites. C. mulz receivre d'or et d'argent trusset."
 E dist li patriarches: "Ja mar en parlerez!
 Tuz li mens granz tresors vus seit abandunez:
 Tant en prengent Franceis cum en vuldrent porter
 Mais que de Saraczins, de paiens vus gardet,
 Qui nus volent destrure sainte Christientez!"

E dist li patriarches: "Savez dunt jo vus priz?
 De Sarazins destrure, ki nus ount en despit."
 "Volenters," co dist Karles. Sa fei si l'en plevit.

"Jo manderrai mes humes, quant qu'en purrai aver,
 E irrai en Espaine, ne purat remaner."
 Si fist il pus encoure, ben en gardat sa fei,
 Quant la fud mort Rollant, li. XII. Per od sei.⁶¹

The Emperor of France remained there so long
 That he took the Patriarch aside and said to him
 "Fair Sire, pray give me leave of you:
 I must return to my kingdom in France;
 I have now been away for some time, I have been here too long
 And my barons do not know where I am.
 Accept from me one hundred mules, packed with gold and silver.
 But the Patriarch said: "I could not think of it!
 My whole treasure lies at your disposal,
 Let the Frenchmen take all they can carry
 However, you guard yourself against the Saracens and Pagans
 Who want to destroy our Holy Christendom."

The Patriarch said: "Do you understand what I am asking you to do?
 To destroy the Saracens who profess hatred against us."
 "I shall gladly," said Charles; and he pledged his faith.

⁶¹ *Le Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, ed. Jean-Louis G. Picherit, p. 20-22.

I shall summon as many as my liegemen as possible,
 And I shall go to Spain without hesitation
 Afterwards, he did keep his promise
 But it was there that Roland and the twelve peers died.

Obviously, the events in the *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne* are intended to pre-date those of the *Roland* story. And since *Roland* has such a strong connection to crusading, it is used in this context as a point of reference. There is, as with a number of literary sources, an emphasis on duty. In the second chapter of this dissertation, literary sources were used to demonstrate the connection between Charlemagne and crusading. In chapter three, sources with a strong theme of kingship were used to demonstrate the relationship between Church and State as well as between the monarchy and the nobility. Similar themes are prevalent here in the *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne*. Charlemagne without the pretense of any battle or even any presence of a Muslim character is still recognized as a crusader. In this short exchange between Charlemagne and the Patriarch, the writer explicitly recognizes Charlemagne's accepted twelfth-century role as crusader and defender of the Church. With the increased participation of kings in the Crusades, this may also be a reflection of the poet's view of the Kings' role as leaders of the Crusades.

Written in the mid-twelfth-century, in the midst of the crusading movement, the poem could be interpreted as part of the propaganda movement that dominated so many of the poems of the *chansons de geste*. Although the poem is unlike any of the cycle of the king, it still contains this propagandistic aspect. Although the poem is comical and has a light tone throughout much of the action, there are still prominent themes and serious messages concerning the Crusades. This is further evidence that Westerners, especially Churchmen, continued to be preoccupied with the Crusades. If the poem was composed around or shortly after the Second Crusade (1145-1149), then the concern is

certainly warranted. The failure of the Second Crusade did not discourage Westerners from planning or participating in future campaigns. However, it did make them acutely aware of their weaknesses. It also re-emphasized the necessity of crusading. In addition, the reference to Spain as part of the Roland reference may be an indication of the expansion of the crusade idea beyond that of campaigns to the East.

Girart de Vienne

Similar to the *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne*, *Girart of Vienne* does not directly concern a crusade. It does not concern a battle or war between Christians and Muslims. Again, there are also no Muslim characters. However, there does seem to be a bit of crusade propaganda as well as indications of a concern for the 'Peace of God Movement.' The concern for the need for a crusade actually becomes the impetus for ending the conflict between Charlemagne and Girart. By the later part of section three, the battle is focused on a single confrontation between Oliver (fighting for Girart) and Roland (fighting for Charlemagne). The outcome of this battle will determine the result of the war.⁶² Finally after days of battle, an angel sent by God descends to Vienne and stops the battle. The author writes;

Es vos un engre qui descent de la nue,
 Qui doucement de par Deu les salue:
 "Franc chevalier, ennor vos est creue!
 Ceste bataille ne soit plus meinteneue;
 gardez que plus ne soit par vos ferue,
 car Damedeu la vos a des desfandue.
 Mes en Espangne, sor la gent mescreue,

⁶² There are explicit references in this section Aeneas. The siege of the city of Vienne has taken seven years. The battle between Roland and Oliver is comparable to either the battle between Achilles and Hector or between Menelaos and Paris. It is clear that the author was familiar with work of Virgil and probably used parts as inspiration for certain scenes such as this battle. See James Westfall Thompson, "Vergil in Medieval Culture," *The American Journal of Theology* 10, (1906), 641-662.

soit vostre force provee et conneue;
 la sera bien vo proece veue
 Pro l'amor Deu conquerre.”

Li dui baron furent en grant fricon
 qant ill oirent de Deu l'anoncion.
 Et dit li engres: “N'aiez poor, baron!
 Deus le vos mende de son ciel la amont:
 lessiez ester iceste aatisson.
 Mes en Espangne, sor ce pople felon,
 la esprovez qui est hardiz ou non,
 par mi les resne au roi Marsilion.
 La conquerroiz par force le roion,
 sor Sarrazins a force et a bandon,
 si essauciez la loi Deu et son non.
 Vos en avroiz molt riche guerredon,
 et les voz ames avront vrai pardon;
 la sus el ciel, en sa grant mension,
 les metra Deus en gloire.”⁶³

Then from the cloud an Angel steps, who sweetly
 In the Lord God's name addresses them and greets them:

“My noble knights, you have been honored deeply!
 This feud and fight of yours no more shall be, lords;
 Not one more blow must be exchanged, for Jesus

The Lord our God forbids you to proceed with it!
 Henceforth to Spain against the race of heathens
 Your fierce prowess shall yet be known and needed;
 Men shall know well your valor there and see it
 In service of God's love.”

Both knights are very much afraid
 To hear the will of the Lord God proclaimed;
 The Angel says: “My lords, be not dismayed!
 From high in Heaven God urges you this day:
 Let be this rivalry of clan and claim!
 In hostile land upon the heathen race,
 There you may prove who is or is not brave;
 Throughout the realm of King Marsile of Spain,
 There you may win his kingdom with you blades
 Out of the hands of Saracen knaves,
 And glorify God's faith and His own name;

⁶³ *Girart de Vienne*, par Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube, publié par Wolfgang Van Emden, (Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1973), p. 261-262.

And your reward for this shall be most great:
 Your souls shall earn true pardon and true grace;
 In Heaven high, in His great dwelling-place,
 God shall set them in glory.”

However, this only stops the battle between Roland and Oliver. Charlemagne after hearing Roland’s story about the Angel’s message does not end the siege. It is only after being convinced by Girart and his other Barons that Charlemagne finally submits to reconciliation. Immediately after this, word comes of Saracen attacks on Christian lands and the poem ends with Charlemagne setting out for a crusade in Spain. In this section, the crusading propaganda is even more explicit as the author has the Archbishop Turpin offer an indulgence to any of those willing to participate. The author writes;

Li arcevesques sus en piez se dreca,
 el fauestuel maintenant en monta,
 molt gentement a parler comenca:
 “Seignor baron, a moi entendez ca:
 je sui el leu de Deu qui tot forma,
 et de seint Pere que a Rome estora,
 a cui pooir des pecheors dona
 de pardoner qanque il mesfet a.
 Qui sor paiens ore aler en voudra,
 avec le roi qui France a garder a,
 de ses pechiez trestoz quites sera,
 en l’annor Deu, qui le mont estora.”
 Dient Francois: “Com haut pardon ci a!
 Molt fu buer nez qui en cele ost ira,
 por tel pardon conquerre!”⁶⁴

Up on his feet stands swiftly the Archbishop;
 He mounts the folding-stool straightway and quickly
 And starts to speak in a most noble spirit:
 “Barons, my lords, give your ear to me and listen:
 I stand for God, Who made the world we live in,
 And for St. Peter, His regent in the city of Rome,
 To whom He gave power of forgiveness
 To any sinners for any sins committed;

⁶⁴ *Girart de Vienne*, par Bertrand de Bar-Sur-Aube, publié par Wolfgang Van Emden, (Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1973), p. 301-302.

I tell you now that any man who's willing
 To go with Charles, keeper of the French kingdom,
 Shall be forgiven for a lifetime of sinning,
 In Lord God's name, Who made the world we live in."
 The French all say: "How high a pardon this is!
 How blessed born all we who shall go with him
 And win so rich a grace!"

The concept of the indulgence was well established during the First Crusade. From that point forward, it became an important part of crusader ideology and propaganda. It is clear from the previous passage that the author was familiar with its importance. It is also an indication that the concepts of crusade and indulgence may have expanded by the time this was written. Charlemagne sends many of his men to various French regions to defend them from Saracen attacks. In addition, he plans to take an army to Spain to liberate it from the clutches of Muslim subjugation. None of Charlemagne's army is planning on traveling to the Holy Land. Yet, essentially they are all offered an indulgence. This work does post date the proclamation of the crusade in Spain by Pope Eugenius III, in 1147. It appears, at least in Bertrand's understanding that the indulgence applies to any Christian knight fighting against Muslims in the name of Christianity.

The Crusades had a tremendous impact on Western culture. Both of these sources were likely written between the Second and Third Crusades. The fact that the Crusades are a part of two stories that involve no real conflict between Muslims and Christians is a clear indication that Western society continued to be preoccupied with Muslim presence in the Holy Land as well as in Spain.

Conclusion

There are a number of conclusions to be drawn from this examination of the less than ideal portrait of Charlemagne in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. First, it is critical to emphasize that this image does represent a major change in the portrayal of not

only Charlemagne, but also of the king. It has been suggested by a number of scholars that the negative representation of Charlemagne in these various works should not be interpreted as a negative reflection of him and his reign, but rather should be more closely associated with other weaker and less popular kings named Charles. This is certainly plausible considering that in most sources, both historical and literary, Charlemagne continued to be popular and represented in mythical and sometimes almost divine terms.

The two main epics analyzed in this chapter represent two different types of genres that contradict the image found in *Roland*. The *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne* presents the king in somewhat contradictory terms. On the one hand, he is comical and un-heroic. On the other, he is compared with none other than Christ himself. *Girart de Vienne*, explores the relationship between kings and vassals and implicitly criticizes the policies of the twelfth-century Capetian monarchs who continually reduced the rights and power of the aristocratic class. This would be an ongoing theme in the rebel-baron cycle of the *chansons de geste*. The late twelfth and early thirteenth-century represented (the period that engendered the most poetic development that commented on the monarchy). This would foreshadow the production of a number of literary sources that would implicitly criticize the policies and administration of Philip II.

However, the problems for the nobility started long before the reign of Philip II. Philip simply accelerated many of the already existing trends in the changing policies of monarchical involvement in local affairs. In particular, as early as 1126, Louis VI had prominent nobles appear before him for judgment.⁶⁵ Kings have also already begun to use 'bailiffs' (*baillis*) to increase their participation and influence in various areas,

⁶⁵ Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, p. 78.

whereas previously the bailiff's role consisted almost entirely of collecting revenue.⁶⁶ During the reign of Philip II, the bailiff's role not only included state finance, but also a great deal of power associated with justice.⁶⁷ Although increased revenue was the first main step in supplanting the wealth of noble families that might oppose Philip and his centralizing policies. Within the first two decades of Philip's reign, he increased the royal revenue by more than 80%.⁶⁸ Philip also increased the number of his regular meetings with the bailiffs and with his royal court (the *curia regis*). The King's increased participation in local affairs was bound to lead to alienation and outright conflict with disgruntled vassals who witnessed firsthand their power being replaced by that of a bailiff or royal justice. In fact, one of the major shifts in power occurred during Philip's reign and favored the monarchy over the rulers of the various principalities of France. During this period, "most of the great duchies and counties came under closer royal supervision with Philip Augustus, including Flanders, Champagne and Burgundy, as well as Normandy and the other Angevin lands which he recovered authority."⁶⁹ The culmination of this process came in 1202 when Philip ordered King John of England (also Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine) to appear in judgment before him, since technically the king of England was still a vassal to the king of France. Just two years

⁶⁶ John W. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages*, (London, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1986), pp. 125-137.

⁶⁷ James Collins, *From Tribes to Nation: The Making of France 500-1799*, (United States, Thomson Wadsworth Learning, 2002), p. 65.

⁶⁸ James Collins, *From Tribes to Nation: The Making of France 500-1799*, p 66. This was prior to the conquest of the Angevin Empire which in turn increased the revenues of Philip II's administration another 80%.

⁶⁹ Jim Bradbury, *Philip Augustus: King of France 1180-1223*, (London and New York, Longman Publishing, 1998), p.226.

later, in 1204, Philip, with impressive military victories took Normandy and all fiefs north of the Loire River.

This is a development that is reflected throughout the literary corpus of the period and particularly the rebel-baron cycle. In *Renaut de Montauban*, Charlemagne's wars are aimed at conquering the lands controlled by the most powerful nobles. Even in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, where Charlemagne is represented in overwhelmingly positive terms, he relies less on the higher nobility and increasingly on the lower nobility.⁷⁰ In *Girart de Vienne*, Charlemagne's unjust war on Girart is intended ultimately to take power away from a vassal. Girart continually demonstrates undying loyalty to Charlemagne, the legitimate, but in this case, unjust king.

Although the story of *Girart de Vienne* is clearly an indication of the ongoing struggles between nobles and the monarchy, and the *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* does not reflect the image found in *Roland* and other poems of the cycle of the kings, they still in a general sense reflect some of the previous themes concerning the image and representation of Charlemagne. Although the genre and theme has changed in this category of sources, the image of Charlemagne still retains two of its main uses – that is crusading propaganda and as a model of medieval kingship.

⁷⁰ Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, pp. 77-78.

CHAPTER 5

THE MAKING OF ROYAL HISTORY: THE CONVERGENCE OF TRADITION AND MYTH

Throughout the Middle Ages, secular leaders across the west constantly sought to associate their persons and their achievements to the Carolingians. Moreover, this illustrious family had produced so many descendants spread across Europe that the claim to be their offspring could very well be true. But pretense far outweighed genuine connections. Every leader was proud to trace his descent from some great Carolingian hero lauded in epic poetry. In this, fantasy and mythology were equally part of the Carolingian legacy.¹

Riché's description of the importance of the Carolingian legacy is quite fitting for the mentality that existed in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century. In the minds of many, the legitimacy of Capetian kingship hinged on a perceived connection to Charlemagne and the Carolingian past. The actual or perceived past of the Carolingians was an important part of Capetian and French identity.

However, the familial or bloodline descent from the Carolingian stock was only one of two connections that helped define Capetian and 'French' history and identity. The myth of Trojan lineage had also been a claim of Frankish nobility and royalty. The Trojan myth had been part of medieval historiography for some time. There are actually two separate sources that are possibly independent that helped to create the myth of Trojan origins. The earliest and most common appeared in the *Chronicle of Fredegar* (c. 660) in which Priam is reported to be the first king of the Franks (*Exinde origo Francorum fuit. Priamo primo regi habuerant...*).² The second source is the eighth-

¹ Pierre Riché, *The Carolingians: A Family Who Forged Europe*, trans. Michael Idomir Allen, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), p. 363.

² George Huppert, "The Trojan Franks and their Critics," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 12, (1965), p. 227.

century *Liber Historiae Francorum* produced at Saint-Denis. Although some modern scholars have questioned the independence of the second source, the concept was nevertheless a belief in Carolingian and Capetian times.³ One of the main purposes of this foundation myth was “to situate the French kings and their peoples in the mythological cosmology of the genesis of nations.”⁴ In addition, it then provided a connection to the Romans, the Merovingians, and Carolingians. It gave the rulers of what would become ‘France’ an unbroken continuity of kings dating back to antiquity. However, this perceived connection came under intense scrutiny on a number of occasions. As early as the ninth-century, Frechulf, abbot of Fulda and bishop of Lisieux (823-851) contended because of language, that the Franks were probably not of Trojan origins. A few centuries later, Rigord, a chronicler from Saint-Denis, writing in the late twelfth-century questioned the connection as well in a long discussion of the ‘widespread skepticism’ about the assumption.⁵ However, the connection with the Trojan past was not the immediate concern of the Capetian monarchy – the connection to Charlemagne and the Carolingians was.⁶

Tradition and myth were powerful forces in medieval society. In essence, for much of the Middle Ages, there was no real distinction between history and myth. The

³ John M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, (London, 1960).

⁴ John Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus; Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages*, (London & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1986), p. 373.

⁵ Elizabeth A. R. Brown, “The Trojan Origins of the French: The Commencement of a Myth’s Demise, 1450-1520,” in *Medieval Europeans. Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe*, ed. Alfred A. Smyth, (London & New York, MacMillan/St. Martin’s Press, 1998), p. 135. In the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-centuries, humanist scholars, churchmen, and lawyers would systematically dismantle the entire concept.

⁶ Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus*, 374.

traditions of the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries associated with Charlemagne represented some of the most developed myths of the medieval period. The fascination and in fact infatuation and reliance on the Charlemagne legend was quite prominent throughout the former Carolingian Empire and in places well beyond it.

Charlemagne was a crusader, an ideal monarch, and sometimes an overbearing feudal lord. However, he also represented an important precedent – a symbol that was at the heart of German and especially French royal history. In many ways, Charlemagne stood as the symbol of the monarchy. The image of Charlemagne had become part of the institution. Laws and various forms of legislation were often cited in his name and his memory was almost always invoked during coronation ceremonies. The institution of the monarchy during early Capetian times was under constant assault from anti-royalist factions, but it was also an institution that gained considerable power by the end of the twelfth-century. However, even with the increased power of the monarchy and the individual monarchs themselves, the kings were still ultimately compared to Charlemagne, or rather his legend.

Capetian Propaganda

The connection between Charlemagne and French royal history was fairly explicit in the late twelfth-century. King Philip II Augustus led a conscious effort to connect the Capetian rulers to the Carolingian lineage of Charlemagne. He also led a conscious effort to identify the image of Charlemagne and the Carolingians with the institution of the monarchy.

Philip started the effort to control and standardize the history of the monarchy and by default, the representation of Charlemagne. In 1194, Philip created the royal

archives.⁷ The archives served a number of purposes. First, it was the initial step in creating an ‘official’ history. Second, it strengthened or legitimized claims of connection between the Capetians and Carolingian kings. Lastly, it put the Capetian version of the past at the forefront. It made a differentiation between the popular, literary, and poetic traditions and the preferred narrative presented by Philip and the monarchy. Philip made a concerted effort to separate the royal archives from jongleurs and other poets whose representation of Charlemagne tended to be the most popular within medieval culture. However, for Philip, relying on poets and performers for an image of the most important emperor and king in the history of France and Christendom was much too unreliable and random.

Philip distrusted the vernacular literary tradition, because, unlike the royal archives, he could not control the poets and *jongleurs* that produced a powerful and sometimes unpredictable image of Charlemagne and his Carolingian progenitors. The divergence between the literary representation and Philip’s preferred image of Charlemagne created a problem for Philip. By the time of Philip’s reign (1180-1223), epic had become so widespread that it was difficult, if not impossible, to replace. However, the creation of royal history and the ‘official’ version of the ‘French’ and Christian past did not necessarily exclude the epic and literary tradition from its source base. In fact, the literary sources are important precursors for the vernacular historiographic tradition of the late twelfth- and thirteenth-century.

⁷ Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus*, 38-39.

The concern for writing history separate from that of popular epic and romance literature began during the same period. There were two major trends associated with this movement. The first was an adoption of the literary themes of the twelfth-century, but the other was a rejection of the literary style of the same period. The tendency to write histories and other 'official' works in the vernacular became quite common in the thirteenth-century. The other major trend among authors included a change from writing in 'verse' to writing in 'prose.' This is in part due to a change in reading practices. However, to many critics, verse also represented the style of poets and jongleurs and rarely represented a truthful account of its subject. Prose, on the other hand, quickly became viewed by many as the language and style of historians and chroniclers.

An ideal example of both of these trends is the numerous translations of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* produced in the early thirteenth-century. The first two came in 1200 by Nicholas of Senlis and were made for count Hugh of Saint-Pol. The second came in 1206 and was made for Count Renauld of Boulogne.⁸ Nicholas's professed goal was to search out and tell the 'true history' of Charlemagne.⁹ Many other translations would soon follow. No less than eight Old French translations of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* were made in the thirteenth-century (six before 1230). In addition, several more were made into Provençal, Catalan, Galician, Welsh, and Old Norse.¹⁰ It did not take long before the new prose versions of the *Turpin-Chronicle* were incorporated into

⁸ Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition of Saint-Denis*, (Brookline, Lyeden: Classical Folia, 1978), p. 74.

⁹ Gabrielle Spiegel, "Forging the Past: The Language of Historical Truth in Middle Ages," *The History Teacher* 17, (1984), 269.

¹⁰ *An Anonymous Old French Translation of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, ed. Ronald Walpole, (Cambridge, Medieval Academy of America, 1979), p. 5.

‘official French history.’ Prior to 1223, the work appeared in the *Chronique des Rois de France*. It was at this point that the *Turpin-Chronicle* became “an integral part of the Carolingian history of the French monarchy.”¹¹ It is also during this same period that the image and representation of Charlemagne would take its place in the Capetian ‘official’ version of French history. The *Turpin-Chronicle* preserved and enhanced an image of Charlemagne as the forerunner of crusaders, the forefather of the Capetian monarchs, and the ‘godfather’ of the French State.¹²

Philip’s reign is a transition point between two distinct forms of historical expression. The rise and popularity of the vernacular prose chronicle in the early thirteenth-century represented a new and somewhat revolutionary ‘language of history.’ The shift in emphasis created a proper ‘style’ and an ‘official’ version of the past while at the same time condemning other previous and existing styles, especially epic and romance.¹³ This is a critical development since the production of both epic and romance literature flourished in the thirteenth-century and continued to be written in the vernacular making it difficult to distinguish, both in its content and stylistically, from ‘royal history.’

The numerous French translations of the *Turpin-Chronicle* would soon be followed by other prose vernacular histories. In particular, the crusading chronicles of Robert of Clari, Geoffroy of Villehardouin, and Jean of Joinville became the standard format for thirteenth-century histories. This is in stark contrast to the chronicles of the First Crusade. Written in the early twelfth-century, chronicles such as the *Gesta*

¹¹ Spiegel, “Forging the Past,” pp. 270-271.

¹² *The Old French Johannes Translation of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle: A Critical Edition*, ed. Ronald Walpole, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1976), p. xv.

¹³ Gabrielle Spiegel, “Pseudo-Turpin, the Crisis of the Aristocracy and the Beginnings of Vernacular Historiography in France,” *Journal of Medieval History* 12 (1986) 214.

Francorum and the *Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres* were all written in Latin. Of course, Latin literature poetry and history continued to appear throughout the remainder of the Middle Ages.

The connection with Charlemagne served Philip and the Capetians in a number of different ways. First, there is the familial connection to Charlemagne and the Carolingians that helped legitimize their place as the ruling dynasty. This is best exemplified by the *reditus regni ad stirpem Karoli Magni* – the idea that the monarchy had returned to the lineage of Charlemagne. Second, the sources and chronicles, many of which are forgeries, such as the false ‘charter of Charlemagne’ and other records at Saint-Denis created a sense of continuity, which in and of itself is a kind of legitimacy. The historical record demonstrated the foundations with the Trojan origins and the translation of the empire from ‘Roman’ to ‘Frank’ and from the Carolingian dynasty to the Capetian dynasty.¹⁴ Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, with legitimacy comes ‘permission’ for Philip to take territory, to invade hostile territories, and to implement increased control over his nobles and vassals. He is acting in accordance with what Charlemagne, as king would do. He is taking back the king’s territory (Charlemagne’s former kingdom).¹⁵ This is precisely the same methodology that is used to present Charlemagne as a progenitor of the crusaders. The emphasis on a ‘crusading Charlemagne’ by monks and chroniclers at Saint-Denis coincides precisely with the period that French kings were campaigning in the East.¹⁶ However, this is a much easier transition since the image of a

¹⁴ Gabrielle Spiegel, “Political Utility in Medieval Historiography: A Sketch,” *History and Theory*, 14 (1975), 316.

¹⁵ Gabrielle Spiegel, “Political Utility,” p. 322.

¹⁶ Gabrielle Spiegel, “Political Utility,” p. 316.

‘crusading Charlemagne’ already existed in popular literature. On the other hand, the familial connection and the demonstration of proper kingship took a much more concerted propagandistic effort.

Blood-Line and Medieval Statecraft

Many of the literary and historical sources of the late twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries that concern Charlemagne are compilations of the most popular epics, romances, chronicles, and histories of previous medieval tradition. Elements in everything from *Roland* to the *book of St. James* were digested and condensed into a kind of quasi-official version of Charlemagne’s life and deeds. Although Philip II and others often rejected these same sources of the literary tradition associated with the legend of Charlemagne and the Carolingian past, they also used various elements of them in order to create the ‘official’ version.

The art of ruling in the twelfth-century was a major concern for most monarchs and in particular, the Capetians. For many of the Capetian kings/monarchs, the issue of legitimacy versus illegitimacy was of constant concern. During the time of Philip II’s rule, there was a legend concerning the end of the Capetian reign. This is known as the ‘Valerian prophecy.’ This story is recounted in several sources including the *Grandes Chroniques de France*. However, it originated in 1040 where it appears in the *Historia Relationis Corporis S. Walarici*. According to the legend, Saint Valery appeared to Hugh Capet and told him that the Capetian rule would last seven generations.¹⁷ Philip II stood as the seventh Capetian king. During Philip’s time, much of the propaganda effort focused on connecting the present Capetians to the past Carolingians. Louis VIII,

¹⁷ Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, p. 79.

Philip's son, fulfilled this need by having a credible familial connection to Charlemagne through both his parents. Philip's connection could only be established through his mother, however, Philip's wife and Louis's mother had a clear connection through both parents.

Out of this complex web of actual and perceived bloodline connections emerged the ideology of the *reditus regni ad stirpem Karoli Magni* – the return to the lineage of Charlemagne. There have been a number of interpretations of this ideology. K. F. Werner argued that the *reditus* was primarily concerned with dynastic legitimation. The reign of Louis VIII re-instituted Carolingian leadership and symbolically wiped away the sometimes 'perceived illegitimacy' of Hugh Capet's accession.¹⁸ Gabrielle Spiegel argues that only when the doctrine of the *reditus* was incorporated into the *Grandes Chroniques* did it become the keystone for legitimizing the Capetian dynasty.¹⁹ According to Spiegel, the royal policies of Philip's reign were the immediate concern. The new patterns of political behavior needed to be explained and justified. In addition, what better way to justify Philip's policies than to "describe his deeds as the revival of Charlemagne's imperial genius."²⁰

Philip in particular showed a continuous concern with connecting his family and reign with the Carolingian past, both symbolically and through actual familial lines – an actual bloodline connection. It was widely known that the 'sword of Charlemagne' was carried during the ceremony of Philip's coronation. In addition, the connection was so

¹⁸ K.F. Werner, "Die Legitimität der Kapetinger und die Entstehung der 'reditus regni Francorum ad stirpem Karoli'," *Die Welt als Geschichte*, 12 (1952), 203.

¹⁹ Gabrielle Spiegel, "The Reditus Regni ad Stirpem Karoli Magni: A New Look," *French Historical Studies*, 7 (1971), 145-171.

²⁰ Spiegel, "Reditus Regni," p. 172.

important and so widely reported that in 1204 Pope Innocent III wrote the letter *Novit ille*, which noted that “Philip Augustus is known to have descended from Charlemagne.”²¹ Apparently, Philip’s propaganda effort was working well.

In the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century and especially during the time of Philip’s reign a genuine royal ideology emerged from a small group of important writers. One of the first, Pierre of Riga, a churchman from Reims wrote of the various conflicts between Louis VII and Henry II and devoted a poem to the birth of Philip Augustus. Another author, Rigord, a monk of Saint-Denis, wrote a chronicle of Philip II’s deeds, painting a picture of the king that was nothing short of exemplary.²² A later work by Guillaume le Breton, a poet that continued much of the work and theme of Rigord’s work, composed a new work, the *Philippidos*, which enhanced the image of Philip and the monarchy. Finished after Philip’s death, the epic poem of 9,000 lines describes the many military victories of Philip, especially emphasizing Bouvines, and articulated a profound statement of royal ideology.²³ In fact, at the beginning of the poem, in the dedication, Philip is actually called ‘our *Karolinde*.’²⁴ In this work, Philip is viewed as the ‘living virtue’ of the former emperor.²⁵ Philip is also described as ‘blessing his army’

²¹ Andrew Lewis, *Royal Succession in Capetian France: Studies in the Familial Order and the State*, (Cambridge, Mass., London, England, Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 110.

²² Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus*, pp. 362-63.

²³ Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus*, pp. 362-365.

²⁴ H. François Delaborde (ed.), *Oeuvres De Rigord et Guillaume Le Breton: Historiens de Philippe-Auguste*, (Paris, Libraire De La Société de l’Histoire de France), p. 3.

²⁵ Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus*, 366. & Lewis, *Royal Succession in Capetian France*, p. 111.

at the battle of Bouvines, a direct reflection of the epic representation of Charlemagne.²⁶

The revival of the name of Charles speaks volumes as to the prominence of his name, bloodline, and his symbolic importance to the institution of the monarchy.

Karolinus

Although *Guillaume* did use epic poetry and not the increasingly popular prose, there was a tendency among some of the authors to try to separate from the genre and style of the *chanson de gestes* and epic tradition. An ideal example of this trend is the poem *Karolinus* by Egidius Parisiensis (Giles of Paris). This Latin poem, begun c. 1195-96, was presented to the future King Louis VIII on September 3, 1200 for his thirteenth birthday. The source is typical of a number of texts of this period, in that its author creates a compilation of previous legends, stories and histories. It includes the events of Roncevaux, although the enemy has reverted to the original Basques rather than the Saracens of *Roland*. This is probably due to the fact that significant material was taken directly from Einhard's work, the *Vita Karoli*.²⁷ This is a significant break with the earlier literary tradition, whose authors either disregarded or did not have access to Einhard's version.

The poem in 'five books' tells of the life and virtues of Charlemagne. M.L. Colker writes;

The *Karolinus* is the work of a pedagogue who wants to instruct the future King of France, Louis VIII, by providing him with a manual of history, wants to instill in the young man a strong sense of national pride by glorifying the early Franks and descendants, and wishes to form his character on the example of Charlemagne. The Charlemagne whom Egidius offers is pious, powerful, and serenely majestic. In fact, the emperor represents the cardinal virtues of antiquity. Just as Vergil

²⁶ Lewis, *Royal Succession in Capetian France*, 112.

²⁷ Folz, *Souvenir et Légende*, 335.

glorified Aeneas, ancestor of Augustus, so Egidius glorifies Charlemagne, reputed ancestor of Louis VIII. For the Capetians constantly strove to be regarded as the legitimate heirs of Charlemagne.²⁸

The five divisions of the poem do in fact correspond with the classical virtues; ‘prudentia,’ ‘justitia,’ ‘fortitudo,’ ‘temperantia,’ and the last section deals with ‘utilitas.’ The focus on virtues is a reflection of the author’s decision to root his depiction of the monarch in an ethical dimension. However, the poet actually does not stray too far from the typical representation of Charlemagne. As Robert Morrissey points out, “the virtues are illustrated through deeds of war.”²⁹ Charlemagne still represents the ideals of knighthood and combat. In addition, many of these deeds of war were in foreign territories. Giles writes of Charlemagne’s deeds in the *Karolinus*;

O magnum meritis o propter facta perenni
Dignum laude uirum cuius preconium numquam
Enarranda satis, qui non in proxima martem
Sustinuit girare suum sed in extera regna;³⁰

(O great man, though your merits, and worthy by your deeds
you of perennial praise, and for who no one could ever say enough,
and who won wars not just against near by kingdoms, but
also far away ones.)

This is a possible connection to Charlemagne’s perceived deeds in Spain as well as a hint of crusading ideology that creeps into this passage. Made famous through the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* and the *Song of Roland*, Charlemagne’s supposed exploits in Spain were some of the best known. However, perhaps more importantly, Charlemagne’s image is used to illustrate the king’s role as defender of the Church and kingdom. This is not a new concept. On the contrary, the idea that the king represented the ‘defense of the

²⁸ M. L. Colker, ed. “The ‘Karolinus’ of Egidius Parisiensis,” *Traditio* 29 (1973), 204.

²⁹ Morrissey, *Charlemagne and France*, p. 80.

³⁰ Colker, ed. “The ‘Karolinus’ p. 265.

realm' was common throughout the early and late Middle Ages. In particular, "the chroniclers of Saint-Denis had always presented the king in his capacity as defender of the realm, the Church, and the spiritual interests of the medieval world."³¹ Charlemagne represented the best of both of these royal attributes. Charlemagne's reign is used in the *Karolinus* as a kind of didactic exercise. The poem is also used by the author to criticize the current French king Philip II Augustus. Philip had separated from his first wife, Ingeborg and then exiled any clergyman who openly opposed his actions. To the author, Philip is also "not sufficiently gentle, moderate, tolerant, and accessible." Although this seems like an indication that Philip does not possess enough of the qualities of Charlemagne, this is never explicitly stated. Philip is, in fact, declared a '*specimen boni rectoris*.'³²

The poet carefully chronicles the history and achievements of Charlemagne while implicitly arguing that his success is the result of his virtue. For example, he treats men with kindness and displays the virtue of prudence and generosity.

Munere percepit. Contra sibi gloria maior
 Instans certamen obnixaque lucta receptis
 Plura remetiri et meritis precedere cunctos,³³

Giles's emphasis on the impressive deeds and great achievements of Charles's life is also accompanied by his implication of Louis's bloodline connection to Charlemagne.³⁴ Near

³¹ Gabrielle Spiegel, "'Defense of the Realm': Evolution of a Capetian Propaganda Slogan," *Journal of Medieval History* 3 (1977), 116.

³² Colker, "The 'Karolinus,'" p. 204.

³³ Colker, "The 'Karolinus,'" p. 285.

³⁴ A lengthy discussion of Charlemagne's deeds can be found in book IV; Colker, "The 'Karolinus,'" pp. 299-300, lines 316-37.

the end of book V, Giles strongly emphasizes Louis's 'blood' connection to former French kings and his duty and place in history.

Vt quos monstrabit docili breuitate libellus
 Cum bene mirandos Karoli miraberis actus,
 Coniclas quanta est Francorum gloria regum
 Et quanti regni quamque alti sanguinis heres
 Existas, o care puer, quam laudibus illis³⁵

(When teaching the example of Charles in a brief book
 it is necessary to consider his thoroughly amazing feats of
 of the past, how great is the glory of the kings of the French
 and of what great kingdom and of what exalted blood
 Oh dear boy, how much praise you have.)

He then ends the poem with:

In laudes Karoli, Karoline, clietulus esto.
 In laudes Karoli zelo uirtutis amande.³⁶

In praise of Charles, he follows Charles's line
 In praise of Charles, the one who loves virtue.

Louis, like his father, is to become the new Charlemagne. This is a crucial part of the developing Capetian royal ideology concerning 'blood-right' and 'descent.' With these two passages, it becomes clear that a bloodline connection to Charlemagne created a sense of legitimacy. This is the same phrase (*In laudes Karoli*) that will be used later, by Guillaume of Breton, to describe Philip II. Symbolically, Charlemagne had become part of the institution of the monarchy. He is an example of proper 'royal behavior' for Philip, Louis VIII, and other future kings.

Giles's text is at once a celebration of the great deeds of Charlemagne, a manual for proper kingship, and a condensed history of Charlemagne's life. As for history, it is

³⁵ Colker, "The 'Karolinus,'" p. 316.

³⁶ Colker, "The 'Karolinus,'" p. 316.

intended to be a correction of previous *jongleurs* and *mithmi* who, according to Giles, continued to spread lies. In book IV, he says;

Sed credi nolim quod mithmus publicus aures
Ad stadium commune petam. Tu que tibi lusi
Solus habe potius, nec sit mea Musa forensis.³⁷

(But credit not what the poets say in the stadium
to the general public. You and you alone have to be
able to perform. Now depend on my poem at the forum)

Giles's text is an ideal reflection of the increased obsession with creating an official version of the history of Charlemagne. This was necessary for a number of reasons. First, Charlemagne represented the ideal king that all rulers should strive to emulate. Second, any connection with Charlemagne would be seen as a legitimizing factor. In the late twelfth- and thirteenth-century, Charlemagne was at the center of the emerging body of writing that became French history.

Kaiserchronik

The tendency of authors (poets and chroniclers) to take previous sources and traditions and combine them into a kind of comprehensive treatise or history on a particular subject, in this case the history of Charlemagne, is a rather early development. Perhaps the first is the author of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* already discussed at length in previous chapters. This author combined the material of *Roland*, the *Pilgrims Guide to Santiago de Compostella*, and other traditions in order to create a broader, more 'complete' history of the emperor. However, it was not just the French chroniclers and the French monarchy that were concerned with preserving the image of Charlemagne. Charlemagne continued to be popular in German lands as well. After all, it was the

³⁷ Colker, "The 'Karolinus,'" p. 315.

German Emperor who orchestrated the canonization of Charlemagne, a ceremony that the French king did not even attend.³⁸ In addition, the same practice of combining previous sources into a kind of ‘critical edition’ or compilation was just as popular in Germany as well as France. During the same period that the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* was written, (c. 1140-1165), a German source, the *Kaiserchronik* also appeared (c. 1150).

The *Kaiserchronik* is a German epic poem of the mid-twelfth-century. It is a legend of saints and a chronicle account of the Roman Emperors and the German emperors and kings to Conrad III (c. 1140’s). The poem contains some 17,000 rhymed couplets, and is considered the earliest complete work in the vernacular produced in Germany.³⁹ The poem is thought to be the work of an ecclesiastic of Regensburg and a *Guelf* partisan. At one time, it was even suggested that it may have been written by Priest Konrad, the author of the *Rolandslied* (1170). However a number of scholars have demonstrated that Konrad did not write the *Kaiserchronik*, but rather borrowed from it.⁴⁰ Some lines are taken directly from the *Kaiserchronik* and used in the *Rolandslied*. In addition, there are enough stylistic differences between the two works to discount the idea that Konrad wrote the *Kaiserchronik* first and then incorporated material from it into the *Rolandslied*.⁴¹ Regardless of its authorship, the work does seem to have been widely circulated. There are twelve complete manuscripts and seventeen partial manuscripts,

³⁸ Louis VII of France did not attend this ceremony probably because of on-going political disputes with the Germans. However, the English king Henry II did attend the ceremony.

³⁹ Albert K. Wimmer, *Anthology of Medieval German Literature*, (Bristol, Indiana, Wyndham Hall Press Inc., 1987), p. 50.

⁴⁰ Carl Wesle, “Kaiserchronik und Rolandslied,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 48 (1924), pp. 223-258.

⁴¹ George Karl Bauer, “Kaiserchronik” und “Rolandslied,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 56 (1931), 1-14.

and it was continued twice in the thirteenth-century. Since the *Kaiserchronik* contains a number of prominent figures and attempts to cover a broad period, Charlemagne is not the central focus of the work. Nevertheless, a number of important features can still be learned about Charlemagne's image in Germany from the limited representation in the work.⁴²

Since the *Kaiserchronik* is a kind of 'chronicle' as much as a poem and it involves other former kings and emperors, it shows the place of Charlemagne in history.⁴³

However, there are so many factual and historical errors that it is difficult to call the work a chronicle, because this would confuse the work with the medieval chronicle tradition that is of an entirely different nature.⁴⁴ The *Kaiserchronik* is about 'kingship' and 'statecraft.' It uses a 'pseudo-chronicle' format in order to discuss former kings and emperors. In fact, the work, near the beginning, promises to tell of 'good and bad kings.' The author's methodology is basically to string together verse biographies of various lengths of ancient Roman, Byzantine, and Holy Roman Emperors.⁴⁵

Not surprisingly, Charlemagne is depicted in overwhelmingly positive terms. The date of the work (c. 1150) for the most part predates the negative image found in the rebel-baron cycle of the *chanson de geste* and the later Italian adaptations from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. At first glance, it may appear that Charlemagne is simply one of many great emperors and kings. This is an important theme concerning his

⁴² Geith, *Carolus Magnus*, pp. 48, 57.

⁴³ Folz, *Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'Empire germanique médiéval*, pp. 160-169.

⁴⁴ Henry Myers, "The Concept of Kingship in the 'Book of Emperors' ('Kaiserchronik')," *Traditio* 27 (1971), 206-207.

⁴⁵ Myers, "Concept of Kingship," pp. 206-207.

place in history. However, the representation of Charlemagne is given a loftier status, he is more important to the author and audience. As Joachim Bumke writes, “of all the rulers of the past, Charlemagne was the most immediate and vivid. The kings of France and Germany invoked him as their ancestor and the model of their rulership. The poets celebrated him as the ideal embodiment of the Christian monarch.”⁴⁶ The text and theme of the *Kaiserchronik* clearly supports Bumke’s claim. The author is explicit about the accomplishments and character of the former emperor and king. He writes;

Karl was ain warer gotes vigant
 Die haiden er ze der cristenhaite getwanc
 Karl was chuone,
 Karl was scone,
 Karl was genaedic,
 Karl was saelic,
 Karl was teumuote,
 Karl was staete,
 unt hete iedoch die guote.
 Karl was lobelich,
 Karl was vorhtilich,
 Karlen lobete man pilliche
 in Romiscen richen
 vor allen werltkunigen.

(Charles was a true warrior of God
 He forced the pagans to convert to Christianity
 Charles was brave
 Charles was handsome,
 Charles was steadfast and was full of kindness
 Charles was praiseworthy
 Charles was fearsome
 He possessed the highest excellence
 Many people in the Roman Empire praised
 Charles above all other kings of the world.)

⁴⁶ Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap, (Berkeley: Los Angeles: Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), p. 280.

This passage highlights the various ideals for which Charlemagne was best known.⁴⁷ He was a knight and crusader of unquestionable faith. He was both fearsome and kind and converted pagans to the true faith.

However, the text goes well beyond just a simple glorification of a popular king from the distant past. In the *Kaiserchronik* there is another use for the representation of Charlemagne. Charlemagne is presented as an authority figure whose customs are treated as a legal precedent. Within the *Kaiserchronik*, there a number of laws that are regarded as having been implemented by Charlemagne. In this respect, the image of Charlemagne is used as a way to legitimize imperial policies of the twelfth century. Two examples of this aspect concern social standing and the rights, or rather, the lack of rights, concerning peasants. The author describes two customs concerning peasant dress and the bearing of weapons by peasants, the first of which forbade peasants from wearing refined or elegant clothes. The author writes of Charlemagne after he was crowned emperor;

do riht er aver sa umbe der buliute gewaete. Daz machte der babes do staete. Nu wil ich iu sagen umbe den buman, waz er nach der pfaht solte an tragen: iz si swarz oder gra, niht anders reloubet er da; geren da enneben, daz gezimet sinem leben; sinen rinderinen scuoch, da mit ist des genuoch; siben elne se hemedē unt ze bruoch, rupfin tuoche. Ist der gere hinden oder vor, so hat er sin ewerch verlorn⁴⁸

(Then he straightaway passed regulations concerning the dress of the peasants. The pope approved them. Now I will tell you what a peasant was allowed to wear according to the law: black or gray, nothing else did the emperor permit. Gores only on the sides, that is appropriate to his social standing, and shoes made only of cowleather and nothing else. Seven ells of cloth for shirt and pants, of rough material. If he wears gores in the back or in front he has violated his social status.)⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Christian Gellinek, *Die Deutsche Kaiserchronik: Erzähltechnik und Kritik*, (Frankfurt & Main, Athenäum Verlag, 1971), 175-177 (my translation).

⁴⁸ *Kaiserchronik*, ed. E. Schroder, (Germany, 1895), lines 14788-802.

⁴⁹ Translation from Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, 128.

Most scholars believe that actual prohibitions concerning dress do not precede the mid-thirteenth-century. However, the passage does indicate that the nobility was interested in protecting certain privileges including dress. In addition, by claiming that Charlemagne had implemented these regulations, it gives them a plausible history and more important – more credibility. In another section, the author discusses the bearing of weapons to church by peasants. According to the author, Charlemagne forbade this as well. He writes;

an dem sunnentage sol er ze kirchen gan, den gart in der hant tragen. wirt daz swert da zim vunden, man sol in vuoren gebunden zuo dem kirhzune: da habe man den geburen unt slahe im hut und harabe.⁵⁰

(On Sundays he [the peasant] shall go to church, carrying his stick in his hand. If a sword is found on him, he shall be bound and led to the church fence. There the peasant shall be held and soundly beaten.)⁵¹

The issue of peasant bearing weapons was an ongoing one in the Middle Ages. This particular episode in the *Kaiserchronik* is a close parallel to Frederick Barbarossa's general prohibition against peasants carrying weapons in the *Constitutio de pace tenenda* of 1152. As Bumke argues "in the High Middle Ages weapons were a symbol of rank."⁵² Charlemagne is again the legitimizing character. He acts as a precedent that displays the monarchy's clear authority in these matters. However, this is one of the more complicated aspects of the *Kaiserchronik*. The former rulers are often given the title of 'judge' rather than their imperial or royal titles of emperor or king respectively. In addition, the interpretation of the law is quite complex, because, "the king who must rule

⁵⁰ *Kaiserchronik*, ed. E. Schroder, lines 14805-11.

⁵¹ Translation from Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, 166.

⁵² Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1999) pp. 179-181. Also, Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, 166.

under law must also observe the plural validity of the differing laws of nations subject to him.”⁵³ The focus on the ‘law’ is an element that is central to the image of ideal and true kingship throughout the entire *Kaiserchronik*. Although the *Kaiserchronik* does not make a major issue of bloodline or ethnicity, it does have a great deal in common with the *Karolinus*.

Both the *Kaiserchronik* and the *Karolinus* are without question didactic. There are specific lessons to be learned and specific models from which to learn them. In the twelfth-century version of Charlemagne, he is a former king and an example of a good and proper king. Like the French sources the image or representation of Charlemagne acts as a form of edification. This image or representation of Charlemagne is typical of this period and serves to reinforce the already existing and growing legend concerning his exploits. In addition, it is further evidence that the French and German writers in the twelfth century had a similar view of Charlemagne. This would become considerably less pronounced in the case of German authors in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Virtually the opposite was the case for French authors. In the thirteenth century, the image and memory of Charlemagne would be used extensively by the French monarchy. There was a variety of uses that historians and chroniclers would find for the image of Charlemagne.

Ethnicity & The Legacy of the Crusades

An issue that became quite prominent in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was ethnicity and national identity. In the midst of the rise of secular states, it became critical, from the Capetian perspective, to identify Charlemagne, the former Frankish king

⁵³ Myers, “Concept of Kingship,” p. 217.

and emperor, as French rather than German. However, this long process would take nearly two centuries. The tenth century represents a kind of transition point or period for the history of France. This period saw the end of the Carolingian line and the beginning of the Capetian one. There is something going on that represented the end of one world and the birth of a new one.

The late tenth century also represented a kind of identity crisis for the heirs of the Carolingian West. In 962, Otto I ascended to the position of Holy Roman Emperor. Two other ruling dynasties, the Salians and Hohenstaufens would follow the Ottonians. In the end, they would all occupy the position of Emperor for nearly three centuries. From the perspective of the Capetians, in the early tenth century during the time of Otto I, they needed to create an alternate identity. Charlemagne's empire had disintegrated and with it went the 'Carolingian' dynasty and identity. The 'Frankish' Empire was now much more 'German' than it had ever been in the previous centuries. There was already an emperor, so the Capetian kings slowly began disassociate with the concept of 'Frank' and would eventually embrace the concept of 'French.' Although this did not happen in the tenth or even the eleventh centuries, it would be the twelfth century when this newly defined concept of ethnicity and identity was first embraced. First, in the tenth century, the monarchy was far too weak to compel such a change. The notable decline in royal charters alone is enough to conclude that royal power was in significant decline.⁵⁴

According to Jean Dunbabin, it was not until after the crusades, in the twelfth century that this became possible.⁵⁵ She argues that "in taking his place at the head of the Second

⁵⁴ Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making 843-1180*, 2nd edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 23.

⁵⁵ Dunbabin, *France in the Making 843-1180*, pp. 256-294.

Crusade, the *Rex Francorum* decisively hastened the transformation of the Franks into the French.”⁵⁶ The process continued after the Second Crusade (1145-1149), as Suger, the Abbot of St. Denis and other royal supporters, continued a propaganda effort that helped define the concept of ‘French.’ In addition, it was primarily the Capetian elite of the twelfth-century that created or invented the concept of ‘French.’⁵⁷ It was not a grass roots movement, but a top-down formula. Louis VI, Louis VII, Philip Augustus, and other monarchs and royal supporters took it upon themselves to help define *Francia* and the ‘French people.’⁵⁸

The representation of Charlemagne is an important part of this process. When it concerned legitimacy and identity, the Capetians would continually recycle the Carolingian legacy for their own purposes. The prevalence and popularity of the literary tradition helped to pave the way for the utilization of Charlemagne and the Carolingian past as propaganda. However, the propaganda effort extended beyond the Capetian royal courts. The Church, and in particular Saint-Denis, was an important part of the process as well.

In particular, the Capetian kings association with the Church became a crucial concept. Charlemagne was reputed to have built or funded and sponsored the building of numerous churches and monasteries. Charlemagne was also represented as the ‘defender of the Church.’ If the Capetian kings were the true descendants of Charlemagne, they

⁵⁶ Dunbabin, *France in the Making 843-1180*, p. 294.

⁵⁷ Joseph Strayer argues that it is in the thirteenth-century rather than the twelfth-century that the Capetians ‘invented’ France. Strayer, “France: The Most Holy Land, the Chosen People, and the Most Christian King,” in his *Medieval Statecraft and the Perspectives of History*, (Princeton: New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 302.

⁵⁸ See also Andrew Lewis, *Royal Succession in Capetian France*, pp. 104-122.

would have to fill this role as well. This is not a concept that the Capetians would have to invent. Christianity had long since been an important aspect of identity, but the crusades would again be a critical defining feature in the twelfth-century. The First Crusade was largely a French campaign. In addition, significant participation in the Second and Third Crusades solidified the image of the 'French' as being the new 'chosen people.'⁵⁹

The Capetians were aided a great deal in defining French identity by the pro-royal propaganda that continued to flow from the monks at Saint-Denis. The connection to Saint-Denis and the issues of identity and ethnicity were part of the propaganda effort of the twelfth-century as well. In addition, there was always a perceived association with Saint-Denis. In fact, the propaganda effort here does not come directly from the royal family. The monks at Saint-Denis were at the center of this propaganda and ideology. Much of the effort actually predates Philip's concerns in the later part of the twelfth-century and in fact goes back to the work of Suger and Philip's father and grandfather, Kings Louis VII and Louis VI. Suger's influence on the image of kingship has already been analyzed and discussed in chapter 3. However, there is much more to his work on ethnic and religious stereotypes. The period of the crusades is critical here as well, especially the time around the Second Crusade when the perceived 'differences' between 'French' and 'German' became more visible.

In Suger's work, the sense of unity of the 'French' is in opposition to an outside group; a threatening force.⁶⁰ In particular, Suger's description of Louis VI's stand

⁵⁹ Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Exchange 950-1350*, (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 254.

⁶⁰ Florin Curta, "Furor Teutonicus: a note on ethnicism and ethnic stereotypes in Suger's Vita Ludovici Grossi," *The Haskins Society Journal* 16 (2005), in print.

against the German Emperor Henry V in 1124 is a defining moment.⁶¹ The Emperor Henry V in coordination with the English King had planned an attack on the city of Reims.⁶² Louis's bold stance against the emperor was an important victory for the French King and for the Church, since Suger viewed Henry as an enemy of the Church more than an enemy of the *regnum Francia*.

In Suger's description, the Germans are presented as barbaric, brutal, and out of control. There are twenty-six negative remarks about various ethnic groups, including Germans and Normans.⁶³ In fact, from the Capetian and French perspective, the German emperors were viewed as usurpers, ruling lands that had once belonged to Charlemagne and lands that rightly belonged to the current French kings. Geoffroy Villehardouin in his chronicle and history of the Fourth Crusade written shortly after the campaign ended uses the term Franks to distinguish between French and German crusaders and the Italians of Venice. However, in separate references to his own people, he uses the term 'French.'⁶⁴

There certainly existed stereotypes concerning Western Christian knights during the time of the crusades. In the late eleventh-century, Anna Comena, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius wrote of the Western Christians as a society obsessed with war and physical violence. She described Robert Guiscard, the Norman conqueror of Southern Italy, as a man who "had a heart full of passion and anger and among his

⁶¹ *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. Richard Cusmano and John Moorhead, (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), pp. 46-54.

⁶² Spiegel, 'Defense of the Realm,' p. 119.

⁶³ Curta, *Furor Teutonicus*.

⁶⁴ Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. M.R.B. Shaw, (London, Penguin Books, 1963).

enemies he expected that either he would drive through his opponent with his spear or himself be destroyed.” Anna held a similar view of western crusaders who visited the Byzantine court during the First Crusade. In her eyes, they were ‘blood thirsty and warlike’ men. She viewed the ‘Franks’ (Westerners) as barbarians unable to control their temper and passions. In addition, a Muslim Emir observed during the same period that “among the Franks, no quality is more highly esteemed in a man than military prowess.”⁶⁵

This is not entirely an exaggeration on the part of Muslim and Byzantine authors. Clearly based on the sources, especially the vernacular tradition, military prowess was an important characteristic. The ideal knight and king was good in battle. No one fit this characteristic better than Charlemagne. The descriptions of Charlemagne usually include his victories on the battlefield – both as an individual and as a commander of large armies in the field. In fact, military prowess represented the most admired attribute of the Charlemagne legend. His army’s victories are a direct reflection of him.

Participation in the crusades during the thirteenth-century did not wane in Capetian France or among the Capetian monarchy. Louis IX (r. 1126-1270) led the Seventh Crusade after the Muslims forces re-captured Jerusalem in 1244. The campaign ended in failure as Louis’s army was defeated and captured in Egypt in 1250. Later, while leading another crusade in 1270, Louis would die en route to Tunis in North Africa. Louis’s crusading exploits cannot be considered a military success, however, the symbolic importance of the crusading king in the thirteenth-century is clear in the contemporary

⁶⁵ Taken from Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950-1350*, (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 89-90.

descriptions of Louis and his popularity. Jean of Joinville described Louis in a similar manner that chroniclers and historians described Charlemagne. He was a man of faith, a crusader, and an ideal king.

The representation of Charlemagne in the twelfth-century consistently portrayed him as a crusader and ideal king – the former being a crucial component of the latter. The thirteenth-century sources that attempted to tell the history of the French kings adapted this representation. Charlemagne continued to be viewed as not only a former king, but also a crusader. The descriptions of Charlemagne in the histories are very similar to that of Philip II and Louis IX and in some cases are coming from the same authors and sources.

The compilations and histories produced during the thirteenth-century reflect the important role the image of Charlemagne played in the history of the representation of the great French kings and the state. There is a clear tendency among chroniclers and poets to use Charlemagne for a number of different issues. This process continued for the entirety of the thirteenth-century.

Anthony Smith describes the adoption of Charlemagne and the Carolingian past as a ‘dynastic mythomoteur.’ The emphasis here again is on an identity perceived or created through opposition to another ‘group.’ The Crusades are the most critical aspect of this ideology. Crusade historians have long since cited the importance of defining the ‘other’ in crusade ideology. “The Capetians indeed took over the special aura of Charlemagne’s heritage and projected back a specifically ‘French’ leadership role onto his campaigns against the Saracens.”⁶⁶ The connection to the Carolingians, to

⁶⁶ Anthony Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 158-159.

Charlemagne, and the crusades became important ethnic markers for the Capetians in the late twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. These were the critical components of the Capetian and the newly evolving 'French' identity.

The Grandes Chroniques

The 'crown jewel' of the medieval French historiographic tradition is the *Grandes Chroniques de France*. The *Grandes Chroniques* was basically a vernacular history produced by the chroniclers of Saint-Denis. They were commissioned during the reign of King Louis IX and completed the work between the 1270s and the early part of the fourteenth-century.⁶⁷ The *Grandes Chroniques* is not the work of a single author, but rather a combination and compilation of a series of works. The first part, complete in 1274, includes previous sources such as Aimoin of Fleury's *Historia Francorum*, the *Liber Historiae*, *Chronographia*, the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, and *Vita Karoli* among others.⁶⁸ The author and translator of the first part, which covers French history up to Philip II Augustus and the part that is the focus of this research, is known only as Primat. Other than his name, virtually nothing is known of the author. The work is a combination of a Latin-Dionysian compilation along with new information from various other vernacular prose histories.⁶⁹

The *Grandes Chroniques* follows in the newly developing vernacular tradition begun in France around the year 1200. Spiegel contends that the monks of Saint-Denis

⁶⁷ Anne Hedeman, *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France, 1274-1422*, (Los Angeles: Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 1-3.

⁶⁸ Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition of Saint-Denis*, (Brookline: Leyden: Classical Folia, 1978), p. 77.

⁶⁹ Hedeman, *The Royal Image*, p. 1.

wished to present the *Grandes Chroniques* in a format more readily available to a lay audience.⁷⁰ However, it becomes quite clear from the manuscript tradition that a royal audience was also the target.

The *Grandes Chroniques* are, if nothing, a manifestation or result of Capetian ideology begun during the reign of Philip II.⁷¹ The royal court and the chroniclers at Saint-Denis enhanced and added to the ideas first put forward by the poets and chroniclers of Philip's reign. The likes of Giles of Paris, William of Breton, Rigord, as well as others helped form the bedrock of thirteenth-century Capetian ideology and theories of kingship. The *Grandes Chroniques* were also the continuation of themes started by Suger at Saint-Denis. The chronicle tradition of Saint-Denis and the biography of Louis VI emphasized royal ideology and the connections to Saint-Denis. Philip's royal archives took the first step in the creation of an 'official' version of history. In many respects, the *Grandes Chroniques* is the end product of this process.

It is with the reign of Louis IX that the ideals of true Christian kingship (*rex christianissimus*) previously expressed through the image and representation of Charlemagne comes to fruition for the Capetian line.⁷² Louis's personality, service to the Church, and dedication to crusading would eventually earn him canonization and a place in the pantheon of medieval 'king saints.'⁷³

⁷⁰ Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition of Saint-Denis*, p. 72.

⁷¹ Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'occident médiéval* (Paris, 1980), pp. 1-44.

⁷² Hedeman, *The Royal Image*, p. 3.

⁷³ Jacques Le Goff, "Saint Louis et la parole royale," in *Le prince et son historien; la vie de Saint Louis de Joinville*, (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), pp. 7-21. Also see Jean Richard, "Joinville à la croisade," in *Le prince et son historien*, pp. 22-31.

There were other vernacular prose histories that may have influenced the *Grandes Chroniques*. In particular, the *Anonymous of Chantilly* (1210-1230), the *chronique des rois de France* (prior to 1223), and the earliest example, the Old-French Johannes translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*. The *Turpin* is a clear example of how significant the impact twelfth-century epic had on the historiographic tradition of the thirteenth-century.⁷⁴ Of course, the *Turpin* is not the only Latin source to be translated into the vernacular. This would be major development of the period. However, Spiegel argues that, “these early thirteenth-century translations formed a critical stage in the development of vernacular historiography in France and served as important intermediaries between the Latin chronicles of the twelfth century and the *Grandes Chroniques* of the thirteenth.”⁷⁵

The society of the thirteenth-century continued to produce epic and romance literature that was often interpreted by contemporaries as historical. Although significantly impacted by the epic and romance literary traditions, the *Grandes Chroniques* is not as much about individual heroism as much as it is about the “history of larger social collectives.”⁷⁶ There is clearly a different goal with the production of the *Grandes Chroniques*.⁷⁷ It is intended to chronicle the history of France, or at least the history of the royalty of France in a kind of ‘national’ framework. The *Grandes*

⁷⁴ Benoit Lacroix, *L’Historien au Moyen Age*, (Paris, 1971), pp. 218-220.

⁷⁵ Spiegel, *Chronicle Tradition*, p. 75.

⁷⁶ Spiegel, “Medieval Canon Formation,” p. 641.

⁷⁷ Michael Zink, *The Invention of Literary Subjectivity*, trans. David Sices, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 11.

Chroniques are often interpreted as the culmination of royal propagandists to present and proclaim the power of the crown and its enduring righteousness by divine appointment.⁷⁸

Medieval historiography in France was going through a number of changes in the thirteenth century. Because often so little was known about the past, it was fairly easy to manipulate. History could be used to legitimize political policies, such as implementing forms of taxation or taking lands from nobles. On the other hand, it could be used as a ‘vehicle of change.’ “All that was needed was to recreate it in the image of the present, and then claim its authority for the legitimization of contemporary practices.”⁷⁹ This is clearly the case with the representation of Charlemagne. Whether he is a crusader, a blood relative who legitimizes monarchical claims, an ideal monarch dispensing justice, or a tyrannical feudal lord who breaks custom, he is the historical justification for ‘present’ policies. This methodology was primarily the instrument of pro-royalist writers and chroniclers. However, there are some instances of anti-royalist and specifically anti-Capetian translators who use this same methodology to demonstrate, among other things, the illegitimacy of Capetian rulers.⁸⁰

The image and representation of Charlemagne continued to be an important model for later monarchs in the thirteenth-century. However, with the production of the *Grandes Chroniques*, the focus shifted to his place in the history of the French monarchy, the history of Christendom, and the history of the French State. According to Spiegel,

⁷⁸ Spiegel, “Medieval Canon Formation,” p. 649.

⁷⁹ Spiegel, “Political Utility in Medieval Historiography,” p. 316.

⁸⁰ Spiegel argues in “*Pseudo-Turpin*, the crisis of the aristocracy and the beginnings of vernacular historiography in France,” *Journal of Medieval History*, 12 (1986), 207-223, that the early Old French translations of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* were made for Flemish lords who sought to demonstrate the illegitimacy of Philip II and the Capetians in general by disconnecting them from Charlemagne and the Carolingians. This was discussed briefly in chapter 3.

“the *Grandes Chroniques de France* condensed the genealogical and dynastic memory of France into a simple edifice that inaugurated a new understanding of French history as the history of the *trois races* of kings – Merovingians, Carolingians and Capetians.”⁸¹

Although there are clear changes in the style, format, and consumption of the idealized representations from the past, the image of Charlemagne is fairly consistent throughout the various sources. However, the description of Charlemagne and the history of his exploits does change in some important subtle ways. The changes are due primarily to variations in genre and focus. There are rarely any vivid descriptions of battle scenes as you see in *Roland*, *Aspremont*, and *Turpin*. The author(s) has a different perspective and goal with the *Grandes Chroniques*. The concern is with the much broader theme of French royal history. It contains a number of different sources and stories without putting too much stress on any one. In some places, the translation is only a synopsis of the original story. The sources used for the section on Charlemagne are the *Royal Frankish Annals*, *Einhard's The Life of Charlemagne*, *The Journey of Charlemagne*, and the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*.⁸²

Books one and two in the section on Charlemagne (volume 3) are based primarily on the work Einhard. It is a fairly straightforward description of day to day life, a chronicle of Charlemagne's victories, travels, and accomplishments. There is a strong sense of nationality present throughout the work that is typically absent from earlier works. Charlemagne and his men are clearly 'French.' Terms such as *France* and *Francois* are used throughout the work to refer to Charlemagne and his Carolingian

⁸¹ Spiegel, “Medieval Canon Formation,” p. 638.

⁸² *A Thirteenth-Century Life of Charlemagne*, trans. Robert Levine, (New York & London, Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), p. ix.

contemporaries. Charlemagne is described as a 'kind and merciful,' ruler who has great concern for women, children and poor of his kingdom. However, he is also a man to be feared. Ultimately, Charlemagne is described as an example for Christian kings and princes.

Si est profitable chose de retenir par escriture les victories
et les faiz de di grant princes pour ce que ses noms et sa
renommée ne soit mise en obli, si que li roi et prince crestien
prengnent exemple à ses faiz et à sa conversation.

(It is profitable to write down the victories and deeds of
the great prince, in order that his name and reputation not be
forgotten, and that Christian kings and princes may use his
deeds and words as an example.)⁸³

In addition, he worked to convert non-Christians to the true faith and gave generously to the Church.

En si très grant amor et en si très grant reverence ot li
empereres saint Eglise, que touz jors la maintint et
honora en toutes manieres, et aorna les eglises de vaissiaus
d'or et d'argent, de pierres precieuses et de dras de soie.

(The Emperor honored and loved the holy Church and he
supported and honored it in all ways, and he decorated the
many churches with vessels of gold and silver, and with precious
stones and silk.)⁸⁴

The didactic nature of the text is immediately clear in this section. Charlemagne is presented as the ideal king. He fights fiercely and courageously. He wins battles against the Lombards and Saxons and he is crowned 'Emperor' and called 'Augustus.'⁸⁵ From the perspective of the historian, the first two books of the section are also the most

⁸³ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, ed. Jules Viard, (Paris, Librairie Ancienne Edouard Champion, 1923), pp. 4-5, (all translations from the *Grandes Chroniques* are mine).

⁸⁴ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, pp. 118-119.

⁸⁵ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, p. 93.

‘historically’ accurate. By this, I mean that most of the events described here actually happened as opposed to the legendary exploits that come out of other sources. In creating ‘royal history,’ Primat combined both legendary and historical events concerning Charlemagne’s life.

Book three of this section chronicles Charlemagne’s legendary trip to Constantinople and Jerusalem. There are strong parallels with the Crusades throughout this section. The representation of Charlemagne is that of a crusader much the same way it is in *Roland* and the *Turpin-Chronicle*. His dedication to the service of the Church is apparent throughout. Charlemagne is described as ‘charitable’ – he builds churches and abbeys and he has great love for pilgrims.

Si fiers et si puissanz, com vous avez oi, estoit li empereres
 En acroistre son roiaume et en plessier et sozmetre ses anemis,
 Et assidument ententis àguerroyer en toutes les parties du monde
 En un meesme tens, si ne demoroit-il pas pour ce que li ne fust
 Curieus des ovres de misericorde, car il edifia eglises et abbaies
 En divers lieus, àl’onor de Dieu et au profit de s’ame.

(As eager and effective as the Emperor was at expanding his kingdom, and defeating his enemies, and as tirelessly as he fought all over the world, he nevertheless was able to pursue works of charity, as he built various churches and abbeys in numerous places in order to honor God and for the profit of his soul.)⁸⁶

There is a clear indication that Primat was concerned with representing the king and Charlemagne as a kind of servant to the Church. In fact, this characteristic is emphasized as much, if not more, than any other.

The parallels with the First Crusade are clear in this section as well. The chronological bracket that should include the actual First Crusade occurs in Book Four,

⁸⁶ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, pp. 142-143.

but does not contain a very detailed description. It is possible that Primat was attempting to fill this gap with a description of Charlemagne's campaign and establish a precedent for French participation and leadership in the crusades.⁸⁷ Charlemagne himself describes the crusade as being part of a Christian knight's duty.⁸⁸ Much of what Primat describes is reminiscent of the rhetoric and propaganda that existed during the First Crusade. Primat chronicles an eyewitness account of the poor treatment of Christians and the violation of the Holy Sepulchre by the Infidels.

En Costantinoble s'enfui; à Constantin l'empereor et à son fil Leon, à plors et à lermes, lor conta la grant dolor et la grant persecution qui en la terre d'outre mer estoit avenue, coment li felon Sarrazin avoient la cité prise, le saint sepulchre ordoïé et violéet les autres sains lieux de la cité, les citez et les chastiaus du roisume de Jerusalem prises, les chans gastez, le pople occis en partie et en partie mené en chaitivoisons, et tant avoient fait de hontes à Nostre Seigneur dit de persecutions à son pople que il n'estoit cuers de bon crestien qui n'en deust estre dolenz et corrociez.

(In Constantinople, he told the Emperor Constantine and his son Leo, of the great suffering and persecution that took place in the land beyond the sea. He said the evil Saracens took the city and violated the Holy Sepulchre and many other holy places in the city. He tells how they captured cities and castles in the kingdom of Jerusalem, ravaging the countryside, and killing many people and enslaving others. They leveled great abuse on Our Lord, and persecuted his people to the point that no good Christian did not have a heart full of grief and anger.)⁸⁹

He then describes the Emperor in the East actually requesting help from Charlemagne.

The Emperor Constantine has a vision that directed him to inform Charlemagne (Emperor of the Romans) of the terrible events in Jerusalem.⁹⁰ Four emissaries are sent to request the aid of Charlemagne. Primat emphasizes that Charlemagne's reputation for great

⁸⁷ Robert Levine, trans., *A Thirteenth-Century Life of Charlemagne*, (New York & London, Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), pp. x-xi.

⁸⁸ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, p. 169.

⁸⁹ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, pp. 161-162.

⁹⁰ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, pp. 162-163.

deeds had spread throughout the East. The emissaries write to Charlemagne describing the events in Jerusalem and requesting that he 'perform his Christian duty.'⁹¹

Charlemagne responds by ordering that everyone fights the Saracen enemy (75).

Tantost fist crier par tout le roiaume de France
que tuit cil qui armes porroient porter, et viell
et jone, s'apareillassent d'aler avec lui es parties
d'Orient contre les Sarrazins.

(He then ordered that all those who could
fight throughout the kingdom to take up arms
and travel with him to fight the Saracens in
the East.)⁹²

Charlemagne's army travels to Constantinople where they combine forces with the Eastern Emperor's army and march to Jerusalem where they rout the Muslim army successfully liberating the holy city (76). The events concerning the trip to Constantinople and the Holy Land are similar to the *Descriptio*. The theme is very serious rather than the comical tone that exists in the *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne* (*Voyage de Charlemagne*).

The focus on Charlemagne's 'imagined' crusading exploits is also probably a reflection of King Louis IX's own obsession with crusading. Louis IX, like Philip, continued the Capetian concern with their connection to Charlemagne and the Carolingian past.⁹³ The concept of 'crusade' dominated Louis's entire reign. However, Louis's first crusade venture 1248-1254 ultimately failed. According to William Jordan, this failure shaped the remainder of his reign. All of his domestic and foreign policies, such as bringing peace to the Christian West, subjugating his own barons, and significant

⁹¹ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, p. 164.

⁹² *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, p. 169.

⁹³ Jacques Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, (Paris, Gallimard, 1996), pp. 405-431.

acts of devotion were designed to make him worthy for success in a future crusade.⁹⁴

Ironically, he would eventually die while on Crusade in North Africa in 1270. However, Louis's important policies do extend beyond crusading and into internal politics as well.

Louis, like Philip II, sought to solidify the image of Capetian kingship as well. Unfortunately for Louis, the strongest symbol of Capetian legitimacy and 'holiness' would come with his death. With his death and quick canonization, he became an important model. In many ways, Louis became the new Charlemagne. For example, in 1350, King John II (John the Good) was crowned with Louis's crown rather than that of Charlemagne.⁹⁵ Anne Hedeman argues that "almost from the moment of his death, Louis IX became a model for royal behavior against whom subsequent kings were measured and often found wanting."⁹⁶ Just as previous kings had had trouble measuring up to the legendary image of Charlemagne, the French kings of the late thirteenth and fourteenth-centuries had similar difficulties living up to the image and reputation of 'Saint Louis.' However, Louis's canonization did solidify the argument that the Capetians were part of the *rois très chrétiens*. Ernst Kantorowicz contends that the

... achievements of this royal crusader and saint [are] the high tide of the French cult of kings [and] of the religion of Reims and St. Denis. It was St. Louis, who in every respect enriched that treasure of grace on which all his successors would thrive. It was he whose kingship was elevated to transcendence by the Spiritualists and Symbolists of his age and who, in turn, bestowed the thin and light air of the angelic kingdoms upon his country and assimilated, for the last time, the French chivalry to the militant celestial hosts.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ William Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade: A Study in Rulership*, (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1979).

⁹⁵ Hedeman, *The Royal Image*, p. 68.

⁹⁶ Hedeman, *The Royal Image*, p. 63.

⁹⁷ Ernst Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship*, (Berkeley: Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), p. 4.

Saint Louis was viewed in every sense as the king who best represented Christ and his kingdom on earth. During the late medieval, early modern and even the modern eras, Louis would often appear in images and paintings alongside Charlemagne as the ideals of kingship and the monarchy.

Books four and five of the Charlemagne section of the *Grandes Chroniques* are essentially an adaptation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*. Primat tells of the conquest of Spanish cities and especially the liberation of Compostella from the Saracens. There is little new in this section as it follows the descriptions and events of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* extremely closely. Perhaps the most important element of this section is the physical description of Charlemagne offered by Primat. It is very close to the description contained in the longer versions of the earlier *Turpin-Chronicle*. In fact, Primat writes that the description comes directly from the Archbishop who was an eyewitness.

...et dit ensi que Karlemaines estoit bruns de cheveleure et vermauz en face, nobles et avenanz de cors, mais fiers estoit en regardeure. En estant avoit viii piez de lone, à la mesure de son pié maismes qui moult estoit granz. Par piz et par espaulles estoit très larges; ventre et rains avoit convenable selonc son cors, gros braz et grosses cuisses avoit. Très aigres et très sages. De face, avoit paume, de front un pié de lonc. Si ieul ressembloient ieuz de lyons, ausi resplendissanz come escharbocles. Li sorcil deseus les ieuz avoient demie paume de lonc.

(... and he said that Charlemagne had dark hair and a sanguine complexion, a graceful and noble body, and he had a proud look about him. Measured by his own foot, which was very large, he was eight feet tall. His chest and shoulders were quite broad, his stomach and loins fit his body well. His arms and thighs were heavy. He was strong in all of his limbs; in battle, he was a fierce and intelligent knight. His face was a palm and a half long, his beard a one palm, his nose a half palm, and his forehead a foot long. He had eyes that were like that of a lion, and they shone like carbuncles. His eyebrows were half a palm long.)⁹⁸

He goes on to discuss Charlemagne's strength and writes that Charlemagne could cut through an armed knight with a single blow and lift an armed knight over his head with

⁹⁸ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, p. 257.

one arm.⁹⁹ An important distinction here is the marked difference between this description and Einhard's earlier image. Einhard gave Charlemagne white hair with a short thick neck whereas Primat's Charlemagne is dark-haired and well-proportioned. It is not entirely clear what prompted this change. It may be that the idea of male beauty had changed in the 1200s. However, it is unknown why Primat and previous chroniclers and poets adapted a different physical description. Perhaps, because it may have seemed more heroic and fit his legendary character better. Primat's representation of Charlemagne does seem to exude an image of youthfulness not present in Einhard's description.

Book five involves the battle of Saragossa, the death of Roland, and the death of Charlemagne. Primat writes that after the death of Roland and the other courageous barons at the battle of Roncevaux, Charlemagne was never healthy again. He mourned and lamented their loss for the remainder of his life.¹⁰⁰ Unlike the seemingly ageless Charlemagne of *Roland*, according to Primat, the Charlemagne of history died at the age of 72 just as Einhard reported in the ninth-century. He sat on a golden throne, in an extravagant tomb at Aix-la-Chapelle dressed with imperial garments while holding his sword and a copy of the Gospels.¹⁰¹ In the end, Charlemagne retains his image as the ideal monarch and the most Christian king. Primat writes:

Karlemaines vaut autant come jors de char, pour
ce que il resplendi et sormonta touz les princes et
les rois charniex après Jhesu Crist, en sciences et
en vertuz.

⁹⁹ These elements are also contained in most long versions of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*.

¹⁰⁰ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, p. 288-292.

¹⁰¹ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, p. 293-294.

(The name of Charlemagne signifies the day of flesh,
for he has surpassed and outshone all other princes
and kings after Jesus Christ in knowledge and
power.)¹⁰²

The image of Charlemagne in the *Grandes Chroniques* is intended to be a more ‘complete picture,’ and a ‘complete history.’ It represents what later chroniclers and historians see as the most important aspects of his life. However, more importantly the *Grandes Chroniques* represent what was critical about the past. It is an indication of what Charlemagne means to French history and the French monarchy.

In addition, the image of Charlemagne in the *Grandes Chroniques* closely corresponds to Louis IX’s conception of holy kingship. Louis intended much of his own reign to be an example of Christian kingship. His actions, policies, and crusading ventures provided instructions for his successors and helped define the royal mission.¹⁰³ In addition, the image of the monarchy in the court of Louis IX was led by a strong monarch with few, if any checks on his power.¹⁰⁴ In other words, he wanted future kings to rule in the manner of Charlemagne and himself, which in the *Grandes Chroniques*, is nearly indistinguishable.

The didactic goal of the *Grandes Chroniques* is something that was apparent right from the beginning of its production. In fact, the earliest surviving manuscript contains clear indicators that the *Grandes Chroniques* were intended as a model of kingship.¹⁰⁵

Commissioned in 1274 by the monks at Saint-Denis, a copy of the *Grandes Chroniques*

¹⁰² *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. 3, Viard, p. 296.

¹⁰³ Spiegel, *Chronicle Tradition of Saint-Denis*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁴ Charles Wood, “The Mise of Amiens and Saint Louis’ Theory of Kingship,” *French Historical Studies*, 6 (1970), 300-305.

¹⁰⁵ Hedeman, *The Royal Image*, pp. 11-22.

was presented to King Philip III who succeeded to the throne in 1270 after the death of his father Louis IX. The numerous pictorial miniatures point to the theme of ideal kingship. Taken in conjunction with the text itself, the conclusion that the *Grandes Chroniques* were intended to ‘teach,’ is unavoidable. In the prologue, the author emphasizes that the numerous French kings highlighted in the work are intended as an *exemplum*. The author writes that the chronicle is a “mirror of life ... [and] each person can find good and evil, beauty and ugliness, sense and folly, and profit in everything through the example of history.”¹⁰⁶ This conclusion is much easier to draw in this case than that of the literary works of the twelfth-century whose audience is more difficult to identify. In the case of the *Grandes Chroniques*, there is no question that at least a portion of the audience was royalty. Just as the *Karolinus* was intended to instruct King Louis VIII through the image and example of Charlemagne, Philip III’s *Grandes Chroniques* were intended to teach him governing principles through the example of his progenitors, including Charlemagne and Philip II.

Even beyond the source itself, Philip III demonstrated the symbolic importance of Charlemagne when Philip III, like Philip II, used the sword of Charlemagne in his coronation. Within the source, both the pictorial images and the text emphasize Charlemagne’s kingship. In many ways, the *Grandes Chroniques* present a proto-nationalistic view of Charlemagne. Charlemagne is now French. In addition, his imperial status is de-emphasized, while his legendary deeds and exploits as King of France become the official version of history. This interpretation did not end with the first renderings of the *Grandes Chroniques*, but would endure well into the Valois reign.

¹⁰⁶ Hedeman, *The Royal Image*, p. 15. Kings had personal copies of the *Grandes Chroniques*. Charles V’s copy is the one being referenced here by Hedeman.

Charles V actively promoted the ‘cult of Charlemagne’ and was often compared to him in works that he had commissioned. In addition, the life of Charlemagne is more heavily illuminated in the Charles V’s version than any other.¹⁰⁷

Charlemagne in the North: *The Karlamagnus Saga*

The reception of the history and representation of Charlemagne outside France was quite prominent. The popularity of the Charlemagne legend was significant in Italy and England through the literary tradition (primarily the *chanson de gestes*). In Germany, a ‘historical’ compilation in a similar tradition as the *Grandes Chroniques* appeared at the end of the thirteenth-century. This work, the *Karl Meinet* is written in German verse and tells of Charlemagne’s life and legendary deeds.¹⁰⁸ In addition, in the late thirteenth-century, an important Norse compilation called the *Karlamagnus Saga* was produced for King Haakon V.¹⁰⁹ This source in particular allows scholars to determine what elements of the Charlemagne legend were most important or popular outside of the French-German context. It acts as an important gauge for the reception of the image of Charlemagne.

The source is the work not of a single author, but rather of several hands. In its fullest form, the Saga contains ten parts. The number of previous sources used that involve Charlemagne is much greater than that in the *Grandes Chroniques*. From the tradition of the *chanson de geste*, it includes the *Chanson de Roland*, *Chanson d’Aspremont*, *Doon de la Roche*, *La Chevalerie Ogier de Danemarch*, *Chanson d’Otinél*, *Moniage Guillaume*, *Chanson de Saisnes* and the *Pélerinage de Charlemagne*. There is

¹⁰⁷ Hedeman, *The Royal Image*, p. 98-105.

¹⁰⁸ *Karl Meinet*, ed. Adelbert von Keller, (Stuttgart, Verwaltung, 1858).

¹⁰⁹ There is even a Swedish version of the life of Charlemagne (*Karl Magnus Kronike*), which is a translation of parts VII and VIII of the Saga. Most manuscripts are from the fifteenth century.

also an adaptation of *the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* as well.¹¹⁰ The work also attempts to the entirety of Charlemagne's life. His youth, knightly exploits, heroic deeds, and death are all covered in the *Saga*. Virtually every major event concerning the previous legend of Charlemagne is included in the *Saga*. Charlemagne's image as crusader, ideal monarch, protector of the Church and women and children is everywhere. However, it is in the longest section, entitled 'King Agulandus,' which is an amalgamation of the *Turpin Chronicle* and the *Song of Aspremont*, that Charlemagne's connection to crusading and kingship is best displayed. The section chronicles Charlemagne's legendary campaigns to Spain. The original *Song of Aspremont* takes place in Italy, but here the authors have moved the story to Spain. Charlemagne's reputation goes beyond Spain:

When the most famous lord who ever lived in the north lands, Karolus Magnus, first of all the kings of the Franks to hold the Roman Empire, had conquered a great realm in Italy and made many lands subject to him under the rule of the Roman empire – Anglia, France, Germany, Burgundia, Lotharingia, and many others which lie between the two seas, together with untold cities taken from the Saracens, -- he intended to put aside warfare,¹¹¹

However, Charlemagne was visited by the spirit of Saint James and told to liberate the Christian lands in Spain besieged by Saracens. Of course, Charlemagne gathers his army and, in a number of epic battles, defeats the Saracen army led by Agolant. The theme of Christian-Muslim conflict is of course familiar. Charlemagne protects and defends Christian lands from Agolant and the treacherous Saracens. It seems like an overly simplistic plot line of 'good' versus 'evil.' However, the characters are not at all static.

¹¹⁰ *Karlamagnus Saga: The Saga of Charlemagne and His Heroes*, trans. Constance B. Hieatt, vol. 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975), pp. 16-18.

¹¹¹ *Karlamagnus Saga: The Saga of Charlemagne and His Heroes*, trans. Constance B. Hieatt, vol. 2 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975), p. 65.

Often the Christians are subject to sin and human frailty while the Muslims are to be admired for their heroic abilities and noble deeds.¹¹²

The quotation above indicates that the Saga follows the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* almost exactly as it had appeared a century and half earlier. Although some scholars have suggested that a complete version of the work circulated in the thirteenth-century, no manuscript of the *Karlamagnus* has a complete version of either the *Pseudo-Turpin* or *Aspremont*. However, Peter Foote has long suggested that the *Pseudo-Turpin* circulated in Iceland by at least the early thirteenth-century. In addition, he argues that the *Pseudo-Turpin* sections of the *Saga* were translated in Iceland while the *Aspremont* section was later translated in Norway.¹¹³

There is really nothing very different about the image of Charlemagne in the northern territories. This is significantly different that what occurs in southern Europe, particularly in Italy. In Italian sources the later the period, the more unpredictable and in many cases, negative, is the image of Charlemagne. In addition, many of the traditional dichotomies are dissolved. In the *Karleto*, Charlemagne is actually raised by noble Saracens. Because of significant clan violence, he cannot even trust his own Christian family and is betrayed by Christian half-brothers and has to turn back to Saracens for support.¹¹⁴ In an even later epic, Charlemagne actually marries a Saracen princess.¹¹⁵ By the fifteenth-century in Italy, many of the epics depict Roland, not Charlemagne, as the

¹¹² *Karlamagnus Saga*, vol. 1, pp. 29-30.

¹¹³ Peter G. Foote, *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle in Iceland: A Contribution to the Study of the Karlamagnus Saga*. (London, 1959).

¹¹⁴ Juliann Vitullo, *The Chivalric Epic in Medieval Italy*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000) pp. 35-36.

¹¹⁵ Vitullo, *The Chivalric Epic*, p. 46.

ideal leader.¹¹⁶ However, the Norse sources are a clear indication that Charlemagne's reputation far exceeded the borders of the former Carolingian Empire.

Conclusion

The making of a royal history represented an important state in the development of medieval historiography. Within a fairly short period, many of the traditions and myths that had been popular for the previous two centuries were modified, condensed, and placed in the official 'canon' of royal history. The image of Charlemagne was an important part of this process. The representation of Charlemagne served a number of important propagandistic goals. Many, if not most, of the themes are the same as they were in the twelfth-century, such as crusading and kingship. However, it was the writers and chroniclers of the thirteenth-century that expanded the format and in some ways legitimized the use of Charlemagne's legendary exploits and made them into history.

During the process, the image of Charlemagne turned more 'French' than 'German.' Although German writers and chroniclers still wrote about Charlemagne and incorporated him into their histories, in France, it was almost an obsession. For various reasons, he meant more to the French kings than he did to the German Emperors. In the middle of the ninth-century, Pope Sergius II commented that "Charlemagne united as one body the Empires of Romans and Franks" (*Romanorum Francorumque concorporavit imperium*).¹¹⁷ Four centuries later, the Capetian propagandists successfully separated 'French' from 'German' and virtually eliminated any Germanic and imperial aspect of Charlemagne's character.

¹¹⁶ Vitullo, *The Chivalric Epic*, p. 81.

¹¹⁷ Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae*, p. 103.

The continuous use and reuse of the figure of Charlemagne to instruct kings, legitimize their rule, inspire Christian armies to conquer and to defend lands against the Muslims reflect political and cultural importance the image of Charlemagne gained during the High and Late Middle Ages. The image of Charlemagne was the perfect combination of heroism, chivalry, and faithfulness. His royal disposition and conduct exemplified ideal kingship.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Although the various chapters of this dissertation cover different thematic strands concerning the legend of Charlemagne there are a number of important themes that run through all of them and there are some broader conclusions. The prolific legend that surrounds the figure of Charlemagne in the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries helped create a multi-dimensional image that had an indelible mark on medieval culture. I argue that a critical period of development of the legend coincides with the major crusades to the Holy Land and continuous campaigns in Spain. This is also the period of increased centralization in Capetian France. The period in question here is the first major key to understanding the development of the image of Charlemagne. It is possible to connect the representation of Charlemagne with some of the broader developments of the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. By analyzing the legend of Charlemagne against the backdrop of these broader circumstances, it is possible to pinpoint the various reasons that Charlemagne appears as he does in both literary and historical sources.

The construction of the image of Charlemagne in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries followed a distinct pattern. After the First Crusade, and throughout the twelfth-century when the West was preoccupied with crusading, the image of Charlemagne appeared in numerous sources as a kind of proto-crusader. In addition, this image was coupled with an emphasis on defining kingship. By the thirteenth-century, the image of Charlemagne represented the ideals of Christian kingship.

In chapter two, the center of the analysis on Charlemagne's image concerns crusading. The representation of Charlemagne in both historical and literary sources is clearly a reflection of this phenomenon. It also concerns the development of the concepts of *miles* and *milites Christi*. The critical period of development for these concepts is the eleventh-century. In the early eleventh-century, the Latin word *miles* is occasionally used to denote a mounted warrior. By the time of the First Crusade (1096-1099), this was its usual meaning.¹ In addition, during the same period, *milites* because of its martial function separated the knights from other societal groups. The older concept of the militia Christi was then transformed in the midst of the developing crusader ideology.² The 'new model army' had evolved from older theological concepts, from the flowering of a new chivalric code, and from the simple need to field an army for the crusading campaigns. The image of Charlemagne is a direct outgrowth of both the crusades and the ideology that helped foster them. In literary sources, Charlemagne is almost always depicted on horseback fighting the infidel on a quasi-crusade. In addition, there are clear parallels between the twelfth-century literary tradition and the crusading sources of approximately the same period. Charlemagne's image in this context is at once a celebration of crusading ideals and a kind of propaganda for the ongoing campaigns. The crusading representation of Charlemagne is the first stage in the development of the legend of Charlemagne in the High and Late Middle Ages. The initial sources such as the *Descriptio, Roland*, and the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* are the foundational sources associated with Charlemagne's perceived crusading past. They also serve as a

¹ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1984), p. 27.

² Hans Eberhard-Mayer, *The Crusades*, trans. John Gillingham, (Oxford & New York, Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 19-20.

propagandistic purpose. In some cases this was a deliberate goal from the beginning. In others it was incidental. The difference is the relative dates the works appeared. Early sources (Roland, Turpin, etc.), have clear propagandistic goals. Roland mirrors the First Crusade far too much for it to be unintentional and *The Turpin-Chronicle* emphasizes the Christian-Muslim conflict over every other theme. In the 1200s, authors were probably more concerned with the imitation of consecrated models than with propaganda. By that time, crusading was a well-established practice and did not require special propaganda efforts.

Although 'kingship' and the 'crusades' were treated somewhat separately in this dissertation, the two concepts are closely related in the image and representation of Charlemagne. Essentially, crusading becomes an element of kingship. In case of the French Capetian monarchy, crusading and kingship became inseparable in the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. There was a virtually uninterrupted succession of French crusading kings from the mid-twelfth-century to the late thirteenth-century. Louis VII, Philip II, and Louis IX were all crusaders and involved in major campaigns. Louis VII helped lead the Second Crusade (1144-1147), Philip II helped lead the Third Crusade (1189-1193), and Louis IX led two crusades, one in 1248 and the other in 1270, which ended with his death in North Africa. Only Louis VIII, who ruled for just three years, between 1223 and 1226, before his early death, failed to take an army to the East. Crusading was clearly an important part of royal conduct and action. But, the concept applies to other crowned heads of Europe as well. Pope Gregory IX actually excommunicated Emperor Frederick II for having refused to fulfill his crusading vow.³

³ Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of the Church & State*, (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 140.

‘Imagined crusades’ were part of the propaganda of the twelfth-century – often coming directly from the papacy in sermons and charters. However, they appeared more frequently in vernacular forms such as epic literature. With continuous crusading in the East and campaigns becoming increasingly prevalent in Spain, the image and memory of Charlemagne quickly became progressively more attached to the concept of crusade. Poets and chroniclers of this period seized on the memory of the former king and emperor and expanded his repertoire of conquests and great deeds to include a veneer of crusading to mirror current events.

Crusading during twelfth century was an ever-present phenomenon and an on-going process. The major campaigns were not at all isolated.⁴ There were numerous engagements and on-going pleas to the West for new and continuous campaigns. Between the First and Second Crusades pleas came in 1101, 1106-1108, 1120-1124, and 1127-1129. In addition, there were fifteen further pleas between 1149 and 1186.⁵ The development of the image of Charlemagne was part of the ‘culture of crusading.’

The legend of Charlemagne in literary sources, like that of Arthur, is well developed and geographically diverse. The chansons de geste and other literary sources were popular in France, Germany, Italy, England, and Spain. This is not surprising since all of these areas were directly involved in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century crusades. The crusade theme was one of the most prevalent themes of the period. However, the memory of the crusades extended well into the late medieval and early modern worlds.

⁴ Jonathan Riley-Smith, “The Crusading Movement and Historians,” *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, ed. Jonathan Riley-Smith, (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 1-3.

⁵ Jonathan Philips, *The Crusades 1095-1197*, (Great Britain, Longman Publishing, 2002), p. 27.

Perhaps two of the most telling sources in that respect are two very different works, the *recuperatione Terre Sancte* and the *Divina Commedia*, written at a distance of ten years from each other in the early 1300s. The former is a pamphlet, written by Pierre Dubois, a lawyer and royal advocate from a bourgeois family of northern France.⁶ The latter, an epic poem, is the monumental work of Dante Alighieri, a Florentine political exile who studied philosophy and theology. However, both works reflect the influence and permanence of Charlemagne's mythical crusading exploits.

Dubois's *Recovery of the Holy Land*, concerns plans for a French-led campaign to the East to re-establish the Latin kingdom. Completed in 1306, his work comes in the wake of the expulsion of the crusaders from the Holy Land with the loss of Acre in 1291. Dubois's work is one that is based on practicality and idealism at the same time. It was practical in the sense that those familiar with the crusades of the past, both successful and unsuccessful, coupled with the continuous fighting that went on in the region between major campaigns, knew very well what had and had not worked from a military perspective. It was idealistic in terms of Dubois's estimation of the strength of the French army as well as the probability of Western monarchs voluntarily combining forces for such a campaign. However, it is in the military planning that Charlemagne becomes important. While debating whether to have the army travel by sea or land, Dubois notes that, "it seems expedient to follow the example of that supreme warrior, Charlemagne, and have the larger part of the army proceed by land."⁷ In a later passage, he adds that "a good way to carry out this project would be to organize four armies, three of which

⁶ Walther I. Brandt, from the Introduction to Pierre Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, edited & trans., Walther I. Brandt, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 4-7.

⁷ Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, edited & trans., Brandt, p. 86.

should go by sea. The fourth and largest should go by land, following the example of Charlemagne, of Emperor Frederick I, and of Godfrey of Bouillon.”⁸ This time Dubois has included references to actual crusaders. This was quite common for later sources. Charlemagne’s reputation and mythical deeds fit seamlessly with the exploits of actual crusaders.

In Dante’s grand epic, completed in 1314, Charlemagne is mentioned only on three occasions. However, these brief passages reveal a great deal about the connection between the crusades and the memory of Charlemagne permeated medieval culture.

In Canto VI of the *Paradisio* Dante Emperor Justinian chronicle aspects of the history of Rome, particularly the Republic and the Empire. However, the narrative also goes into the Middle Ages and by the time he reaches Charlemagne’s era, the history of Rome and the history of the Church seem to have become synonymous. Dante describes Charlemagne’s defense of the Church against King Desiderius the Lombard as follows;

E quando il dente longobardo morse
La Santa Chiesa, sotto le sue ali
Carlo Magno, vincendo, la soccorse.

Lombard fangs bit into the Holy Church,
and under those same wings came marching forth
victorious Charlemagne to rescue her.⁹

The monarch’s role as defender of the Church was an emerging theme in various sources in the later Middle Ages, especially so in the wake of the Crusades and the various

⁸ Dubois, *The Recovery of the Holy Land*, edited & trans., Brandt, p. 156.

⁹ *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum, (New York, Bantam Books, 1984), p. 52.

episodes of Church-State conflict. The image of Charlemagne, in both literary and historical sources, exemplified this emerging concept.

Charlemagne is mentioned again in *Paradisio* Canto XVIII. It is here that the pilgrim actually sees the spirit of Charlemagne. What is particularly telling about the scene is the company in which the spirit of Charlemagne resides. He is with a group of spirits who are depicted as 'lights' and who form a cross and the opening message from the Book of Wisdom – *Diligite iustitiam qui iudicatis terram* ('love, justice, you who judge the earth'). Not surprisingly, he is placed in the company of warriors and defenders of the Church. He introduced together with such Old Testament figures as Joshua and Judas Maccabaus (the Maccabees). This was a common element of the crusade rhetoric that permeated a number of sources of the previous two centuries.

According to Dante,

Così per Carlo Magno e per Orlando
Due ne seguì lo mio attendo sguardo,
Com' occhio segue suo falcon volando.

Poscia trasse Guiglielmo e Rinoardo
E'l duca Gottefredi la mia vista
Per quella croce, e Ruberto Guiscardo.¹⁰

Then came the names Roland and Charlemagne,
and eagerly I followed these two lights,
as hunters watch their falcons on the wing.

William of Orange, then, and Renouard
and the Duke Godfrey drew my sight with them
along the cross; then came Robert Guiscard.

¹⁰ *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Mandelbaum, p. 160.

Robert Guiscard was a Norman leader who took southern Italy and Sicily from Saracen control just before the First Crusade. Godfrey of Bouillon was the leader of the First Crusade, an actual descendant of Charlemagne, and the first Christian King of Jerusalem. The depiction of Charlemagne in the company of crusaders is an important indicator for how later generations viewed his life as well as the concept of crusade. From the perspective of late medieval culture ‘crusading’ was something that dated back to at least the time of Charlemagne. Those knights who went on crusade enjoyed the bounty of indulgence and those who fell in the process were considered martyrs. Charlemagne’s favored relationship with God comes through the text as well. He resides among the most respected and elite of all Christian warriors.

Dante’s brief mention of Charlemagne is an accurate gauge of recognized perceptions of his past heroic deeds that existed in the mentality in much of Western Europe in the late Middle Ages. Writing in the early fourteenth-century, Dante in a few short passages was able to capture the basic image of Charlemagne that had been most prevalent for the previous two centuries – a king who defended the church and an immortalized crusader.

The same theme is also incorporated into the works of other later writers. Leonardo Bruni in his *History of the Florentine People*, the bulk of which was completed by 1428, confirmed Charlemagne’s actions in defending the Holy Church. According to Bruni, Charlemagne came to Italy three times, the last of which to restore Pope Leo to Rome. Bruni argued that in Charlemagne’s day, “the papacy depended on the emperor.”¹¹ However, Bruni’s description presents Charlemagne as much more than a defender and

¹¹ Leonardo Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, trans. & ed. James Hankins, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 91.

servant of the Church. According to Bruni, Charlemagne possessed all the necessary virtues of the ideal king. Bruni writes,

Carolo certe ipsi, utcumque tandem electo, divina porro humanque faverunt, et fuit profecto vir dignus imperatorio culmine et qui non solum rerum gestarum magnitudine, verum etiam plurimarum virtutum excellentia, Magnus meruerit appellari. Idem fortissimus atque mitissimus, summa iustitia nec minori sobrietate, ad gloriam rei bellicae, quae in illo mixima fuit, liberalium artium studia et doctrinam litterarum adiumxerat.¹²

Charlemagne himself, whatever the means of his election, certainly enjoyed both divine and human favor. He was truly worthy of the high position of emperor. He deserved to be called “The Great” not only for the greatness of his deeds but for excellence of his many virtues. He was most strong and most merciful, just in the highest degree and equally temperate in his habits. To the great glory he had won in war, he added zeal for the liberal arts and literary learning.

Bruni’s description reflects a multi-talented and well-rounded Charlemagne and a clear indication that the primary thematic strand associated with chapter three – kingship continued to be associated with the image of Charlemagne well beyond the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries.

Kingship, like crusading, is a concept that is prevalent in both literary and historical sources. In addition, the example of Charlemagne as an ideal king was, to a certain extent, predicated upon his military success, which often included a Muslim enemy and therefore could not be severed entirely from his image as a knight and crusader. However, the image of Charlemagne is also important in this area for a number of other reasons. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century Capetian kings used perceived or actual connections to Charlemagne to legitimize their own rule. This is a critical period for the history of the French monarchy. This is best exemplified in the concept of the *reditus regni ad stirpem Karoli Magni*. In the midst of emerging secular states and a tremendous

¹² Bruni, *History*, trans., Hankins, pp. 90-93.

growth in the power of monarchies, the image of kings changed. Increasingly, sources in the early twelfth-century focused on the idea that kings were sacred individuals. It was in the twelfth-century not the early Middle Ages that kings were first credited with having miraculous healing powers. They were often accorded the 'royal touch,' which gave them the ability to cure such diseases as *scrofula* – a notoriously disfiguring disease. The earliest account of this ability comes from Guibert de Nogent's *On Saints and Their Relics*.¹³ In addition, in the twelfth-century there was a marked increase in the canonization of former kings and emperors. There were at least four major figures who were canonized during a twenty-year span of the mid-1100s. The German Emperor Henry II, was canonized in 1146; the English King, Edward the Confessor in 1161; Canute, King of Denmark and Charlemagne in 1165.¹⁴ Charlemagne's is the most controversial as the canonization was performed by the anti-pope Pascal III at the request of Frederick Barbarossa. The French king, Louis VII, was noticeably absent from the ceremony.¹⁵ Louis and Pope Alexander III in Rome probably did not oppose the canonization because of negative views of Charlemagne, but rather because they thought that neither Pascal nor Barbarossa possessed the authority to hold the ceremony. The first to promote the idea of Charlemagne's canonization was Otto III (983-1002), who opened Charlemagne's tomb. A participant in the event, the Italian count Otto of Lomello, reported in the *Chronicum Novalinciense* that Charlemagne was sitting up with a golden crown and that his body was uncorrupted as his finger nails continued to grow.

¹³ Maureen C. Miller, *Power and the Holy in the Age of the Investiture Conflict: A Brief History with Documents*, (Boston & New York, Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2005), p. 162.

¹⁴ Miller, *Power and the Holy in the Age of the Investiture Conflict*, p. 163.

¹⁵ The only monarchs present at the ceremony were Frederick Barbarossa and Henry II of England.

Otto's ultimate intention was to have Charlemagne canonized. However, Otto died shortly after the opening of the tomb and plans for the canonization were not carried until the time of Barbarossa.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it was never formally recognized, nor condemned by the Church. Consequently, the 'cult of Charlemagne' flourished well into the modern era. The language used at the canonization is an ideal illustration of the representation of Charlemagne's kingship. He is described as a 'great and glorious king' who established churches and monasteries while devoting much of his life to converting non-Christian peoples.¹⁷ He is put forth as the ideal and the one ruler that all who follow should strive to emulate. For example, in 1364, Christine de Pizan in her *Le Livre et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, said of King Charles V that not since the time of Charlemagne had a king possessed such 'greatness,' 'wisdom,' and 'virtue.'¹⁸ Charlemagne clearly continued to be the 'standard' benchmark for French royalty.

It is not difficult to see the broad significance of Charlemagne's iconic image concerning kingship in the Middle Ages. Even with the limited time period analyzed here, it is obvious that the image of Charlemagne is an important representation of the ideal king. In this context, in both literary and historical sources he appears as such in a variety of contexts throughout Western Europe in the High and Late Middle Ages.

However, a short analysis of the word 'king' itself, may lead the discussion to a better

¹⁶ Gert Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice, (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2003), pp. 104-107.

¹⁷ Diploma of January 9, 1166 in *Monumenta Germaniae historica, Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germania* 10.2, ed. Heinrich Appelt, (Hannover, Hahn, 1979), no. 502, p. 434.

¹⁸ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre et bonnes meurs du Sage roy Charles V*, ed. Suzanne Solente, (Paris, H. Champion, 1936).

understanding of the impact the image of Charlemagne had on the concept of kingship in the broader context of European history.

The medieval Latin form of Charlemagne's name, *Carolus Magnus*, is actually based on the Old High German form *Karal*. The more familiar Middle High German form, *Karl* found in numerous literary and historical texts, was the source from which several East Europe languages drew to adopt the name to a more general purpose. As a result of the extended contact between Charlemagne and the Slavs of the Eastern marches, Charlemagne's Germanic name was adapted as a general term for 'king' in the Slavic language.¹⁹ Max Vasmer has demonstrated that the word for 'king' in all modern Slavic languages derives from Charlemagne's medieval Germanic name.²⁰ The structure of 'Karl' yields the modern Slavic, and even some non-Slavic, words for king as illustrated in the chart below. From Slavic, the word was borrowed and adapted by other non-Slavic languages such as Lithuanian, Albanian, and Romanian. In all of those languages, a king is always said to be 'Charlemagne.'

¹⁹ Erich Berneker, *Slavisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, (Heidelberg, Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1924), pp. 572-573.

²⁰ The idea was first pronounced by Franz von Miklosich, in his *Etymologisches Wörterbuch Der Slavischen Sprachen*, (reprint Amsterdam, Philo Press, 1970), p. 131.

| Language | Word(s) for King |
|--|------------------|
| Polish | król, krolík |
| Czech | král |
| Slovak | kráľík |
| Serbo-Croatian & Slovenian | kralj |
| Russian, Ukrainian | korol' |
| Macedonian | kral |
| Bulgarian | kral', kralăt |
| Other, non-Slavic languages influenced by the use. | |
| Lithuanian | kar̃alius |
| Albanian | kral' |
| Romanian | crai |
| Turkish | ķeral, kral |

Král first appears after the year 883 and before 900 in the *Vita Methodii*. *Korol'* appears in Ukrainian and Russian as early as 1289.²¹ The linguistic history associated with Charlemagne illustrates the development of the legend and image of the 'king' who surpassed all of his medieval and even modern counterparts in representing the institution of the monarchy.

However, Charlemagne's image goes beyond simply representing the ideal of Christian kingship. There is a much more specific purpose associated with Charlemagne's role as a monarch. Politically, Charlemagne was used as both a precedent for royal policies and a legitimizing factor for later monarchs. With the increased centralization of France in the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries, the Capetian kings found

²¹ Max Vasmer, *Russisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1953), p. 631.

it necessary to demonstrate the legitimacy of their rule by establishing strong familial connections with the Carolingian past. This connection almost always took the form of some sort of descent from Charlemagne. A familial connection to Charlemagne went a long way in representing the legitimacy of the Capetian kings of France. Part of the reason for this depiction may have a lot to do with his perceived positive relationship with the Church.

Charlemagne's devotion to God is emphasized in virtually every literary and historical text analyzed in this dissertation. However, his devotion and service to the Church is the main theme in such works as Suger's *Vita Ludovici Grossi Regis*, in which Charlemagne is praised as 'a friend of the Church.' He is even depicted as paying homage to the Abbey of Saint-Denis. This is a critical component to his characterization since the relationship between 'Church and State' was in constant flux. The emerging centralized monarchy France dramatically altered the power structure in these two regions and threatened to reduce the political influence of the Church. Although, it can be argued that this did not actually occur until the fourteenth-century, the concern among churchmen was certainly present for some time. The conscious effort to depict Charlemagne as a 'friend' and sometimes a 'servant' to the Church is a reflection of this growing concern.

The concept of precedent is one of the most important aspects concerning Charlemagne's representations. It is one that runs throughout the various themes analyzed here. Charlemagne is a proto-crusader, he is the predecessor of the Capetian kings, and his behavior viewed as an example for later rulers. Charlemagne, by the twelfth-century, is also the symbol of the monarchy. This helps explain why he is

depicted in a negative manner in some literary works of the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries. It is often not a personal attack on Charlemagne, but rather a critique of royal behavior and policies.²² Charlemagne is the ‘anti-ideal’ in these sources because he is a king who lacks proper faith and one who mistreats his own vassals.

The negative portrait of Charlemagne is a complex issue, primarily because it is the representation that occurs least. More than thirty of the approximately eighty extant *chansons de geste* belong to the *Geste du roi* cycle. Another twenty-four are from the William of Orange cycle.²³ Still others belong to the Crusade cycle and some of the rebel baron poems do not even have Charlemagne as a character. The negative portrait is clearly in the minority. The first instance of this practice occurs in some mid-twelfth-century French sources. However, the tendency was much more prominent after the thirteenth-century and into the fourteenth and fifteenth-centuries, particularly in Italy and Spain. In Italy, Charlemagne (Orlando Furioso) is represented as a dotard and knight-errant. In Spain, the theme of Roland is changed so that Charlemagne is not a liberator or deliverer, but a vainglory bandit. He does not attack the Muslim oppressors, but Alphonso the Chaste and is eventually driven out by Bernard de Carpio.²⁴ The practice of depicting Charlemagne in a less-than-ideal fashion occurs almost exclusively in literary sources.

In France, the sources containing negative and comical portraits of Charlemagne still tend to promote an image of proper authority and sanctity. In the *Pilgrimage of*

²² Henry W. C. Davis, *Charlemagne: The Hero of Two Nations*, (New York, Books for Libraries Press, 1972), p. 327.

²³ *Guillaume d'Orange Four Twelfth-Century Epics*, trans. Joan M. Ferrante, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 8-10.

²⁴ Davis, *Charlemagne*, pp. 329-331.

Charlemagne, he is actually mistaken for Christ himself and in the rebel-baron cycles such as *Girart de Vienne*, he is always respected as the rightful king and there is no attempt to remove him from power. In the French sources, it appears to be a bi-product of the ongoing conflict between the monarchy and the nobility.

The culmination of the ‘construction of the image’ came in the thirteenth-century with the advent of royal vernacular historiography. By the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century, the poets, chroniclers, and court historians had a wealth of material to work with and expanded the use of the image. The Capetian-Carolingian blood-line connection took center stage as Giles of Paris, William of Breton, and Rigord and other court poets and historians explicitly emphasized that Capetian kings such as Philip II and Louis VIII descended from Charlemagne. This is not entirely a fabrication of the Capetian monarchy since Louis VIII, in particular, could claim lineage to Charlemagne on both his mother’s and father’s side of the family. However, what is important for the purposes of this study is the importance that the Capetian court placed on these familial connections. The emphasis on Charlemagne shaped the way in which his image was used. The image of Charlemagne as an ideal king already existed and the Capetian writers seized upon this image and used it for their own propagandistic purposes whether it be legitimizing their own rule and royal policies or helping to instruct their future kings.

With the compilation of the *Grandes Chroniques*, much of the legendary image and mythological deeds became canonized in the ‘official’ history of the realm. The image of Charlemagne became a compilation of previous epics, historical chronicles, and pseudo-chronicles that painted a picture of royal and knightly perfection. The image solidified

the crusading king of the twelfth century epics. The image and representation also took on more explicit didactic objective and Charlemagne was cited much more often as an example of proper kingship and presented as the ideal to be followed by future kings. By this period, the history of Charlemagne was put in the its 'preferred form,' at least by the standards and expectations of the Capetian monarchy.

Shortly after the completion of the *Grandes Chroniques*, the image portrayed in it was exported to Scandinavia and other regions. In Norway, the *Karlamagnus Saga* appeared shortly after the *Grandes Chroniques* in about 1300 and at the same time in Germany, the *Karl Meinet* also appeared. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, various other versions appeared in Iceland and Denmark. However, unlike the case of Spain and Italy, in these other non-French regions, the positive archetype is still more prevalent. From Germany to England to Norway and Iceland, Charlemagne is presented as an archetype crusader and king – the defender of the Church and the precedent for all future kings.

Clearly, the image of Charlemagne is one that is unique among medieval monarchs. The Charlemagne of history conquered the Lombards and Saxons, converted non-Christian territories, ruled the Carolingian Empire at its greatest extent, and oversaw a renaissance in education and learning that transformed the West. The twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries, Charlemagne combined all the achievements and exploits of the historical Charlemagne with a crusade to the Holy Land, with the successful liberation of Spain from the yoke of Muslim oppression, and with the defense of Italy from Muslim aggression. The later Charlemagne lived for more than two-hundred years. The later

‘medieval’ Charlemagne rose from the dead to join the army of the First Crusade. The reputation of the later Charlemagne would also lead to his eventual canonization in 1165.

There are a number of factors that help define the image of Charlemagne. In particular, the physical description of Charlemagne is an important element. The author of *Roland* described Charlemagne with a ‘white beard’ and a man with ‘fierce countenance.’ In the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, he has a youthful body and dark hair. In Aspremont, he has a ‘long and flowing beard’ and an ‘imposing mark.’ Primat in compiling the *Grandes Chroniques* gave a detailed description of Charlemagne physical characteristics, calling his body ‘graceful’ and ‘noble.’ There are clearly some contradictions among the various sources concerning his physical description. However, in reality, it simply reflects the attributes that the authors are trying to express through Charlemagne’s representation. The long white beard is representative of ‘age’ and ‘wisdom.’ The fierce countenance and imposing mark are representative of Charlemagne's image and status as a knight and warrior. The physical description was clearly an important aspect for the authors to report. Whether it is because of his famous beard or his imposing physical presence, he was distinguished and set apart from all others. Perhaps what is more important is the context in which he is used.

Zumthor was quite right when he argued that literature “simultaneously reflects and interprets a state of society.”²⁵ The literary sources reflected a value system and concerns that centered on a number of important issues. I have tried to elucidate a few of the most prominent as they relate to the image of Charlemagne. All of this ultimately comes back to the purpose and the reason Charlemagne was depicted the way that he was. It is a

²⁵ Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett, (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 5.

question of function. What did he provide and for whom did he provide it? The questions of function in this case are dependant upon the intended audience.

Maria Corti contended that authors in the Middle Ages always had a “definite public” in mind when they produced their texts.²⁶ Having studied more than 25 texts, it became clear that Corti’s assessment of the relationship between author and audience in this context is accurate. Of course, the intended audience often varies source to source.

One of the keys to understanding audience is patronage. Of course, for many anonymous works this is not always possible. However, many others did. Using the sources that can be linked with an author and patron can be used broadly to establish possible audiences for other sources. Examples from the *chansons de geste*, such as *Girart de Vienne* and the *Crowning of Louis* were primarily aimed at a noble rather than royal audience. They were often performed at princely and baronial courts. *Roland* was also primarily intended for a warrior aristocracy of an aristocratic audience. However, with the prominence of the crusade theme, the positive portrait of the king, and the popularity of the works based on the number of manuscripts, sources such as *Roland* and the *Turpin Chronicle* probably appealed to both royal and noble audiences. The Roland story is adapted into other sources such as the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* and the *Grandes Chroniques* and became standard ‘history’ at the royal courts. On the other hand, sources such as the *Grandes Chroniques* and the Latin poem *Karolinus* are clearly intended for a royal audience. In both cases, their production was often intended to be gifts for certain Capetian kings. The prominence of Charlemagne in these sources and others like them is a clear indication of the notoriety of Charlemagne’s reputation. It also suggests the

²⁶ Maria Corti, *An Introduction to Literary Semiotics*, trans. Margherita Bogat and Allen Mandelbaum, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 17.

importance of the image of Charlemagne to the monarchy and the nobility. The image of Charlemagne was attractive to various levels of society. His image was multi-dimensional and multi-functional. He represented a number of important twelfth and thirteenth century ideals. The image of Charlemagne represented a defining symbol for crusaders and kings. In the midst of a major literary movement, and a torrent of crusade and royal propaganda the image of Charlemagne emerged as an ideal that Western culture would continue to view as a transcendent figure for centuries to come.

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