Chapter 5  Division, Invasion, and Reorganization, c. 800–1000

Map 5.1  The Partition of the Carolingian Empire, 843

When Charlemagne’s grandsons divided the empire among themselves, Charles the Bald took West Francia, from which would eventually emerge the medieval realm of France. Louis the German took East Francia, from which arose in the tenth century the Holy Roman Empire. And Lothar, the eldest brother, took the imperial title and an impossible-to-govern swath of territory known as the Middle Kingdom.

Invasions between 300 and 1000 was Europe’s relative freedom from incursion between 750 and 850. This century of relative peace was a great buttress to Carolingian empire building, and the return of peace after 1000 would be a similar blessing for those who lived during the Central Middle Ages.

But this longer perspective would have offered little comfort in the later eighth and ninth centuries when, as Map 5.2 shows, Western Christendom was attacked on all fronts. In the southern parts of Charlemagne’s old empire, people prayed for divine protection against the Muslims: “Eternal Trinity, deliver thy Christian people from the oppression of the pagans.” To the north they prayed, “From the savage nation of the