

**CATHWULF:** *CALMA* 2.581; *HLW* 180; *PASE* “Cathwulf 1.”

**Letter to Charlemagne** [CATH.Epist.]: *BCLL* 1181; *CSLMA* 1.268–69 (CAT 1).  
ed.: Dümmler, *MGH ECA* 2.502–05.

*MSS* — *Refs*: none.

Cathwulf (“Cathuulfus,” a Latinized form of the name, is given in the heading of his letter) was probably not an Irishman, as has sometimes been thought, but an Anglo-Saxon active on the Continent (see Garrison 1997 pp 101–02; 1998). In his letter of ca. 775 to Charlemagne, preserved uniquely in a ninth-century Saint-Denis manuscript (Paris, BNF lat. 2777; see Story 1999 pp 11–21, with a facsimile of the opening of the letter in fig. 1), Cathwulf refers to Charlemagne as “my king” (*rex mi*) and to himself as Charlemagne’s *seruulus*. According to Garrison (1998 p 324), he “should perhaps be located in a milieu in some contact with the writings of the circle of Lul and Boniface.” Story (pp 20–21) suggests that Cathwulf was associated with Saint-Denis and that the letter was written in connection with the dedication of the new basilica there.

There is no evidence that Cathwulf’s letter was known in England, and no reason to assume, with Moore (1996 p 307), that Cathwulf sent the letter from England. The letter, aptly characterized by Garrison (1997 p 101) as a “*Fürstenspiegel* in miniature,” congratulates Charlemagne on prevailing in his rivalry with his brother Carloman and on his recent victory against the Lombards, and instructs him about the prerogatives and responsibilities of kingship, which, following **AMBROSIASTER**, Cathwulf ranks above the episcopacy. Anton (1968 p 106) and Meens (1998 p 354) believe that a passage in **ALCUIN**’s **EPIST. 18** to King Æthelweard of 793 (ed. Dümmler, *MGH ECA* 2.51 lines 29–32; see Anton 1982 p 601) on the benefits of good kingship echoes Cathwulf (lines 38–44) as well as the Hiberno-Latin tract **PSEUDO-CYPRIAN, DE DUODECIM ABUSIVIS SAECULI** (ed. Hellmann 1909 pp 51–53) perhaps via the **COLLECTIO CANONUM HIBERNENSIS XXV.4.1ab** (ed. Wasserscheben 1885 pp 77–78; see under **SYNODS AND COUNCILS**). The *Hibernensis* may have been Cathwulf’s immediate source, since both attribute the passage to **PATRICK, BISHOP OF THE IRISH**; Anton thinks a lost common source was used independently by Cathwulf, Pseudo-Cyprian, and the *Hibernensis*. Another of Cathwulf’s formulations of ideal kingship, an enumeration of the eight columns of kingship (see Story pp 8–10), derives from the probably Hiberno-Latin **PROVERBIA GRECORUM** (ed. Simpson 1987; see Wright 2006), and recurs in Old English in **WULFSTAN II OF YORK**’s **INSTITUTES OF POLITY** (ed. Jost 1959 p 52; see Sauer 1980a p 354; Wright 1993 p 76). Wulfstan’s direct source, however, was **SEDULIUS SCOTTUS, DE RECTORIBUS CHRISTIANIS** (ed. Hellmann 1906 p 49 lines 13–22), which perhaps also informs **ASSER**’s representation of Alfred in his **VITA ALFREDI REGIS** (see Scharer 1996 pp 193–95 and 2000 pp 100–02 for possible echoes of the eight columns motif; Lapidge 2003 p 42 and 2006 p 116 note 101, in reference to another passage, thinks that Asser knew the *Proverbia Grecorum* directly). Scharer (1996 p 200) also points out that Asser’s explanation of the word *enchiridion* (“id est manualis liber”) is paralleled in various sources, including Cathwulf (p 503 lines 12–13: “enchyridion, quod est librum manuaem”), but concludes that “Asser is apparently closest to Cathwulf.”

Cathwulf’s letter is thus a witness to the Anglo-Saxon reception of Hiberno-Latin formulations of ideal kingship (see Wright 2001 pp 354–55), and was apparently known to Alcuin after he left England for the Continent, but it is not the direct source for any surviving text written in England.

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