



# Æthelred: The Unready (English Monarchs)

*Levi Roach*

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**An imaginative reassessment of Æthelred "the Unready," one of medieval England's most maligned kings and a major Anglo-Saxon figure**

The Anglo-Saxon king Æthelred "the Unready" (978–1016) has long been considered to be inscrutable, irrational, and poorly advised. Infamous for his domestic and international failures, Æthelred was unable to fend off successive Viking raids, leading to the notorious St. Brice's Day Massacre in 1002, during which Danes in England were slaughtered on his orders. Though Æthelred's posthumous standing is dominated by his unsuccessful military leadership, his seemingly blind trust in disloyal associates, and his harsh treatment of political opponents, Roach suggests that Æthelred has been wrongly maligned. Drawing on extensive research, Roach argues that Æthelred was driven by pious concerns about sin, society, and the anticipated apocalypse. His strategies, in this light, were to honor God and find redemption. Chronologically charting Æthelred's life, Roach presents a more accessible character than previously available, illuminating his place in England and Europe at the turn of the first millennium.

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