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The Last Years of Charles the Simple (923-929)**

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## **After Soissons: The Last Years of Charles the Simple (923-929)\***

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In August 923, Charles the Simple was imprisoned by Count Heribert II of Vermandois, spending the rest of his life in prison. The six years between his imprisonment and his death, however, have never been the focus of a sustained study: Charles usually disappears into a jail cell and out of history. This article uses the difficult source material for West Frankish history in the early and mid-920s to examine the resilience of Carolingian kingship. To retain their position, this article argues, the regimes seeking to replace Charles had to navigate a confusing political environment in which there were no ready-made paths to consensus about what to do with an imprisoned king.

Middle Ages; 10<sup>th</sup> Century; West Francia; Charles the Simple; imprisonment; deposition; civil war; kingship.

### *1. Introduction*

In Autumn 923, desperate for allies, King Charles the Simple went for a private meeting with Count Heribert II of Vermandois, looking to gain his support. Instead, Heribert seized and imprisoned him<sup>1</sup>. The key moment for the end of Charles' reign was the battle of Soissons, fought on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 923<sup>2</sup>. Charles, who had provoked the battle, sustained a strategic defeat, and was abandoned by most of his army. The West Frankish rebels gave their loyalty to Ralph, ruler of Burgundy, who would stay on the throne until 936. Charles remained a prisoner for the rest of his life. This fact is often taken for granted by historians; yet on reflection it must rank as amongst the most remarkable aspects of a remarkable reign.

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<sup>1</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, p. 459.

Attempts to depose Carolingian monarchs, although by no means universally unsuccessful, were usually difficult and always risky. Charles' great-grandfather, Louis the Pious, had been overthrown and imprisoned by his sons, but had returned to power within a few years<sup>3</sup>. Charles' cousin, Pippin II of Aquitaine, was deprived of power by Charles the Bald several times, but was able to mount frequent comebacks<sup>4</sup>. Charles' son, Louis d'Outremer, was captured by Vikings and thrown into prison; but eventually he too was released and restored to power<sup>5</sup>. Imprisonment did not necessarily neuter kings politically, and for an imprisoned king to stay imprisoned was rare<sup>6</sup>. Removing a king from power permanently required the political will and finesse to not only orchestrate such a profound re-alignment of the political scene, but to ensure that the change stuck<sup>7</sup>. This was no small task, and – evidently – few could successfully pull it off.

The end of Charles' reign, in this light, is noteworthy (although perhaps unfortunately so for him) because he could not mount a comeback. Even here, though, the process of his removal was drawn out over several years and remained at the focal point of West Frankish politics. Despite this potential interest as a case study, historians have not tended to pay Charles' later years any particular attention. In his extremely useful account of the early and mid-920s, for instance, Büttner makes no mention of Charles' political role after his imprisonment<sup>8</sup>. Even the most recent and in-depth study on Charles' reign, by Geoffrey Koziol, goes as far as Charles' imprisonment and no further. This is largely because Koziol's focus is on Charles' diplomas and Charles issued none after 923; nonetheless, it leaves an important historiographical gap<sup>9</sup>.

To some extent, the existence of this gap is due to the difficult nature of the surviving source material. By its very nature, the evidence for this time does not allow for the development of a full account. The *Annals* of the Rheims canon Flodoard provide, for all intents and purposes, the only narrative account and, as will be set out below, they are a difficult source for the period. Other evidence is similarly scanty and obscure. There are a couple of bare references in other narrative sources, and a mere handful of charters, mostly from Lotharingian institutions, give information about the shifting political loyalties of this period. A brief notice of a synod held in the archdiocese of Rheims is important in showing the ambiguity felt about the civil war amongst the elite. The *Liber Memorialis* of Remiremont and the record of

<sup>3</sup> De Jong, *Penitential State*, esp. pp. 46-51.

<sup>4</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 202; Nelson, *Bad Kingship*, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 256-258.

<sup>6</sup> Work on the imprisonment of kings in the Carolingian period is limited, and usually focussed on monastic confinement: see De Jong, *Monastic Prisoners*.

<sup>7</sup> Koziol, *Is Robert I in Hell?*, p. 239, note 16; see also Nelson, *Kingship, Law and Liturgy*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>8</sup> Büttner, *Westpolitik*: Charles is imprisoned at p. 28 and plays no further role in events.

<sup>9</sup> Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 461, 548.

the so-called Pact of Bonn (921) between Charles and the East Frankish king Henry the Fowler, as well as a few of Charles' diplomas, can provide crucial contextual detail, but do not directly address the period after the battle of Soissons. It can therefore well be imagined that this period in Frankish history is distinctly shadowy.

This is not least thanks to Flodoard's particular style of writing. As an author, Flodoard's main narrative strategy was silence, the omission of embarrassing detail<sup>10</sup>. Rather than active polemic, Flodoard took sides in his annals more subtly, by leaving out material which might make the side he supported look bad. This is problematic in this case, because, as Lecouteux has argued, the first few years of the annals were written up in one go late in 922, and the next couple of years were probably also edited after the event. Moreover, they have a distinct anti-Charles bias, criticising him for his depredations but leaving out any mention of his opponents' undoubtedly similar activities<sup>11</sup>. Even when not (as far as modern historians can tell) shaping his narrative actively to make a polemical point, the *Annals* are notoriously opaque about the motivations of the figures they describe or the context of their actions: the case of the conflict between the brothers Gislebert and Reginar, mentioned below, is a case in point.<sup>12</sup> Given this, any attempt to write the history of this period is of necessity an effort to read between the lines, putting together a jigsaw of which most of the pieces are missing. However, while following Robert Parisot and refusing to speculate beyond the bald and confusing letter of the sources may be *strictu sensu* the methodologically wise choice, it is both unsatisfying and unhelpful in trying to get a grasp of these crucial years<sup>13</sup>. The only way for historians to make progress in this area it to read between Flodoard's lines. This does mean that what follows is but one of many possible hypothetical reconstructions, one that although built upon the evidence is aware of how great the gaps in it are. Nevertheless, even with these caveats some things are clear.

Charles remained a political quantity – he did not simply disappear on 16<sup>th</sup> June 923, or even after his imprisonment<sup>14</sup>. In what follows, therefore, the fragmentary and oblique sources for the last years of Charles' life will be critically re-read to suggest possible answers for why Charles could not muster enough support to be restored to his throne, and what this says about the nature of late Carolingian political culture.

<sup>10</sup> See Roberts, *Hegemony, Rebellion and History*.

<sup>11</sup> Lecouteux, *Le contexte de rédaction*, pp. 84-85, 115, for the date of the *Annales*; pp. 111-112 for bias.

<sup>12</sup> MacLean, *Cross-Channel Marriages*, p. 28; for Gilbert and Reginar, see below, note 66.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Parisot, *Lorraine*, p. 669.

<sup>14</sup> Parisot, *Lorraine*, p. 655.

## 2. *The End of Charles' Reign*

Before diving into the tumultuous time after 923, some background is necessary<sup>15</sup>. In 920, Charles' western counts, angered by Charles' preference for his Lotharingian favourite Hagano, withdrew their allegiance from him; at the same time, the major Lotharingian magnate Gislebert began an armed rebellion<sup>16</sup>. Through the mediation of Archbishop Heriveus of Rheims, Charles' western nobles were reconciled to him by the end of 921, but war continued in Lotharingia, as Charles ravaged the lands of Gislebert and another prominent Lotharingian noble family, Ricuin of Verdun and his son Otho. Charles appears to have had some military success against the Lotharingian rebels, but tensions in the west had not died down. The Western war began in earnest just after Easter 922. Provoked by Charles' gift of the abbey of Chelles to Hagano, Hugh the Great, son of the most important Western aristocrat Robert of Neustria, met some disgruntled counts and *fideles* of the church of Rheims at the estate of Fismes. Charles' response was to flee to Lotharingia with Hagano and Count Heribert II of Vermandois. For the rest of summer 922, a war of manoeuvre and counter-manoeuve resulted, as Charles and Robert's armies danced around one another, until, eventually, Charles withdrew to Lotharingia.

Robert, meanwhile, was crowned king in Rheims. The following year, Charles made another expedition into the Western kingdom, discovering Robert's forces encamped near Soissons and launching a surprise attack. In the battle, Robert was killed, but his army gained the victory; and so Charles began down the road which would end with his imprisonment. Such a bald summary, though, fails to capture the complexity of this rebellion. Indeed, because events after Soissons cannot be fully understood without examining the political scene immediately before the battle, it is towards a more in-depth investigation of how West Frankish and Lotharingian loyalties lay in 922 and 923 that our attention should now be directed.

## 3. *Before the Aftermath: Charles' Support and Opposition on the Eve of Soissons, 922-923*

Robert's rebellion presents historians with a problem. Flodoard presents the war relatively simply, as a struggle between Robert and Charles, with Charles perpetually on the back foot and Robert having the support not only of his own men but the most important figures in Burgundy and Lotharingia; this account has been followed by most historians<sup>17</sup>. However, as noted in the

<sup>15</sup> See in general Sassier, *Hugues Capet*, pp. 80-87.

<sup>16</sup> For a narrative of events up to Ralph's coronation, see Flodoard, *Annales*, pp. 2-14; for Hagano's career, Depreux, *Haganon*, pp. 383-387.

<sup>17</sup> See above, note 16; Flodoard's account is basically followed by, e.g., Sassier, *Hugues Capet*, pp. 81-83; Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, p. 428.

introduction, Flodoard presents the reader with a story hostile to Charles. Consequently, it is important to compare the *Annals'* account with the documentary evidence.

The first point to be made in this regard is that Charles' core support, from the north-east of the West Frankish kingdom and Lotharingia, was probably not as negligible as Flodoard implies. The witness list of the treaty made between Charles and the East Frankish king Henry the Fowler at Bonn in November 921 gives some idea of his allies. Included amongst his lay *fideles* were several counts from north of the royal heartlands including Adelelm of Arras; and several powerful Lotharingians, including Isaac of Cambrai and Boso, brother of Ralph of Burgundy<sup>18</sup>. Charles was also accompanied by several bishops; of these Archbishop Roger of Trier was a particularly close and important ally<sup>19</sup>. The Bonn treaty was, of course, signed before the war proper began in Easter 922, and so it is possible that some of these figures changed allegiance afterwards<sup>20</sup>. However, it is likely that most of these men were the hard core of Charles' supporters, and thus that most of them could probably be found with him in 923. In the case of some (Roger of Trier, Dirk of Frisia), there is corroborating evidence to show this<sup>21</sup>. Robert's support, in contrast, is much harder to clearly define. It is possible that Robert's committed base of support was not necessarily as large as Flodoard implies<sup>22</sup>. Being more concrete about Robert's supporters is made more difficult by the fact that, although historians have not tended to view the conflict in this way, there is suggestive evidence that not everyone sympathetic to Robert was necessarily part of his core support.

Several important actors in the rebellion can be shown to have complex loyalties, which do not fit neatly into a simple split between Carolingians and Robertians in 923. The most famous of these figures is Charles' future gaoler, Count Heribert II of Vermandois, who had actually switched sides during the rebellion, first fleeing Laon in 922 with Charles and Haganon but then fighting on Robert's side at Soissons in 923<sup>23</sup>. Heribert, then, was someone with ties to both camps<sup>24</sup>. The new archbishop of Rheims, Seulf, is another of these figures: he was ordained shortly after Robert's coronation, with Robert's approval, but his closest connections appear to have been to Heribert: Flodoard's *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* describes the two working closely together to

<sup>18</sup> *Pactum cum Karolo rege Franciae Occidentalis*, cap. 4, p. 2; for identifications, see Barth, *Herzog*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>19</sup> For the importance of Trier, see Schieffer, *Die lothringische Kanzlei*, esp. pp. 139-142; for the treaty, Depreux, *Haganon*, p. 386.

<sup>20</sup> As Heribert of Vermandois appears to have done; see below, note 23.

<sup>21</sup> *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple*, no. 121, pp. 286-288.

<sup>22</sup> See Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, p. 446.

<sup>23</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, pp. 8, 13; Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 465-466.

<sup>24</sup> Schwager's characterisation of Heribert as a die-hard Robertian – *Graf Heribert*, p. 69 – is thus incorrect, not least because it relies on simply dismissing evidence which disagrees (pp. 71-72).

reclaim Rheims' estates and arrange the succession of Heribert's son to the bishopric on Seulf's death<sup>25</sup>. As the *Historia* was written in the 940s and 950s, at a time when Flodoard, who was generally sympathetic to Seulf, saw no need to hide his dislike of Heribert, there seems to be no reason to doubt this<sup>26</sup>.

More significantly, the question of the involvement of one of the kingdom's most important families, the sons of Richard the Justiciar, ruler of Burgundy (sometimes known as the Bosonids), including Charles' eventual replacement Ralph, appears to be more open than usually appreciated<sup>27</sup>. Richard, who had died in 921, had three sons, Ralph, Boso, and Hugh the Black. Before his death, Richard – who had been opposed to Robert of Neustria at the very beginning of Charles' reign – had sought a rapprochement with Robert. In 918, a charter issued in the name of Bishop Walo of Autun at a *placitum* over which Richard presided issued a charter requesting prayers for Robert and his family<sup>28</sup>. At the same time, Ralph married Robert's daughter Emma, and Robert and Richard co-operated in the capture of the city of Bourges<sup>29</sup>. Historians have thus almost universally believed that the Bosonids were actively on Robert's side as a group during the rebellion<sup>30</sup>. Such a claim is supported by an entry in the *Liber Memorialis* of Remiremont, recording the names of people to be prayed for. In this case, recorded as still living (*nomina vivorum*), the *Liber* lists the names of (amongst others) Robert of Neustria, King Rudolf of Upper Burgundy, the three Bosonid brothers, and the East Frankish king Henry the Fowler<sup>31</sup>. This request for prayers, evidently written during Robert's rebellion, has been interpreted as a sign of a political alliance between all the actors involved<sup>32</sup>.

Examining the brothers' interactions with the rebellion in detail, though, raises important questions about their role. Some military support was provided by Hugh the Black: he «attacked about two hundred of Haganone's men... capturing some, killing three, taking horses and weapons, and sending the others back home burdened with shame»<sup>33</sup>. This skirmish, which Flodoard presents at some length as a triumph for the rebellion, was Hugh's only explic-

<sup>25</sup> Flodoard, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, IV.xviii, pp. 409-410; Sot, *Séulf*, p. 477, although Sot, assuming that there were only two sides to the war, views them as being the heads of the Robertian party.

<sup>26</sup> Flodoard accuses Heribert of having Seulf poisoned at *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, IV.xix, p. 411, demonstrating that he no longer needed to hide his dislike; see Glenn, *Politics and History*, pp. 229-230.

<sup>27</sup> For an introduction to this family, see Bouchard, *The Bosonids*, esp. pp. 414-416.

<sup>28</sup> *Recueil des actes de Robert I<sup>er</sup> et de Raoul*, ed. J. Dufour, Paris 1978, no. 51, pp. 206-207.

<sup>29</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, p. 8, for Ralph as Robert's son-in-law; p. 20 for Bourges; for the context, see Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, p. 446; Sassier, *Hugues Capet*, p. 83; Schwager, *Graf Heribert*, p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> *Liber Memorialis Romaricensis*, fol. 6v, no 1.

<sup>32</sup> See Schmid, *Unerforschte Quellen*, esp. pp. 134-136.

<sup>33</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, p. 9: «[Hugh] ducentos circiter ex his, qui cum Haganone erant, obvios habuit... quibus captis, tribus tantum occisis, equos cum armis abstulit, et ad suos ignominia oneratos remisit ceteros».

it contribution to Robert's cause – and also the only armed support any of the Bosonid brothers can be shown to have given him. As mentioned above, Boso, indeed, appears as one of Charles' *fideles* at the treaty of Bonn<sup>34</sup>. Indeed, there is no evidence directly connecting Boso to Robert<sup>35</sup>. This suggests the possibility that Boso remained at least loosely affiliated to Charles during the war.

Ralph's role is harder to make out. In 922, he and Robert held talks on the Aisne. Flodoard takes care to note that Charles and Hagano were not present. Indeed, this would make sense, for at this exact time Charles was holding a *placitum* a few kilometres to the east, at Tours-sur-Marne, in the company of his allies and men from the Spanish March<sup>36</sup>. Yet Flodoard does not say that this meeting led to an alliance between Robert and Ralph; he merely invites readers to deduce it through silence. This is in contrast to his descriptions of other meetings, such as that between Charles and Henry the Fowler in 921 which led to the Pact of Bonn; here, Flodoard does explicitly note that «a pact was made»<sup>37</sup>. That Flodoard omits such a statement from his description of the meeting between Robert and Ralph raises important questions about whether an active military alliance was in fact agreed on. It is noticeable that although the two men passed below the fortress of Épernay, recently taken by Hagano, they did not attack it. This seems to imply that the two were not acting together militarily. It may instead be preferable to see these meetings as Robert and Charles competing to display proper kingship: as Charles demonstrated his royal credentials by holding a meeting with men from the Spanish March – even though they were not part of his core force – so too did Robert with Burgundians, even though they too were not his key allies<sup>38</sup>. Ralph is certainly not visible for the rest of the rebellion. Most importantly, he was not present at the battle of Soissons – even though the battle was in June, giving him plenty of time to join up with Robert in the new campaigning season. When he was summoned to be made king, he and his men were in Burgundy, not part of Robert's army<sup>39</sup>. This strongly implies that Ralph did not provide any military assistance to Robert.

How, then, should we explain the presence of the Bosonid brothers in the Remiremont *Liber Memorialis* entry? Almost certainly, not as evidence for active political assistance between the two parties, as Karl Schmid proposes<sup>40</sup>. First, Boso was included, and as argued above he was very likely not

<sup>34</sup> See above, note 18.

<sup>35</sup> Flodoard reports Boso slaying the bed-bound Count Ricuin of Verdun, who was one of the Lotharingians rebelling against Charles: *Annales*, pp. 12-13 for the murder. There is some dispute over where Ricuin's murder occurred in May or November; the latter is perhaps more likely, but if the former is in fact the case this may be a further indication of Boso's being at least nominally on Charles' side: see Parisot, *Lorraine*, p. 663, note 2.

<sup>36</sup> See Flodoard, *Annales*, pp. 8-9; for Tours, see *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple*, nos. 115-120, pp. 272-286.

<sup>37</sup> «facta pactione», Flodoard, *Annales*, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> On Tours as a display of Charles' kingship, Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 494-495.

<sup>39</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> See above, note 32.



on Robert's side. Second, other parties in the entry – Henry the Fowler, for example – whilst supportive of Robert, did not lend him any concrete (i.e. military) assistance<sup>41</sup>. The names in this entry more likely represent the acknowledgement an extended family network than direct military alliance<sup>42</sup>. This is not to say that Ralph did not support Robert at all – clearly, he was sympathetic to his father-in-law. Despite this, there is no evidence that the alliance between Robert and Ralph was anything more than symbolic. This is not to say that the symbolism was unimportant – as on the Aisne, the assent of Ralph to Robert's kingship allowed Robert to act in a kingly manner and thus bolster his position – but it does mean that there may be limited grounds for saying that Ralph gave Robert military support, or that he was one of Robert's most important supporters. It is important to be cautious about this, because placing Ralph as a "Robertian" undermines his own agency and understands too starkly a position which was much more ambiguous.

On the eve of Soissons, then, the situation within Charles' kingdom was significantly more complicated than a simple competition of Robertian anti-king vs a weakening Carolingian regime. Charles had a powerful group of supporters, particularly in Lotharingia; while in the West Frankish system there was a third group of major magnates, in general sympathetic to the Robertian cause but not part of its core support. In the confused aftermath of the bloody battle, each of these would have to decide where they stood.

#### 4. «*Relicto Karolo*»: Charles and the West Frankish Kingdom, 923-925

Soissons was a transformative moment. Neither side could claim victory: Robert lay dead, but Charles' army was apparently decimated. However, Robert and Charles were not the only forces in play. Immediately after Soissons, Charles sent messengers to (among others) Archbishop Seulf and Heribert of Vermandois, asking them to re-accept him as king<sup>43</sup>. However, rather than doing so, they decided to send for Ralph in Burgundy and make him king in Charles' place. Charles was at this point still a viable option. That he sent messages appears to indicate that he was at least willing to negotiate, and indeed he had a track record of integrating old enemies under his rule: after he began his sole rule in 898, he had made amends with Robert of Neustria, who had previously led military campaigns against Charles on behalf of his brother King Odo<sup>44</sup>. That Heribert and Seulf crowned Ralph instead looks, in light of the arguments above, remarkably like a seizure of power by the heterogeneous

<sup>41</sup> Parisot, *Lorraine*, p. 652; contra Brühl, *Deutschland-Frankreich*, p. 473, whose conjectures seem unlikely.

<sup>42</sup> For a parallel case in the *Liber Vitae* of Salzburg, see McKitterick, *History and Memory*, p. 183.

<sup>43</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 306.

group of magnates who were die-hard supporters of neither Charles nor the Robertians, now forming into an uneasy and little-unified coalition. It is striking that no contemporary source records Hugh the Great as having had any say in Ralph's kingship<sup>45</sup>. Indeed, the most senior Robertian ally who definitely played a part in Ralph's coronation was Archbishop Walter of Sens, who by virtue of his geographical location also had strong Burgundian ties<sup>46</sup>. Events seem to have been driven by the triumvirate of Heribert, Seulf, and Ralph.

Why was Ralph made king? Even leaving aside Charles and Hugh the Great, there were several other powerful nobles who could have become candidates for the throne, including Duke William the Younger of Aquitaine and – perhaps especially – Heribert himself. As no tenth-century source gives explicit reasons for why Ralph was chosen, any answer to this question is of necessity hypothetical. Nonetheless, there were two significant facts about Ralph which may explain why he was chosen, things which were true only of him<sup>47</sup>. The first is that he was unusually well-placed to be a compromise candidate. As argued above, he was a figure with friendly ties to Robert's camp but not himself in it. Between his in-laws and his brothers, he had links across the north of the kingdom, and was an active participant in royal politics in a way which William of Aquitaine was not<sup>48</sup>. (During Charles' reign, the king never visited Aquitaine, and the Aquitanian ruler only visited Charles twice, in 899 and 905<sup>49</sup>).

Even more importantly perhaps – and unlike Heribert – he had played no role in the battle of Soissons itself. At a synod held in 923-924, a panel of bishops composing figures who had been on both Robert's side (such as Abbo of Soissons) and Charles' (such as Stephen of Cambrai) imposed a penance on everyone who had been involved in the battle, regardless of on which side they had fought<sup>50</sup>. The parallels to the 841 battle of Fontenoy are striking. Both battles were bloody conflicts in Frankish civil wars, both seem to have been traumatic for the Frankish polity – but whereas after Fontenoy, episcopal authority was invoked to clear the consciences of those involved, after Soissons it decreed that everyone who was involved had sinned and had to do penance<sup>51</sup>. It seems likely, then, that the slaughter of the battle horrified the

<sup>45</sup> Ralph Glaber, *Historiarum Liber Quintus*, pp. 14-16, describes Hugh as conceding the kingship to Ralph on the advice of his sister Emma; this appears to be a fabrication to explain why the succession in 923 did not fall to Hugh (as a Robertian) in accordance with early eleventh-century norms of heredity and, crucially, finds no support in contemporary sources.

<sup>46</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, pp. 14-15; *Annales Sanctae Columbae Senonensis*, p. 105.

<sup>47</sup> For prior discussion, see Sassier, *Hugues Capet*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>48</sup> Lauranson-Rosaz, *Auvergne*, pp. 72-75; Eckel, *Charles le Simple*, p. 41.

<sup>49</sup> *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple*, no. 20, p. 43; and no. 50, p. 110; William also appears in no. 102, pp. 241-243, dating to 919, but this is very likely a forgery. I would like to thank Horst Löblein for drawing my attention to this.

<sup>50</sup> *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 9, p. 324; on this decree, see Hamilton, *Practice of Penance*, pp. 193-194.

<sup>51</sup> On Fontenoy, see Nelson, *Violence in the Carolingian World*, pp. 100-101; Nelson, *The Search for Peace*, pp. 98-100, 104.

Frankish aristocracy, and participating in it would have been a blot on any royal candidate's copy-book. This would have had important implications for Charles and Heribert (and Hugh the Great, although he does not seem to have been in the running); but Ralph's hands were clean. Ralph, therefore, was in the centre of a Venn diagram – the only major figure in West Frankish politics with enough connections to be a plausible king who was also not stained by Soissons. These two facts may have been important factors in his being invited to take the throne.

As noted, this “third party” was not a coherent force, and whilst Ralph may have been *a priori* more suitable for the throne than Heribert, it seems that Heribert was unwilling to allow Ralph to take the throne without providing a trump card for himself. This seems to have been his motivation for placing Charles in custody through deception, the act which would destroy his reputation for centuries to come<sup>52</sup>. Being orchestrated by one of the very magnates in the middle to whom he had looked for support as part of internal manoeuvring among a shaky coalition of such figures, Charles' capture illustrates how men such as Heribert were not taking part in a world of “Carolingians vs Robertians” but had taken the initiative themselves, ignored both parties, and re-orientated their political action around a king who had been part of neither's core support.

However – as will be seen in the case of Lotharingia – Charles' status as a king without power and dishonourably imprisoned could yet have created an atmosphere of political confusion had Charles not (perhaps inadvertently) shot himself in the foot. As noted above, Charles' messengers had been sent out across the realm, seeking help. Two groups in the West Frankish kingdom did in fact respond to Charles' appeals: the Northmen of the Seine and the Northmen of the Loire<sup>53</sup>. The West Frankish Northmen were unusually loyal to Charles, and this manifested in their turning out in his support now<sup>54</sup>. There are a couple of reasons which can be adduced for this loyalty. The first is that the position of the Rouen Norse was dependent for its legitimacy on the agreement made between them and Charles in 911; their position within West Frankish politics was totally bound up with Charles' authority<sup>55</sup>. The other, more simply, and pertaining more to the Loire Norse, was that Charles offered them land if they supported him<sup>56</sup>. The result was that fighting erupted in the north-east of the kingdom, and the Vikings had to be defeated in battle, promised land, and bought off with cash as well<sup>57</sup>.

This seems to have fatally damaged Charles' cause. Pursuing this kind

<sup>52</sup> See MacLean, *Cross-Channel Marriages*, p. 34; for reputation, see Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, p. 465.

<sup>53</sup> Flodoard, *Annales, ad annum 923*, p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> Koziol, *Politics of memory*, p. 436; Searle, *Predatory Kingship*, p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> Bauduin, *La première Normandie*, p. 145.

<sup>56</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 15-16 for military defeat; pp. 17-18 for promises of land; p. 19 for cash payment.

of alliance with Vikings was generally seen as an unacceptable course of action within Frankish politics<sup>58</sup>. As Coupland has shown, not all alliances with Vikings were criticised<sup>59</sup>. Robert of Neustria's father, Robert the Strong, for instance, was not judged by Hincmar for hiring Viking mercenaries against the Bretons in 862<sup>60</sup>. Nonetheless, military alliances with the Vikings against fellow Franks do seem to have been generally condemned. Charles' surrogate father figure, Archbishop Fulk of Rheims, had warned him in 898 that if he pursued an alliance with the Viking leader Hundeus, Fulk would abandon his cause and Charles would do fatal damage to his soul<sup>61</sup>. Earlier than that, Pippin II of Aquitaine's repeated efforts to regain his crown in Aquitaine had come to an end when he associated himself with a Viking warband: this seems to have placed him outside the pale of acceptable action and lost him any potential support he could have looked for amongst the Frankish aristocracy<sup>62</sup>. An important difference appears to have been drawn between the (politically acceptable) use of Viking help against outsiders, and its (unacceptable) use in internal, Frankish, conflicts. In fact, Ralph's first surviving royal diploma appears to be capitalising on this sentiment, declaring with an unusual degree of emphasis and in phrasing which is not at all standard that God had granted kingship to him in order that he might guard the Church for which Christ had spilled His blood (implicitly drawing a contrast with Charles, who allied with pagan enemies)<sup>63</sup>. In Charles' case as well, the Viking attacks he provoked seem to have driven supporters into the arms of Ralph's regime. This is reflected in Flodoard's annals, which name (among others) Adelelm of Arras, one of Charles' supporters before Soissons, as now standing with Ralph against the Northman menace<sup>64</sup>. It is very likely Charles' other supporters from the area were similarly driven by his overtures to the Northmen into an alliance with Ralph (whether through disgust at Charles' actions or simply because he was not able to supply them with military support). This appears to have been an important factor in why his existing West Frankish support base evaporated after 923. By provoking Northmen attacks in his name, Charles managed to galvanise an unusual degree of solidarity around Ralph, as nobles turned to a king unstained by the slaughter at Soissons to defeat this imminent threat.

In the West Frankish kingdom then, it is possible to hypothesise some relatively straightforward reasons for Charles' political failure after Soissons. In the first place, after the establishment of Ralph as a compromise candi-

<sup>58</sup> See Bauduin, *Le monde franc*, pp. 337-338, 341, although hedged with more caveats than the argument presented here.

<sup>59</sup> Coupland, *Poachers to Gamekeepers*, with Bjorn at pp. 103-104 being the most obvious example.

<sup>60</sup> *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, ad annum 862, p. 89.

<sup>61</sup> Flodoard, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, IV.iii, pp. 384-385; see Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 433-434; Bauduin, *Le monde franc*, p. 326.

<sup>62</sup> *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, p. 113; Bauduin, *Le monde franc*, pp. 336-338.

<sup>63</sup> *Recueil des actes de Robert I<sup>er</sup> et de Raoul*, no. 3, pp. 17-22.

<sup>64</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, p. 16; for Adelelm see above, note 18.

date, any potential support Charles could have gained from those magnates who were actively attached to neither the Carolingian nor the Robertian side was already limited. It also appears likely that Charles' support, and probably his legitimacy as well, took a major blow from his alliance with the Vikings, which seems to have lost the potential future support of those who had previously supported him, such as Adelelm of Arras. Charles' hand was bad, but he played it badly, and so his West Frankish support had collapsed quickly and seemingly totally by 924.

##### 5. *The Falcon Cannot Hear the Falconer: Charles and Lotharingia, 923-925*

If the West Frankish kingdom experienced as smooth a regime change as can be allowed for in the midst of civil war and large-scale Viking attack, the situation in Lotharingia appears much more confused and violent. To some extent, this may be a source issue: as in the West, Flodoard's annals remain the most important account of events in these years, but his descriptions of Lotharingian affairs are even more laconic and devoid of context than usual. Nonetheless, it does seem that Flodoard is reflecting a real situation. In the first place, the civil conflicts of Charles' last years seem to have hit harder there: whereas in the Western kingdom the magnate rebellion in 920 seems to have been initially resolved largely through negotiations, and only to have erupted into armed conflict in 922, in Lotharingia warfare had been ongoing throughout the whole period<sup>65</sup>. In addition, there seem to have been vicious internal conflicts the context of which we know nothing about. An excellent example of this is when, in 924, Gislebert, having been captured and had his ransom paid by his brother Reginar, immediately began to ravage Reginar's lands<sup>66</sup>. Why this happened cannot be reconstructed, but it, and events like it, give the impression that Lotharingian politics was genuinely more unstable than in the West<sup>67</sup>. Here, the confusion forestalled in the West Frankish kingdom by the imminent threat of Viking attacks played out immediately after Soissons' aftermath.

Some Lotharingians appear to have switched loyalties more often than others. In particular, Gislebert initially gave his allegiance to Henry the Fowler in late 923, attempted to switch to Ralph's side in 924 and was finally accepted in 925 before returning to Henry at the end of that year<sup>68</sup>. Moreover, Otho of Verdun initially sided with Ralph before switching to Henry in late 923 and then back to Ralph in 925 before going back to Henry with Gislebert at the end of 925<sup>69</sup>. Significant here is that Gislebert and Otho were the two most prominent Lotharingian rebels against Charles before the battle of Soissons. That

<sup>65</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>67</sup> Mohr, *Groß-Lothringen*, p. 21.

<sup>68</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, pp. 18, 22, 25, 33.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 18, 25, 33.

their loyalties were already floating appear to have given them more room for manoeuvre and more space for negotiation with potential kings.

The actions of Charles' former loyalists are much harder to give a coherent account of. In the first instance, they did not transfer their loyalties *en bloc*, instead dividing into several factions, virtually all of whom are less well-recorded than would be ideal. The fact of the division itself, however, seems to reflect a degree of genuine confusion as to who the legitimate king was, and how to respond to a dishonoured but not deposed monarch. With one chief exception, Henry, at least at first, does not seem to have had a large constituency amongst Charles' ex-followers. That exception, perhaps surprisingly, was Charles' old archchancellor Archbishop Roger of Trier, whom both narrative and documentary evidence shows plumping for Henry's side early and never leaving it<sup>70</sup>. Ralph of Burgundy, at least initially, had more luck, gaining the allegiance of Bishops Wigeric of Metz and Gozlin of Toul, and being able to impose his own candidate on the see of Verdun after the death of Bishop Dado in the form of one Hugh<sup>71</sup>. This division does not seem to be random<sup>72</sup>. Wigeric of Metz, as Ralph's chief supporter, was also the former abbot of Gorze, where Ralph's family, the Bosonids, had strong ties; he may also have known Ralph's father Richard the Justiciar<sup>73</sup>. Gozlin of Toul, equally, appears to have strong ties, possibly familial but certainly in his capacity as bishop of Toul, to Burgundian abbeys, particularly Montier-en-Der<sup>74</sup>. Ralph's Lotharingian kingship thus suggests that he was able to successfully make use of his pre-existing connections; the same is presumably true of Henry.

This leaves one key question unanswered: Why did some of Charles' most important Lotharingian supporters support other kings rather than working for Charles' reinstatement? Late Carolingian alliances could certainly be fluid, but this fluidity was a response to political conditions; and, as the examples of earlier Carolingian kings mentioned in the introduction illustrate, deposition and imprisonment did not necessarily remove a king as a focus for loyalty and alliance. Roger of Trier and Gozlin of Toul, indeed, had been especially involved in Charles' regime, as his archchancellor and penultimate notary – they were not simply part of his administrative structure, but played an important role in crafting the ideological underpinnings of his kingship<sup>75</sup>. That they abandoned Charles cannot therefore be simply ascribed to the inconstant nature of tenth-century politics, but must have been the result of specific circumstances (even if, thanks to the nature of the source material,

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, *Annales*, p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17 for Wigeric, p. 19 for Verdun; *Bouxières-aux-Dames*, no. 2, pp. 65-67 for Gozlin.

<sup>72</sup> Büttner, *Westpolitik*, pp. 32-33, notices the division but analyses it geographically.

<sup>73</sup> For the Bosonids at Gorze, see Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons*, pp. 40-50; it is possible that the «Wiiricus» recorded with a cluster of Richard's family members in the *Liber Memorialis Romaricensis*, fol. 3v, no 13, p. 4, was this Wigeric.

<sup>74</sup> See Hlawitschka, *Anfänge*, pp. 38-39; for Gozlin's monastic interests in the area, see *Gesta Episcoporum Tullensium*, p. 640.

<sup>75</sup> Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, p. 530.

it is only possible to suggest possibilities as to what these were rather than provide anything more concrete).

The question of why Charles could not maintain his previous Lotharingian support is more acute in the light of the significant possibility of a pro-Charles resistance after 923. In 924, Isaac of Cambrai launched an attack on Château-Thierry. As noted, Flodoard's account is usually laconic, but his description of the fortress as «where Charles was imprisoned» – instead of using its name – seems to imply that Isaac was attempting a rescue<sup>76</sup>. If so, the attempt failed. The failure of this perhaps rather last-ditch military action seems to have marked the end of any notions of setting Charles free, as it became clear that Charles' prison was too well defended to take without a coalition larger than his remaining supporters could muster. This does not, though, explain Charles' old supporters jumping ship beforehand.

It must be said that charter evidence and Flodoard both only show episcopal defections from among Charles' supporters. Flodoard clearly knew of the dispositions of Lotharingian lay magnates (as with Reginar of Hainault or Isaac of Cambrai), and (as in his annal for 939) did not hesitate to name them when he knew them to have changed alliances<sup>77</sup>. Thus, the silence here is important: it may very well indicate that Charles' support amongst Lotharingian lay magnates remained more substantial for longer than is often believed, at least insofar as few of his loyalists were willing to commit themselves openly to another side<sup>78</sup>.

This leaves the episcopal defections themselves to be explained. Here, the most plausible answer is to once again return to the question of Charles' Viking alliance. As noted, Roger and Gozlin in particular had been instrumental in constructing the image of Charles' kingship, and that image rested on, amongst other things, the king's role as a protector of the Church. Such an image, indeed, is present in diplomas issued to the church of Trier in 919 taking its side in a long-running dispute with Gislebert over the abbey of Sint-Servaas in Maastricht, and another to Toul in 922, issued immediately before Charles appointed Gozlin as bishop there<sup>79</sup>. While this may have been a *topos*, that does not mean that a king would not have been in trouble if he seemed to be disregarding expectations about his position. As such, Charles' Viking alliance may have made episcopal support for him untenable in a way which was not true of Lotharingian laymen (who were less effected by the attacks themselves than in the West); certainly, there is no other evident explanation as to why only Charles' bishops defected<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> «ubi Karolus custodiebatur», Flodoard, *Annales*, p. 24.

<sup>77</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, p. 72, listing all the (lay) magnates who abandoned Otto the Great in favour of Louis IV.

<sup>78</sup> Parisot, *Lorraine*, p. 662.

<sup>79</sup> *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple*, nos. 101 and 103, pp. 230-240, pp. 243-246 (to Trier), no. 114, pp. 296-272 (for Toul).

<sup>80</sup> It is noticeable in the West that the areas unaffected by the raids of the Loire and Seine Vikings – that is, those south of the Loire – were, as in Lotharingia, the areas which maintained the most sympathy for Charles.

Despite these patterns, Lotharingian politics during these crucial years is unable to be fully explained. Nonetheless, it is very possible that support for Charles remained a more important factor in Lotharingian politics than in the West. The disorder in the kingdom during these years was probably exacerbated by a degree of genuine confusion over who the rightful king was, caused by residual loyalty to Charles, and manifesting both in an unwillingness on the part of lay magnates to give their loyalty to any side; and in what was probably the only serious attempt to rescue Charles. In the end, though, it appears likely that, as in the West, Charles' Viking alliance alienated his crucial supporters in the episcopacy, and so no-one was able to put together enough of a coalition to secure Charles' release; the failure of Isaac's jailbreak probably made it clear that this was not possible.

## 6. *The Comeback Tour: Charles and Heribert, 926-929*

By 925, then, it was clear that Charles' political capital in both Lotharingia and the West Frankish kingdom had run out. His authority, however, does seem, implicitly, to have retained some moral force. A strain of "legitimist" thought is detectable in the south of the kingdom, Aquitaine and the Spanish March<sup>81</sup>. This comes through almost entirely in charter dating clauses, which continue to refer to Charles as king and which do not recognise Ralph as a legitimate monarch. In Girona, for instance, whose bishop was Charles' appointee, Ralph was never recognised as long as Charles lived<sup>82</sup>. In a slightly different way, a charter of Acfred, duke of Aquitaine, to the abbey of Sauxillanges was dated to the «fifth year in which the treacherous Franks disgraced their king Charles and elected Ralph as their chief» as a protest against Ralph's kingship<sup>83</sup>. However, this does not seem to have translated into any concrete political support.

Charles' practical political role as a prisoner, as it had been as a king, was largely restricted to the north of the kingdom. It is likely Heribert's control of Charles', and thus of Charles' royal authority, which explains how he was able to assume a dominant position in the north of the West Frankish kingdom with so little resistance from Ralph or Hugh the Great, including making his five-year-old son Archbishop of Rheims<sup>84</sup>. Divorced as it was from the levers of power, though, Charles' authority was a tool which had to be very carefully managed; and, in 927, the count of Vermandois overplayed his hand. During

<sup>81</sup> See *Recueil des actes de Robert I<sup>er</sup> et Raoul*, introduction, appendice II, pp. CIX-CXIX, esp. p. CXII.

<sup>82</sup> See e.g. *Catalunya Carolíngia vol. 5*, no. 217, p. 210, which was issued in 930 and is dated by Charles' death.

<sup>83</sup> «anno v<sup>o</sup>, quod infideles Franci regem suum Karolum inhonestaverunt, et Roduphum in principem eligerunt», *Cartulaire de Sauxillanges*, no. 13, p. 51; for this act, see Buc, *Les débuts de Sauxillanges*, pp. 537-545; Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 285-287.

<sup>84</sup> MacLean, *Cross-Channel Marriages*, pp. 34-35; Parisot, *Lorraine*, pp. 656-657.



a quarrel with King Ralph over the county of Laon, Heribert freed Charles from captivity<sup>85</sup>. This restoration only lasted for a brief while, and by the end of 928, Charles was back in prison. However, his brief second period as king neatly illustrates some salient points.

The first is that Charles' restoration was not done to win over material support, for (with one important exception) most of the military and political muscle available to Heribert remained that of Heribert and his allies, particularly Hugh the Great – indeed, with Ralph, Hugh and Heribert and their respective support networks already committed, there were few potential waverers to be won over. Instead, Charles' role appears to have been solely a legitimising one. This is suggested by Flodoard's description of Heribert's letters to Pope John X, saying that, at last, the count was obeying the pope's commands to fight on Charles' behalf<sup>86</sup>. Heribert seems to have been trying to “re-activate” Charles' kingship, and the moral claims which went with it, and thereby give himself unlimited access to compliant and legitimate royal authority. If his dispute with Ralph were cutting him off from influence in the royal court, Charles was potentially just as much of a king, and one whose claims to being a king seem to have had some recognition as theoretically legitimate (if perhaps undesirable in practice). We may thus see in this rebellion the same kind of confusion as was displayed in Lotharingia several years earlier, only now emerging in the West due to the end of the Viking attacks.

The second point is that the rebellion enjoyed only limited success. To some extent, this may have been contingent: Heribert's messengers to Pope John found him in prison and unable to help, and the one force Charles was able to bring to the table – as in 923, the Norsemen of the Seine under Rollo – seem to have had rather different ideas about what Heribert's rebellion entailed than their nominal Frankish allies<sup>87</sup>. Indeed, Rollo seems to have taken Charles' restoration more seriously than virtually anyone else, using the fact that Heribert's son Odo was his hostage to try and extort oaths of loyalty from the Frankish magnates. This fracture between different rebel factions probably limited its effectiveness, causing Heribert and Ralph to come to a negotiated settlement; as well, it illustrates the lack of an agreed meaning for Charles' position<sup>88</sup>. Everyone, in 927, seems to have agreed that Charles' kingship meant something but quite what that was seems to have been up in the air.

The third and final point, relatedly, refers to the cap on the rebellion, when Ralph came to visit Charles, who was back in captivity, giving him gifts and restoring to him the royal palace of Attigny. This gesture was probably intended to neuter Charles' threat to Ralph's legitimacy. Charles was never formally

<sup>85</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, pp. 36-39.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40, describes the pope's instructions in the pluperfect, meaning they were sent before 927; the most natural place for the pope to have sent letters on Charles' behalf would have been in Soissons' immediate aftermath.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

deprived of his crown (something Flodoard again cloaks in silence through the expedient of not referring to him as a *rex* in his *Annals*)<sup>89</sup>. Even after 923, he remained a king, and thus had a legitimate claim to authority. By giving Charles the honour due his position and possession of a royal estate, Ralph seems to have been intending a kind of honourable de-activation of Charles' kingship, recognising that Charles was still entitled to his royal honour – and consequently neutralising claims that he had usurped Charles – whilst at the same time continuing to ensure that Charles had no actual agency<sup>90</sup>. For the setting up of an anti-king, Heribert's rebellion appears to have been something of a damp squib. An appeal to Charles' dishonoured status, while potent, was not potent enough to dislodge Ralph from the throne. Nonetheless, it was enough for Ralph to attempt to settle Charles' ideological meaning, and to do so well enough to hold until Charles' death in 929.

## 7. Conclusion

The contested kingship of Charles the Simple did not cease to be a matter for dispute after the battle of Soissons. Five years later, the reverberations were still resounding through the very heart of Frankish politics. Although the sources are cloaked in silence and obscurity, the protraction of the struggle allows Charles' post-Soissons career to be an interesting illustration of the problems surrounding rebellion against the king in late Carolingian politics. Charles was not a political non-entity during this period, but he was a failure. Unlike other members of his family, he was never able to secure his return to the throne. The dynamics at play in his final years, although to a great extent unknown, can even in their shadowy outlines illustrate some important things about the nature of Carolingian kingship.

It is significant that Charles' attempts at restoring himself were not merely passive but active failures. A variety of potential explanations for how Charles fumbled his throw have been explored above, but the most significant was likely his alliance with the Northmen. This appears to have lost him the support of most bishops in both his kingdoms, as well as the lay nobles whose lands lay in their path – which, unfortunately for Charles, included the majority of his West Frankish supporters. Charles' missteps made the creation of a new consensus around Ralph of Burgundy in the West Frankish kingdom, at least, substantially easier, smoothing the new king's first few years: Ralph would not have been able to uphold his new throne as easily as he did without Charles' failures severely weakening the appeal of an otherwise-viable royal candidate.

<sup>89</sup> Koziol, *Is Robert I in Hell?*, pp. 239, 257; for Charles' royal title, Sot, *Hérédité royale*, p. 723.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. MacLean, *Cross-Channel Marriages*, p. 34, who reads the act as benefitting not Ralph but his opponents.

This is made clearer by the fact that Charles managed to maintain fragments of his viability until his death. Charles was still a king, but a king imprisoned and deprived of his kingship. He thus appears to have preserved a degree of sympathy for his plight amongst the Frankish nobility. In both kingdoms, it appears that there was enough support for Charles to try something in the name of supporting him, whether Heribert's rebellion or Isaac's jailbreak. Despite this, there was no overall consensus on what the proper response to his position should be. Both Heribert's and Isaac's challenges were tentative and unsuccessful; but the eventual settlements in both the West Frankish kingdom and Lotharingia have something of the nature of improvisation about them.

Charles' – perhaps inadvertent – sabotage of his own position played into Ralph's hands because of the fragmentation of the high-political world in which he moved. Carolingian politics had a multiplicity of factions. Seeing tenth-century politics through the lens of a great struggle between two clearly-defined “Carolingian” and “Robertian” sides is necessarily distorting. A crucial role was played by magnates outside the two more famous families, up to the new West Frankish king himself. Men like Ralph of Burgundy and Heribert of Vermandois may have at various times allied with one side or the other, but they were not simply representatives of greater lords. They had their own goals and agency which, as in this case, could be paramount in determining the direction of West Frankish politics.

The number of interest groups in play was precisely why legitimate and established kings were hard to get rid of, and the years after Soissons illustrate this perhaps better than any other period in Carolingian history. Getting rid of an old king was not simply a matter of launching a coup and imprisoning the previous monarch. Carolingian politics was not well-equipped to cope with the ambiguities of a situation wherein the bearer of royal power was removed from its exercise. Consensus that the old king should stay there had to be built amongst several factions, and this consensus appears to have been difficult to create. The final years of Charles the Simple thus present an important case study illustrating the resilience of kingship in the Carolingian world.

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