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Title: Flodoard of Rheims and the Historiography of the Tenth-Century West

Edward Roberts

Abstract: Flodoard of Rheims is one of the most important authors of tenth-century Europe, and the only contemporary historian to document the momentous struggles between kings and nobles in Francia in the wake of the demise of the Carolingian Empire. Flodoard's era stands at the center of major historiographical debates concerning the nature of political and social change and the origins of European institutions. Yet, despite his singularity, his substantial histories have received little attention from scholars examining the profound transformations of the period. Exploring this discrepancy, this article offers an overview of Flodoard's career and reviews how his histories have been invoked in some of the great scholarly debates about tenth-century Europe. It further proposes to recontextualize Flodoard and to reread his histories from the bottom up in order to gain a subtler understanding of how one contemporary perceived and represented the dramatic events and changes taking place around him.

Keywords: Flodoard, Rheims, West Francia, Carolingian Empire, historiography, feudal revolution, church reform

The tenth century and its historians

In 888, the monopoly on royal power held by the Carolingian dynasty since 751 was broken, and the empire forged by Charlemagne and his family disintegrated. The causes, nature and implications of this political crisis have received considerable scholarly attention in recent years (e.g. MacLean, 2003 and 2014; Le Jan, 2005; Airlie, 2012; Koziol, 2012; West, 2016). But there was also a cultural dimension to the empire's demise – perhaps a crisis of confidence following the failure of the Carolingian project (Leyser, 1994a), or a consequence of the dislocation of a long-established dynastic center (MacLean, 2016) – for the dawn of the tenth century was accompanied by a noticeable decline in the production of many types of written sources. The post-Carolingian era has thus sometimes been considered a *quellenarme Zeit*, a “source-poor time” (e.g. Schmid, 1984), especially on account of the scarcity of chronicles and histories in many parts of Western Europe.

The deficiency is most conspicuous in Francia, where in the ninth century fulsome narratives illuminated the reigns of Charlemagne, Louis the Pious and the later Carolingians. Around 900, however, the lights really do seem to dim (for overviews, see Hofmann, 1991; Sot, 2004a). For Lotharingia and the East Frankish kingdom, Regino of Prüm's *Chronicle* (c.908) was followed by a half-century cessation of major historiographical activity. This silence was broken only by the emergence of historians writing in celebration of the *de facto* imperial rule of Otto I around the late 950s, such as Widukind of Corvey, Liudprand of Cremona and Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim. Scholars of the Iberian and Italian peninsulas and the British Isles likewise must contend with lengthy narrative absences. The long-running Roman *Liber pontificalis* (*Book of the Popes*) spluttered to a halt: surviving manuscripts attest to a fragmentary life of Pope Stephen V (885–91), which was supplemented in the tenth century with only the barest of notes. In the West Frankish kingdom, the termination of the *Annals of Saint-Vaast* in 900 heralded a two-decade historiographical silence. This drought

ended with Flodoard (893/4–966), a young canon from the cathedral of Rheims who began writing annals shortly after 919. Flodoard, however, was just about the West Frankish kingdom's lone chronicler until the 990s. Finally, around the millennium, history-writing seems to reemerge with the altogether livelier narratives of authors such as Richer of Rheims, Dudo of Saint-Quentin, Thietmar of Merseburg and Raoul Glaber (Koziol, 1992, p. 145; Leyser, 1994b).

Modern scholars tend to privilege the survival of written monuments, the historiographical record especially, when assessing a period's worth. The tenth century's narrative dearth is thus a key reason that, from the Renaissance until quite recently, the period was habitually viewed as the nadir of Western European history – an “age of iron and lead,” and the quintessential *saeculum obscurum*, “dark age.” The obscurity also meant that it could be portrayed as the liminal point between a Europe of post-Roman kingdoms and empires and a properly “medieval” Europe of intensified local lordship, papal monarchy, urbanization, crusades and the rest (Reuter, 2000; Howe, 2010a). In many respects, the period's reputation as a “source-poor time” has been rehabilitated. From the perspective of history-writing, scholars today stress the proliferation of diverse forms of historiography which were less common in the Carolingian Empire, such as *gesta*, histories of individual bishoprics and monasteries (Sot, 2004a; Morelle, 2010; Riches, 2011). It is now recognized that many tenth-century historians also wrote hagiography, and that the period witnessed an outpouring of innovative and sophisticated saints' lives (e.g. Barone, 1991; Smith, 1996; Leonardi, 2000; Patzold, 2013). Yet even among the era's better-known authors and works, there remains a great deal to say. There is clear scope for reevaluating many texts in the light of recent work that has challenged the time-worn grand narratives of political collapse, intellectual stagnation and clerical decadence (e.g. Koziol, 2012; Hamilton, 2013; West, 2013; Kleinjung & Albrecht, 2014; Wickham, 2015; MacLean, 2017; Greer, Hicklin & Esders, 2019). Many scholars today prefer to see the tenth century as an era of formalization in which social and political processes unleashed by the Carolingians were consolidated and the institutional church began to “take off.”

The century following the demise of the Carolingian Empire thus lies at the heart of debates about periodization, continuity versus change and the “making of Europe.” Against such bright lights, the works of one of the age's rare narrative historians, Flodoard of Rheims, can appear rather dull. Flodoard seems to provide little information on the purported big stories of the day, such as the “Feudal Revolution” and “Church Reform” (Noble, 2011, p. 511). This has arguably led to an unwarranted marginalization. Although Flodoard does not furnish the kinds of data or viewpoints many historians crave, he was exceptional in his decision to write history at this time. He was also prolific. Flodoard wrote his aforementioned *Annals*, which span the years 919 to 966, across virtually his entire adult life. His verse history of Christianity, *The Triumphs of Christ*, is nearly 20,000 lines long, making it perhaps the longest work of Latin poetry to have survived from the Middle Ages. He also composed a monumental *History of the Church of Rheims* in four books, which in Martina Stratmann's 1998 edition stretches to 457 pages of text. While these extensive writings have not been completely ignored, they have also not been studied nearly as much as one might expect given their author's uniqueness. Nevertheless, Flodoard has occasionally been invoked in the big debates about the tenth century's place in European history. In what follows, I shall first sketch Flodoard's career and contextualize his works, and then survey how the historian has (and has not) informed our picture of post-Carolingian Europe. Finally, I propose that we might reconsider Flodoard by rereading him from the bottom up: what was he interested in? What drove him to write? How did he understand the often-dramatic events occurring around him? Reevaluation of authors such as Flodoard on their own terms and with fresh attention to

their political, social and cultural contexts may yield a fuller picture of the history of the tenth century and, consequently, the transition from the earlier to the later Middle Ages.

Flodoard of Rheims: canon and historian

Almost everything we know about Flodoard comes from his own writings. He was born near Rheims in 893 or 894, a time of great conflict in the West Frankish kingdom. In 888, Odo, the powerful Robertian count of Paris and Tours, was elected king, but a rebel faction led by Archbishop Fulk of Rheims (883–900) soon challenged his rule by elevating the young Charles the Simple as anti-king in 893 (Guillot, 1991; MacLean, 2003; Noizet, 2004; Lößlein, 2019). Odo was not toppled, but a deal was struck whereby Charles would succeed Odo, which came to pass in 898. Persistent political instability and court factionalism led to Fulk's murder in 900; Flodoard probably entered the cathedral school of Rheims in 902 or 903 with the memory of this shocking act still raw. Of his formative years, he relates only that his *nutritor* ("foster father") was a cleric named Gundacer (*Historia*, II.19, in Stratmann, 1998, p. 176). Flodoard seems to have excelled under Fulk's successor, Heriveus (900–22), later recalling his piety and generosity and casting him as an ideal bishop in the *History of the Church of Rheims*.

Under Heriveus, Flodoard began working in the cathedral scriptorium, and around the end of his episcopate, he began writing annals. He may have been spurred to do so by the extraordinary political events occurring around him (Lecouteux, 2010a). In 922, the late Odo's brother Robert rebelled against Charles and was crowned king in Rheims. At the Battle of Soissons on 15 June 923, Charles' army was defeated, but Robert was killed (Kozioł, 2012, p. 459). Having abandoned Charles, the West Frankish nobles chose as their king the duke of Burgundy, Raoul, who ruled until 936. Charles, meanwhile, was betrayed and imprisoned by the magnate Count Heribert II of Vermandois, remaining in captivity until his death in 929 (McNair, 2017a). Flodoard continued to record events for more than forty years, right up to the time of his death in 966. This chronicle, known today as the *Annals*, has had a preponderant influence on modern understandings of West Frankish history, for Flodoard's succinct, unemotional account inspires trust and has thus been gladly received as a much-needed guide to the period's complex politics (Lauer, 1905; English translation in Fanning and Bachrach, 2004).

Recurrent conflict among kings and nobles within and without West Francia was a significant backdrop to Flodoard's life at Rheims. A wealthy, storied church and the seat of St Remigius, the "apostle of the Franks" (*apostolus Francorum*), Rheims was a major political and cultural hub that frequently played a part in wider power struggles in the kingdom. In an effort to strengthen his hold over the region, Count Heribert successfully imposed his four-year-old son, Hugh, as archbishop in 925. Flodoard and numerous other canons objected, and Heribert stripped them of their benefices (*Annales*, s.a. 925, in Lauer, 1905, pp. 32-3; *Historia*, IV.20, in Stratmann, 1998, p. 412). Flodoard thus found himself out of favor. Consequently, he turned to the composition of a verse epic known today as *The Triumphs of Christ* (*De triumphis Christi*; Migne, 1853; see the fundamental study of Jacobsen, 1978a), completing it between 937 and 939. This work traces the feats and glories of Christ's followers, from their early victories in the Holy Land and the Levant to the flowering of Christianity in Rome and Italy. Because it has little to say about contemporary history, the *Triumphs* has tended to be overlooked and dismissed as an unoriginal versification of earlier Christian historiography and hagiography. As a witness to tenth-century historical understanding, scholarship and culture, however, it has been unfairly neglected.

In 931, King Raoul and Duke Hugh the Great, Robert I's son, captured Rheims, ejected the young Archbishop Hugh and oversaw the election of a new archbishop, Artold. Flodoard benefited from this regime change. In 936, he travelled to Rome, where he met Pope Leo VII (936–9), though for what purpose is unclear (*De triumphis Christi apud Italiam*, XII.7, in Migne, 1853, col. 832). Political upheaval landed Flodoard in trouble once again, however. In 940, Count Heribert regained Rheims, deposed Artold, and had Hugh restored as archbishop. Flodoard tried to leave the city, he claimed, to go on pilgrimage to Tours, but Heribert had him detained, deprived him of his offices and benefices again, and kept him under house arrest for five months (*Annales*, s.a. 940, in Lauer, 1905, p. 78; *Historia*, IV.28, in Stratmann, 1998, p. 420). Shortly thereafter, Flodoard composed a short text known as the *Visions of Flothilde*, which describes the otherworldly experiences of a local girl (edited in Lauer, 1905, pp. 168-76; see Koziol, 2016). Flodoard displayed a keen interest in visions and miracles across all his writings (Roberts, 2019, pp. 188-217).

Flodoard's whereabouts in the early 940s are obscure. Count Heribert died in 943, and it is possible that Flodoard left Rheims at this point to join Artold at the court of King Louis IV, the son of Charles the Simple who had succeeded Raoul in 936. In 946, with the help of his brother-in-law, Otto I of East Francia, Louis captured Rheims and restored Artold as archbishop. To settle the Rheims schism once and for all, a great synod was convened in June 948 at Otto's palace of Ingelheim. Before Otto, Louis, a papal legate and some thirty East Frankish bishops, Artold's claim to the see was recognized and Hugh of Vermandois was excommunicated. Flodoard, who was in attendance, described the council vividly in his *Annals*. When he returned home, he began writing the *History of the Church of Rheims* (*Historia Remensis ecclesiae*), completing it around 952 (*Historia*, in Stratmann, 1998; French translation in Lejeune, 1854; see above all Sot, 1993). This work, considered one of the tenth century's crowning historiographical achievements, recounts the city's history from its legendary origins to 948. Much of the text's renown lies in Flodoard's summary and quotation of hundreds of documents from the otherwise lost episcopal archive, including over 450 letters of the great Archbishop Hincmar (845–82) (Zimmermann, 1977; Stratmann, 1994; Roberts, 2014). The *History* is perhaps the single-most important source for early medieval Rheims, and it has been considered a landmark in the development of institutional historiography and the construction of local identity (Sot, 1993; McKitterick, 2000, p. 147; Sot, 2004b; Beddoe, 2006; Riches, 2011). In composing it, Flodoard also drew extensively on his earlier writings, reproducing large chunks of his *Annals*, employing the same principle of apostolic succession that had guided *The Triumphs of Christ*, and recycling a now lost collection of miracles of the Virgin Mary he wrote in verse probably in the 930s.

After the turbulence of his earlier career, Flodoard's later years look to have been rather more settled. He mentioned that he was at Otto's court in Aachen over Easter 951, where he helped argue Rheims' case in a property dispute with the duke of Lotharingia (*Historia*, I.20, in Stratmann, 1998, pp. 111-12). In 963, he resigned his canonical office on account of illness and old age (*Annales*, s.a. 963, in Lauer, 1905, pp. 154-5). We do not know what this office was, but probably he had been provost of the college of canons. An addition to his annal for 966 states that Flodoard died on 28 March and that he had been a priest. He is often presumed to have headed up the cathedral school and scriptorium, but this is uncertain. Though Flodoard did not obtain (nor perhaps even sought) high office, it is clear from the autobiographical nuggets in his works and the sprinkling of references to him in the writings of contemporaries such as Rather of Verona and Folcuin of Lobbes that he was highly regarded and had powerful friends at the West Frankish and Ottonian courts.

Flodoard and tenth-century change

Flodoard lived through a time of prolonged political convulsion in the West Frankish kingdom. Where did he stand with respect to these controversies? Historians have, reasonably enough, sought to identify Flodoard's biases in order to compensate for them. It was long presumed that Flodoard was a Carolingian loyalist, since Rheims was one of the chief spiritual seats of the West Frankish kingdom and the later Carolingians patronized the cult of St Remigius (Lauer, 1905, p. xi; Brühl, 1995, p. 299; on Rheims and the Carolingians generally, see McKitterick, 1983; Depreux, 1991; Isaiia, 2010, pp. 617-54). Recent work, however, has clearly shown that Flodoard, like his archbishops, supported Robert I during the crisis of Charles the Simple's reign (Jacobsen, 1978a, pp. 15-16; Glenn, 2004, pp. 206-7; Lecouteux, 2010a and 2010b). While a good case can be made for such partisanship in his early annals, Flodoard's loyalties become decidedly more ambiguous after Hugh's election in 925 and his dispossession by Count Heribert. Flodoard's principal narrative strategy in the *Annals* was discretion, very probably a result of his involvement in the political struggle for control of the see. So little does Flodoard reveal about his own views, however, that historians have not agreed whether the canon wished to have Hugh or Artold as his bishop (compare Sot, 1993, pp. 307-18; Glenn, 2004, pp. 228-34; Koziol, 2012, pp. 418-22; Roberts, 2019, pp. 32-48). Flodoard is similarly ambivalent towards the Carolingians, Robertians and the House of Vermandois. The volatile, complex nature of West Frankish politics in this period makes it difficult to identify Flodoard with a particular archbishop, ruler, family or faction (Glenn, 2004, pp. 221-34). Having been punished for apparent disloyalty in 925 and 940, Flodoard probably hedged his bets and adopted a position of pragmatism as the conflicts over his church and the kingdom took their course; it made sense for him to write equivocally (Jacobsen, 1978a, pp. 34-45; Roberts, 2019, pp. 36-48, 92-4). His real commitment may simply have been to the church of Rheims and the ideal of an unbroken succession of bishops (McKitterick, 2000, pp. 146-7).

Even though Flodoard was well situated to observe and describe the consequences of the end of the Carolingian Empire, his works have been surprisingly underused in attempts to understand the period's formative political, religious and cultural trends. Arguments about the fragmentation of political authority in tenth-century France, ostensibly collapsing into a "Feudal Revolution" and a privatization of power and justice around the millennium, have typically been conducted around legal texts, especially charters (for summaries, see MacLean, 2007; West, 2013, pp. 1-11). While the interpretation of charter evidence has remained a key plank of the debate, some historians have looked to Flodoard for evidence of violence, lordship and political order, or at least contemporary attitudes to such things. Thomas Bisson highlighted a number of Flodoard's reports on the deeds of West Frankish kings in order to argue that violence was already an institutionalized component of a "public," "Carolingian" order in the early tenth century (Bisson, 1994, pp. 10, 13, 25; Bisson, 2009, pp. 31-2, 44; cf. West, 2013, pp. 55-6). Meanwhile, Dominique Barthélemy has compared the laconic notes of Flodoard with the more elaborate narrations of Richer of Rheims, whose *Histories*, written in the 990s, took Flodoard's *Annals* as a key source. Against those who have argued that texts produced around the millennium bear witness to an unprecedented frenzy of lordly violence, Barthélemy suggests that it is only the nature of the sources that changed. Richer's dramatic embellishment of events Flodoard apparently deemed unremarkable would thus seem to support Barthélemy's argument for a documentary rather than "feudal" revolution (Barthélemy, 2002; Barthélemy, 2004, pp. 9-44).

Another strand of scholarly inquiry in which Flodoard has featured concerns the origins of European polities and nations. The *Annals*, for instance, are a key source for the early histories of the Norman and Flemish principalities (Normandy: Hagger, 2017, pp. 41-77; Flanders: Dunbabin, 1989; McNair, 2017b). Flodoard has also been invoked in

scholarship examining the “birth of nations” and the origins of France and Germany. This has tended to be a focus of German historians, for whom notions of Feudal Revolution have held little interest in the light of the emergence of a comparatively successful Ottonian-Salian monarchy. Nevertheless, the distinctive style of medieval German rulership and its apparent lack of centralization – the so-called *Sonderweg*, Germany’s “special path” from post-Carolingian kingdom to modern state – have prompted efforts to locate the moment of divergence, when Francia became “France” and “Germany” (see Reuter, 2006a and 2006b; and for a critical overview, Scales, 2015). For example, Joachim Ehlers and Bernd Schneidmüller have placed the origins of French identity in the late tenth century (Ehlers, 1980 and 1985; Schneidmüller, 1979 and 1987; see also Brühl & Schneidmüller, 1997). Schneidmüller has compared the geographical attention and terminology of Flodoard and Richer, arguing that the latter’s narrower focus on West Frankish affairs attests to a newfound sense of political and “national” independence (Schneidmüller, 1979, pp. 49-60; Schneidmüller, 1987, pp. 27-48). Against this, Carlrichard Brühl, also comparing Flodoard’s language with that of Richer and the Ottonian historians, has argued that the peoples of the western and eastern kingdoms preserved a common Frankish identity well into the eleventh century (Brühl, 1995, pp. 122-6, 144-7, 254-5, 298-301; see also Zeller, 2006; Reuter, 2006c; MacLean, 2016). Meanwhile, others have sought to determine Flodoard’s attitude to the rise of the Ottonians, with many focusing again on his geographical and titular terminology in order to gauge how the new empire was perceived from West Francia (Bezzola, 1956, pp. 20-54; Jacobsen, 1978a, pp. 75-9; Jacobsen, 1978b; Karpf, 1985, pp. 94-8; Roberts, 2016).

Another prominent trend of tenth-century historiography, on which one might expect Flodoard to provide a useful perspective, is the multitude of religious practices and movements traditionally clumped together under the term “reform.” The arc of church reform has long provided a grand narrative of medieval European history (classically, Fliche, 1924-37; for a recent critical reflection see Leyser, 2016). For Renaissance thinkers, the tenth century was a cesspit of pagan invasion, secularization and religious degeneracy between the moral triumphs of the Carolingian and “Gregorian” reforms. But, as scholars have long recognized, this period was a great age of monasticism which saw the rise of reform networks such as those headed by the abbeys of Cluny in Burgundy and Gorze in Lotharingia, characterized by the ideal of a correct and strict observance of the Rule of St Benedict (for a traditional overview, see Wollasch, 2000; and now Nightingale, 2001; Rosé, 2008; Koziol, 2012, pp. 263-313; Vanderputten, 2013). Some historians have lately emphasized the tenth-century roots of the Gregorian Reform (e.g. Howe, 2016), while others see fundamental continuity between the ecclesiastical programs of the Carolingian and Gregorian centuries (e.g. Hamilton, 2013). At the same time, the value of “reform” as an analytical concept is now a subject of considerable debate (Barrow, 2008; Miller, 2009; Melve, 2015; Leyser, 2016). Can one speak of “reform” without falling into teleology? What was distinctive about tenth-century religious movements?

For his part, Flodoard said very little about “reform,” however conceived. Though he occasionally registered the restoration of the Benedictine Rule in monasteries, he never stated what he actually made of this. True enough, as a secular cleric, we might not expect him to have been attuned to monastic practices and ideals. But there was nevertheless a lot of monastic reorganization going on at Rheims during his day. As Flodoard probably recognized, “restoring the Rule” was frequently deployed as a political tool by Archbishops Hugh and Artold in their bids for control of the city (Huysmans, 2017). Yet we might also note that Flodoard was closely acquainted with the reformers Odo of Cluny and Archbishop Teotolo of Tours, writing approvingly of their activities (Roberts, 2019, pp. 181-6; more generally, Rosé, 2008). And, as mentioned, in the early 940s, Flodoard recorded the visions of a local girl named Flothilde; the resulting account suggests that there was considerable

discussion at that time – the aftermath of Artold’s deposition in 940 – about clerical standards, especially concerning celibacy and literacy (Koziol, 2016). Flodoard’s lack of comment about Hugh’s election as a boy of just four in 925 is remarkable at first glance, but in fact typical of his reticent yet occasionally barbed prose. By simply stating Hugh’s age and pointing out that he and the other canons had objected to his installation, Flodoard made his own view clear enough. The historian’s caginess about “reform,” then, should not be mistaken for a lack of interest.

Flodoard and medieval historiography

Despite being a rare narrative voice from the period, Flodoard has thus tended to remain on the sidelines of debates about the nature of post-Carolingian change. When he has made appearances, moreover, he has sometimes been invoked rather uncritically. Two recurrent features of this usage stand out. First, Flodoard and his writings, especially the *Annals*, have routinely been described as “honest and straightforward” (Dunbabin, 2000, p. 17), “neutral” (Barthélemy, 2006, p. 150), “sober” (Bisson, 2009, p. 50), or “objective” (Schneidmüller, 1987, p. 32; Dunbabin, 2000, pp. 18-19). The classic source-guide of Wilhelm Wattenbach and Robert Holtzmann pronounces Flodoard’s *Annals* as “characterized by great accuracy, spotless sincerity and reliability” (Wattenbach & Holtzmann, 1967-71, 1:292). It has also been suggested that the unadorned prose of annals represents a rudimentary form of historical writing lacking the literary sophistication of fully fledged “history” (*historia*) and is therefore implicitly more objective. On this view, Flodoard learned his craft writing simple annals before becoming a real “historian” when he composed *The Triumphs of Christ* and the *History of the Church of Rheims* (Sot, 1993, p. 86; Sot, 2004a, p. 400). This, however, is an illusion: annals and chronicles are no less literary constructs than “histories,” by which is usually meant more overtly didactic works such as those of Eusebius, Gregory of Tours and Bede. Annals are rather just one of a range of options suited to different historiographical purposes (McKitterick, 2004; Foot, 2012; Burgess & Kulikowski, 2013). Flodoard’s *Annals* are therefore not objective or impartial, and his reasons for writing deserve to be considered much more carefully (Lecouteux, 2010b; Koziol, 2012, pp. 418-22; Roberts, 2019, pp. 75-103; on authorial intention broadly, see Lake, 2014).

A second problematic aspect of historians’ use of Flodoard concerns the way he is habitually compared with Richer. In a traditional, positivist fashion, this comparison has tended to favor Flodoard, distinguishing between his measured, factual reports and Richer’s elaborate anecdotes and rhetorical inventions (e.g. Lot, 1891, pp. xvii-xviii; Brühl, 1995, pp. 145-8, 299-300; Dunbabin, 2000, p. 19). Next to Flodoard, Richer’s work has been considered fanciful and historically worthless: as one scholar commented, he is frequently cast as “Flodoard’s ugly stepchild” (Glenn, 2004, p. 7). But despite their divergent reputations, Richer has received far more attention recently than Flodoard, thanks largely to the survival of his autograph manuscript. The opportunity to examine this working copy and to compare Richer’s text with his source material has led to nuanced and sympathetic treatments of his methods (Hoffmann, 1998; Glenn, 2004; Lake, 2013). However, such comparisons of outlook and language as those mentioned above are less helpful for understanding Flodoard, because the two historians wrote for completely different purposes and in distinctive political and intellectual milieus. This approach tells us nothing about the mentality of Flodoard, whose works have arguably lacked sufficient contextualization when they have been deployed in this way.

General surveys of medieval historiography have tended to bypass Flodoard. Considering he has bequeathed us three quite different works which offer an uncommon

opportunity to explore one author's historical consciousness, approach to genre and use of diverse sources, the neglect is perhaps unjust. It may be because Flodoard does not ruminate on history or historiography. He relates in the preface to the *History* that he was urged to compose that work by his acquaintance Archbishop Robert of Trier, but beyond this he is silent about his reasons for writing (*Historia*, preface, in Stratmann, 1998, p. 57). As a chronicler, he says nothing about the age of the world (or its imminent end) and displays no particular interest in the reckoning of time. He evidently did not write in the expectation of reaching a royal audience for the purpose of *admonitio*. Nor did he write histories that could be read as "ethnic," "national" or "dynastic." Only Flodoard's *History* has been more widely acclaimed as an episcopal history par excellence (Bautier, 1970, pp. 815-16; Sot, 1981, 1993, 2003 and 2004b; Kaiser, 1994; Riches, 2011). The *Annals* and *Triumphs* have not yet received the critical attention required to determine where Flodoard stands in relation to other early medieval historians.

Rereading Flodoard

If Flodoard's works have to some extent escaped the purview of modern historians, what did he fill his many pages with? What was he interested in, and what mattered to him? In closing, I wish briefly to raise three important aspects of his writing in order to suggest that a deeper appreciation for Flodoard's historiography can be gained by focusing less on grand narratives and more on what he himself thought was worth writing about. By adopting a more critical and contextual approach to Flodoard's own worldview, we might obtain a better understanding of the wider political and cultural history of the tenth century, and of the West Frankish kingdom in particular.

First, Flodoard had a deep interest in history, both of the past and of the present, and the different ways it could be represented. Rheims was a major center of historical culture, and its libraries provided access to the full array of Roman, Christian and Frankish historiographical traditions. His *Annals* thus preserved the fundamental focus of earlier Frankish annals on the deeds of kings (Nelson, 2000). The *History of the Church of Rheims* employed a model of serialized biography derived from the *Liber pontificalis* via Carolingian monastic and episcopal local histories. Flodoard drew on Roman historians including Livy and Caesar to elucidate Rheims' ancient origins. And in *The Triumphs of Christ*, he versified great classics of Christian historiography such as those of Eusebius and Cassiodorus, repurposing them in a work that amounted to a continuation of the late antique tradition of biblical poetry. Flodoard was thus remarkably attentive to and experimental with the different ways the present could be understood in relation to the past.

Second, Flodoard devoted a great deal of space in his *Annals* and *History* to defining Rheims' landed property and deploring its encroachment. This was prompted not by a general impulse to assert the inviolability of church lands, but rather by the specific challenges Rheims faced during Flodoard's lifetime. As he tells us, he was involved in the administration and recovery of ecclesiastical property, and in the *History* he used charters and letters to construct detailed justifications for Rheims' rights over specific estates and churches (Roberts, 2014 and 2016). Flodoard's focus on church property reminds us that his works, especially the *History*, were written not simply to consolidate institutional memory, but in response to debilitating conflicts that sometimes threatened to overwhelm.

Third, Flodoard wrote at length about the supernatural. His annals are filled with reports of portentous weather, healing miracles, visions and other wonders. He reproduced most of this material in his *History*, gathering them alongside other accounts of miracles and visions he found in written sources or heard about from peers. This is particularly striking

because many of Flodoard's contemporaries were unsure whether miracles still occurred or were even a precondition for sanctity (Barone, 1991; Airlie, 1992; Patzold, 2013). The historian's response was emphatic. Flodoard thought that miracles did have a place in the world, and that they demonstrated the power of the saints and the authority of the bishops who guarded their legacies. Contrasting sacred power with the bleak conflicts of kings and nobles, Flodoard's enthusiastic attention to miracles supported a specific claim to the role of the archbishops of Rheims in the governance of the West Frankish kingdom. Collectively, Flodoard's histories provide a treasure trove of information on the transformation of Carolingian Europe. While historians have not always agreed how to interpret his witness, a more critical approach to his career and works enables us to see why Flodoard presented his time in the ways he did, and so stimulate further discussion about the place of this period in the history of the Latin West.

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