

“The Oaths of Strasbourg,” from Nithard, *On the Dissensions of the Sons of Louis the Pious*¹

This text describes an agreement made in 843 CE between Charles the Bald (ruler of the western part of the Carolingian empire), and Louis the German (ruler of the eastern part of the Carolingian empire). The text is embedded in a larger chronicle.

[Main text in Latin:] So, Louis and Charles met on the 16th day before the calends of March (14 February) in the town that used to be called Argentaria but which is now commonly known as Strasbourg, and they swore the oaths given below, Louis in Romance and Charles in German. But before swearing the oaths, they made speeches in German and Romance. Louis, being the elder, began as follows:

“Let it be known how many times Lothair has — since our father died — attempted to destroy me and this brother of mine, committing massacres in his pursuit of us. But since neither brotherhood nor Christianity nor any natural inclination, save justice, has been able to bring peace between us, we have been forced to take the matter to the judgement of almighty God, so that we may accept whatever His will is.

“The result was, as you all know, that by the Grace of God we came out as victors, and that he, defeated, went back to his people where he was stronger. But then, motivated by brotherly love and compassion for Christendom, we decided not to pursue and destroy them; instead, until now, we have asked him at least to submit to justice as in the past.

“But he, despite this, not content with God's judgement, does not cease to come after me and this brother of mine with his armies. Moreover, he is devastating our people by burning, pillaging and murdering. That is why we now, driven by necessity, are having this meeting, and, since we believe that you doubt our firm faith and brotherhood, we shall swear this oath between us before all of you.

“This act is not in bad faith, but simply so that, if God gives us peace thanks to your help, we may be certain that a common benefit will come of it. Should I — God forbid — break the oath which I am about to swear to my brother, I release you from my sovereignty over you and from the oath that you have all sworn to me.”

Once Charles had finished off the speech with the same words in Romance, Louis, since he was the elder, then swore allegiance first:

“Pro Deo amur et pro christian poblo et nostro comun saluament, d'ist di in auant, in quant Deus sauir et podir me dunat, si saluarai eo cist meon fradre Karlo, et in adiudha et in cadhuna cosa si cum om per dreit son fradra saluar dist, in o quid il mi altresi fazet. Et ab Ludher nul plaid nunquam prindrai qui meon uol cist meon fradre Karle in damno sit.”

“For the love of God and for Christendom and our common salvation, from this day onwards, as God will give me the wisdom and power, I shall protect this brother of mine Charles, with aid or anything else, as one ought to protect one's brother, so that he may do the same for me, and I shall never knowingly make any covenant with Lothair that would harm this brother of mine Charles.”

¹ Cod. Lat. 9768 in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, III.5 (fol. 12-13)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oaths_of_Strasbourg

When Louis had finished, Charles swore with the very same words in the German vernacular:

“In godes minna ind in thes christiānes folches ind unsēr bēdhero gehaltnissī, fon thesemo dage frammordes, sō fram sō mir got gewizci indi mahd furgibit, sō haldih thesan mīnan bruodher, sōso man mit rehtu sīnan bruodher scal, in thiu thaz er mig sō sama duo, indi mit Ludheren in nohheiniu thing ne gegango, the mīnan willon imo ce scadhen werdhēn.”

“For the love of God and Christendom and the salvation of us both, from this day on, as God will give me the wisdom and power, I shall protect this brother of mine, as one ought to protect one's brother, so that he may do the same for me, and I shall never go along with Lothair in anything that, by my will, would harm him [Louis].”

The oath that each of the two peoples (*i.e.* the assembled armies) then swore in their respective languages is, in Romance, as follows:

“Si Lodhuuigs sacrament quæ son fradre Karlo iurat, conseruat, et Carlus meos sendra, de suo part, non lostanit, si io returnar non l'int pois, ne io, ne neuls cui eo returnar int pois, in nulla aiudha contra Lodhuuuig nun li iu er.”

“If Louis keeps the oath that he has sworn to his brother Charles, and Charles, my lord, on the other hand breaks it, and if I cannot dissuade him from it — neither I nor anyone that I can dissuade from it — then I shall not help him in any way against Louis.”

And in the German vernacular:

“Oba Karl then eid, then er sīnemo bruodher Ludhuwīge gesuor, geleistit, indi Ludhuwīg mīn hērro then er imo gesuor forbrihchit, ob ih

inan es irwenden ne mag: noh ih noh thero nohhein, then ih es irwenden mag, widhar Karlo imo ce follusti ne wirdhit.”

“If Charles keeps the oath that he has sworn to his brother Louis, and Louis, my lord, on the other hand breaks the oath he has sworn to him, and if I cannot dissuade him from it — neither I nor anyone that I can dissuade from it — then I shall not follow him against Charles.”