

H-France Review Vol. 15 (October 2015), No. 135

Steven Biddlecombe, ed., *The Historia Ierosolimitana of Baldric of Bourgueil*. Woodbridge, U.K., and Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2014. cvii + 153 pp. Map, notes, bibliography, and index. \$99.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-84383-901-9.

Review by Bruce L. Venarde, University of Pittsburgh.

Steven Biddlecombe has done historians of the crusades and of Latin literature a great service by providing the first critical edition of Baldric of Bourgueil's *Historia Ierosolimitana*. The only previous edition, in a volume of *Recueil des historiens des croisades* published in 1879, considered seven manuscripts and produced an amalgam text that included most of the material found in them. Biddlecombe has used twenty of the twenty-four medieval manuscripts he describes in detail (pp. lxx-ci). Of the others, the first, a Chartres manuscript that was apparently the main base for the *Recueil* text, was destroyed during World War II, another contains only a fragment of the text, a third, apparently a scribal practice piece, has been set aside because of its many errors, and the fourth is a Spanish translation of the fifteenth century.

The manuscripts fall into several clusters. The base text here is from Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Latin 5134, ff. 2r-31r (which he calls **A**; it is digitally reproduced at gallica.bnf.fr), an early to mid-twelfth century manuscript chosen as the one with the fewest unique variations among those Biddlecombe consulted. Textual evidence shows a two-stage composition: Baldric composed the text in about 1105 as abbot of Bourgueil and revised it very slightly after he was elected archbishop of Dol in 1107. This Paris manuscript belongs to the tradition reflecting the earlier version, what Biddlecombe calls the Bourgueil recension. The Dol recension adds in particular a few more names of participants in the crusade, and one of its representatives, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Latin 5513 (here **G**), adds more names and considerable new material, reproduced in the apparatus. The variations, Biddlecombe argues, reflect local knowledge where the manuscripts were created. **G**, for example, appears to reflect the interests of the important seigneurial family of Amboise in Touraine.

The present edition, then, faithfully reproduces the best manuscript of the Dol recension. Unlike the *Recueil* text, this one does not classicize spelling, refrains from inserting diphthongs where they are absent in the manuscript, and uses “u” for vowels and consonants except when “V” begins a sentence or a proper name. All the manuscripts divide the text into a prologue and four books, but since there is no consistent subdivision within the books, Biddlecombe has chosen to make paragraph breaks only at the beginning and ending of direct speech, which highlights one of the outstanding features of Baldric's account. He has also adhered to the manuscript puncti that indicate the end of sentences by using periods and has begun sentences with a capital letter. This sometimes means shorter sentences than in the *Recueil* edition, with the intent to “reinstatement the rhythmic qualities of the prose” (p. civ). In only about a dozen cases has Biddlecombe diverged from readings in **A** and in only one instance (p. 118) does the insertion add more than a word or two.

The reproduction of **A** is painstaking, right down to reproducing the spelling *Ugo* (p. 79), even though everywhere else it is *Hugo* (the Hugh is the count of Vermandois). There are a few errors: *igcognita* for *incognita* (p. 27), *utrinque* for *utrimque* (pp. 50, 82), *adbucti* for *abducti* (p. 75), *tuetandam* for *tutandam* (p.

78; the manuscript is a bit tricky to read here, but *tutandam* is an ordinary form), and *com dignis* for *condignis* (p. 83). It is appropriate to capitalize *mars* (p. 65), since it refers to the Roman god. Commas are editorial matters, but there are better choices than *Illic, Lombardis et Longobardis, et Alamannis a Francis separatis* (p. 13), since the point is that the Franks parted ways with the other three groups. Then there are a few mistakes, e.g., the punctuation and capitalization of ‘*O si venerit*’ *Loquebantur autem mutuo* (p. 32). These small blemishes do not distract from the overall excellence of the presentation or the narrative at hand.

And what a narrative it is! In his preface, Baldric expresses a desire to improve on a certain *libellum...nimis rusticanum*, an *inculta et incompta lectio* (p. 4). As Biddlecombe carefully puts it, there is general agreement that “this codex must have been a version of the *Gesta Francorum*” (p. xxv). The caution is wise, since Jay Rubenstein has shown that the *Gesta* as we have it was a compilation of one or more earlier texts, echoes of which can be found elsewhere.[1] The text on which Baldric expands—our version of the *Gesta* is a little under 20,000 words, the *Historia* nearly 35,000—was used carefully and thoughtfully. As Biddlecombe outlines (pp. xxx-xl), Baldric was a writer of great sophistication. He repeatedly cited or echoed classical, biblical, and patristic authors and engaged in much wordplay, including alliteration, punning, and rhyming clauses. This is no surprise, since Baldric was also a poet of note.

Perhaps most strikingly, Baldric associates the crusaders with classical heroes through his use of direct speech in the mouths of Christians and Muslims alike. For example, in the *Gesta Francorum* version, the Muslim leader Curbarannus has a conversation, involving a number of exchanges, with his mother, a very old woman equipped with arcane knowledge who is wary of her son’s plan to fight the Christians. Baldric rearranges and amplifies this material into terrific speeches. The tearful mother, said to be 100 years old, begins:

“Why, my dearest son, did you undertake this military business without consulting me? Is it because I am so decrepit that you thought I was a fool? Believe you me: understanding thrives in my weakened innards, and loose skin and old-age wrinkles still caress a lively spirit. So, you have kept your plans secret from one more faithful to you than any other, who both loves you more fiercely and consults with you more discreetly. For what compares to maternal affection? Why, then, o man of leaden heart, did you presume to flee your mother without consulting and greeting her? What a flinty temperament, what a steely liver that the memory of a mother did not soften, that reverence for an affectionate mother did not cause to beat strongly [*everberavit*] for conversation! For if the body has withered away, understanding lives and thrives, unimpaired.” [*irreverberatus*][Latin text on p. 64]. This is brilliant, since it offers us a mother reminding her son that old age does not equal senility, that maternal affection is unequalled, and that Muslims, like classical writers, identify the liver as the site of emotions. And, like the discourse of even the most alert elderly people, it is a bit repetitive, even amidst wordplay like *everberavit/irreverberatus*.

Curbarannus is no oratorical slouch himself. Here is part of his reply to an embassy of Christians who suggest, during the long siege of Antioch, that he convert and hand over territory that by rights should be Christian, as St. Peter made it:

“We consider things in quite a different way, for we entirely disdain [*respuimus*] and abominate your Christianity as idolatry and abomination. Your crucified one, whom you offer as an excuse, who was unable to escape from the disgrace of the cross—he will rescue you from our hands? We marvel, agape, that you presume to call this land, that we have long held, yours, land that our forbears held before your credulous Peter. He turned them away from the worship of their deity with his trickery, and he seduced them by deception into your most nonsensical sect. Furthermore, the land is ours by ancient right and our strength will restore it to us soon, after we have obliterated you” [Latin text on p. 78].

Curbarannus drips contempt. Baldric's learned readers would know that *respuere* means, etymologically, to spit back out.

The most numerous and grandest speeches are put in the mouth of Bohemond of Taranto, the hero of the *Historia*, who even calls his fellow generals *patres conscripti*! Elsewhere, Baldric compares the attack on Nicaea to the siege of Troy (it's even better) and its leaders to Ulysses, Ajax, and Achilles, and refers to the battles of the ancient Israelites. The crusader armies are even like a beautiful church, the beloved one that, following medieval interpretation, Solomon compares to the tents of Cedar.

In a section of the introduction called "The Main Ideas in the Text," (pp. xl-lxx), Biddlecombe focuses on two themes: the *familia Christi*, in which Baldric, unlike some other crusade historians, was at pains to include Eastern and Western Christians, and Bohemond as a great but flawed hero along the lines of those found in Homer, Vergil, and the *Song of Roland*. Biddlecombe makes these cases persuasively. There are plenty of other possibilities for historical, cultural, and literary analysis, including masculinity (one of the subthemes in the portrait of Bohemond), battle preparations and tactics, and not least of all, Baldric's sources, stated and unstated. Baldric's vocabulary was immense, and he used many words that were classical but rare. (I must admit I resorted to the dictionary often.) If Baldric was largely self-taught, an old idea that Biddlecombe repeats in a literary-biographical sketch (xi-xxiv) that is easily the best in English, the result was truly dazzling. Much will be gained also by juxtaposing Baldric's prose history with his hagiographical work, much of it newly available in Latin and French translation thanks to Armelle Le Huërou. And of course it is now possible to make more precise comparisons between Baldric's and other accounts of the crusade.

Again in the introduction, I wished for a little more proofreading. It is the Britons' *perversitatem*, not *pervisitatem*, that Orderic Vitalis says was the reason for Archbishop Baldric's frequent sojourns in Normandy (p. xxiii); *sicut* is once *icut* (xxxviii); the meaning of the phrase *nemo acciperet nisi quod ei sufficeret ad edendum* is that crusaders were not to appropriate more food than they could eat, not that "no one should take anything unless it was a sufficient amount to eat" (p. lxi and note 266). Few scholars would now accept that the heretics Bohemond's army attacks were Bogomils (p. lxii). The bibliographic system is frustrating. An important article by P. R. Grillo is cited on p. ix and then not until almost sixty pages later with only author and short title, but the article is not in the bibliography. "Trans. Krey, Ch. IV, pp. 14-15" (li, note 221) gets the reader nowhere in the absence of any other citation. The bibliography itself contains mistakes and at least one mystery. Even with the help of an expert reference librarian, I was unable to figure out which book, with author given as Pierre le Venerable (which comes after both Peter the Venerable and Peter Tudebode!), editor as J. Laporte, and translator as C. Misrahi, is meant. The editor of Gilo of Paris is C. W. Grocock, not Growcock; and Patrick Geary's book becomes *Phantoms of Remembrance*. The index, although serviceable, contains mistakes and omissions: Aleppo is named on p. 65, not p. 64 and the Longobards appear a second time in the text on p. 84, not just once.

Thanks to Biddlecombe and others, we now have reliable modern texts of the four accounts written within a decade or so of the capture of Jerusalem in 1099: the *Gesta Francorum* and the narratives by Baldric, Robert the Monk, and Guibert of Nogent. The *Gesta Francorum*, Robert, and Guibert have been translated into English, and the *Gesta* will shortly get a new text and translation by Marcus Bull to replace a fifty-year-old volume. We now lack only a full translation of Baldric's *Historia Ierosolimitana*. Biddlecombe calls for one. I hope he does it himself. He knows the text better than anyone, and the brief translations he offers are deft and vivid, giving a fine sense of what he calls Baldric's "appealing style."

To end as Baldric does: *et sic soluto promisso quiescimus*.

NOTE

[1] Jay Rubenstein, "What is the *Gesta Francorum*, and Who was Peter Tudebode?," *Revue Mabillon* n.s. 16 (2005): 179-204.

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ISSN 1553-9172