



Bien mostre Diex apertement

(RS 640)

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| Author: | Anonymous |
| Version: | English |
| Principal Investigator: | Linda Paterson |
| Text Editor: | Luca Barbieri |
| English Translation: | Linda Paterson |
| Reviewer: | Luca Barbieri |
| Text Encoding: | Steve Ranford/Mike Paterson |

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Anonymous

I

Bien mostre Diex apertement
que n'ovron mie a son plaisir,
quant si vilment nos lait honir
4 en Albigois, ou a tel gent
qui de nului ne se defent
qui en champ les puisse tenir.
Or i sunt mort nostre parent,
8 et nos font la terre gerpir.

II

Trop vit clergie desloiaument:
par tot lo mont voi Deu traïr;
sa grant besogne fist perir
12 outremer, n'a pas longement,
que nostre haut conquierement
fist tot en perte revertir.
Encor m'en met ou jugement
16 au boen roi qui nen doit mentir.

III

D'umilité n'i a noient,
lor orguel ne puet nus sofrir;
tot vuelent lo monde saisir
20 par lor escomeniement.
Tant ont avoir et tienement,
qe par rober, que par tolir,
que chascuns vuet ce qu'il enprent,
24 soit torz, soit droiç, faire fornir.

IV

E, Diex! tant metent malement
ce c'unt des morz ensevelir
en lor garces paistre et vestir,
28 en boivre et maingier trop sovent;
il deüssent tant seulement
lor lase vie sostenir,
et le sorplus par boen talant
32 au besogneus Deu departir.

I

God clearly shows that we are not acting according to his wishes, when He allows us to be so shamefully humiliated in the Albigeois, where there are such people who encounter no adversary who can withstand them on the battlefield. Now our kinsmen have died there, and they make us leave the land.

II

The clergy lives most dissolutely; all over the world I see God betrayed; not long ago they made His great business perish overseas, for they turned our high conquest into failure. Nevertheless I submit to the judgment of the good king who cannot lie.

III

There is no more humility in them; no-one can endure their arrogance. They want to take over the whole world through their use of excommunication. They own so much wealth and property, either by robbery or by extortion, that each wants carried out whatever he decides on, whether it be right or wrong.

IV

Ah God, how wickedly they spend what they receive from burying the dead on dining and clothing their strumpets, in constantly eating and drinking! They ought to restrict themselves to sustaining their wretched lives, and gladly distributing the surplus to God's poor.

V

Rome, don nostre loi descent,
nos par fait del tot esbaïr,
c'a son hués veaut tot retenir
³⁶ ce que por pechié nos deffent;
por loier asot et sospent,
et vant ce que Dex rove ofrir,
et marie si pres parent
⁴⁰ que la loi no doit consentir.

VI

Dex les tut toz ou les ament,
si qu'il nos puisse garantir;
ou se ce non, prochainement
⁴⁴ nos convendra sanz loi morir.

V

Rome, the origin of our religion, makes us utterly and completely perplexed, for it wants to reserve for its own use everything it forbids us as sinful; it absolves and excommunicates for money, and sells what God asks us to offer freely, and marries close kin such as the law should not allow.

VI

God kill them all or reform them, so that He may protect us; if not, we shall soon have to die faithless.

Notes

The text is essentially an anticlerical *sirventes* close in tone and content to the contemporary Occitan ones, but also to a few Old French texts such as RS 273 by Thibaut de Champagne and RS 1576 by Huon de Saint-Quentin (for whom see the introductory note to that commentary, as well as Vatteroni 1999, especially pp. 60-62). As well as the commoner and more general accusations stigmatising the sins of lust, avarice and simony committed by the clergy there are the more specific ones regarding responsibility for the fate of the Holy Land. Criticisms of the clergy, in particular the pontifical legate Pelagius, for the failure of the Fifth Crusade are typical of contemporary French historiography, but also of the environment of the emperor Frederic II. A telling example is found in the chronicle called the *Estoire d'Eracles*, II, p. 352: *Ensi fu perdue la noble cité de Damiate par peché et par folie et par l'orgueil et la malice dou clergé et des religions, la quel avoit esté conquise a grant cost et a grant travail*. But the song RS 640 is especially surprising for its opening lines which express a critical position with regard to the Albigensian Crusade. Such a position, common in troubadour lyric (see Vatteroni 1999 and the texts in Zambon 1999), is much rarer among French authors. Apart from RS 273 by Thibaut de Champagne, if my interpretation is correct (see Barbieri 2013, pp. 311-317), there are only a couple of relevant non-lyric texts such as Huon de Saint-Quentin's *Complainte de Jérusalem contre Rome* and Guillaume le Clerc de Normandie's *Besant de Dieu* (composed in 1226-1227). The first text, apart from its vague accusations against the clergy concerning the situation in the Holy Land, contains an allusion to the Albigensian question in vv. 82-84 which is not easy to interpret. The second is much more explicit: the author firstly inveighs against the Toulousain campaign (vv. 2395-2408), then wonders whether the French crusaders are not more sinful than those they are intending to fight (vv. 2484-2490), and ends with a violent attack on the legate Pelagius (vv. 2547-2564). As far as the Occitan texts are concerned, the presence of a double criticism of the clergy over the Albigensian question and of the bad management of the Fifth Crusade is found in Guillem Figueira BdT 217.2, for example (in a general context devoted to the Albigensian Crusade, vv. 45-48 mention the loss of Damietta), and Tomier and Palaizi BdT 442.1 and 442.2 (here also the *sirventes* is mainly devoted to the Albigensian Crusade, but vv. 43-49 mention the situation in the Holy Land)). As in RS 1576, there are no specific allusions to Damietta, but again because of the reference to the Albigensian Crusade it is clear that the text refers to the events of the Fifth Crusade.

- 3-8 For the chronological implications of these lines on the difficulties of the French during the Albigensian Crusade see the section on dating.
- 9-14 For a general condemnation of the clergy for their lack of concern for the Holy Land see for example Peire Cardenal BdT 335.54, 25-32: *E d'aquo baston lur maizos / e belhs vergiers ont elhs estan, / mas ges li turc ni li perssan / non creiran Dieu per lurs sermos / qu'elhs lur fasson, car paoros / son del passar e del morir, / e volo mais de sai bastir / que lay conquerre los fellos*; for a direct attack on the cardinal Romano di Sant'Angelo in the context of the Fifth Crusade see Tomier and Palaizi BdT 442.1, 57-64: *Nostre cardenals / soiorna e barata / e prent bels ostals / de qe Deus l'abata, / mas pauc sent los mals, / quant a Damiata. / Segur estem, seignors, / e ferm de ric socors*. The precise temporal allusion in v. 12 confirms that the song must have been composed shortly after the fall of Damietta.
- 16 The *boen roi* has traditionally been identified with the king of France Philip Augustus, who died 14 July 1223 (Serper 1983, p. 5), but is more likely to refer to John of Brienne, king of Jerusalem, whose conflicts with the papal legate Pelagius over the management of the Fifth Crusade are well known (see Huon de Saint-Quentin, *Complainte*, vv. 85-87).

- 17-20 On the clergy's desire to rule the world, with allusions to their various sins and improper use of indulgences and excommunications, see Peire Cardenal BdT 335.66, 22-28: *A tantas mas vei clergues essaïar / que totz lo mons er lor, cuy que mal sia, / car els l'auran ab tolre ho ab dar, / ho ab perdon ho ab ypocrizia, / ho ab asout ho ab escuminar, / ho ab prezicx ho ab peiras lansar, / ho els ab Dieu ho els ab diablia* and BdT 335.47, 17-18: *Et auran lo mon, can que tir, / que res non lur n'es amparat*.
- 20 For the use of the term *escomeniement* see Thibaut de Champagne RS 1152, 7-8: *et voi esconmunniër / ceus qui plus offrent raison* and the *Complainte* of Huon de Saint-Quentin, v. 103: *Je vi ciâx escumeniër / qui ne s'aloient remoier*; as this refers to the clergy in general, it should probably be interpreted in the broad sense of "moral condemnation".
- 21-24 For accusations of pride and theft on the part of the clergy see for example Peire Cardenal BdT 335.1, 17-18: *Esperitals non es la lur paubreza: / gardan lo lor prendon so que mieus es*; BdT 335.47, 9-16 and 25-29; BdT 335.54, 9-16 (texts also quoted by Vatteroni 1999, p. 21).
- 25-28 On the clergy's love of luxury clothing, fine food and fornication see Peire Cardenal's whole *sirventes* BdT 335.1.
- 26 For references to dues collected by the clergy for burial of the dead see Vatteroni 1999, pp. 19-20.
- 33 For the apostrophe to the city of Rome see Huon de Saint-Quentin's *Complainte* (composed according to Serper in 1221-1222, after the fall of Damietta and immediately after RS 1576), vv. 1, 49 and 61, and especially Guillem Figueira BdT 217.2, composed 1227-1229 according to Peron 2015. These texts also share their stress on the Church's (and particularly the legate Pelagius's) grave responsibility for the failure of the Fifth Crusade, and their criticism of the Albigensian Crusade.
- 35-36 This idea is also echoed in Peire Cardenal BdT 335.64, 18: *e devedon als autres d'aco que fan lurs atz*.
- 37-38 Among the numerous contemporary allusions to the sale of indulgences see for example Huon de Saint-Quentin *Complainte*, vv. 181-183: *Segnor, qui les pardons portés, / poi vos costent et les vendés; / c'est pechiés et ovre vilaine* and Peire Cardenal BdT 335.54, 17-20: *Per deniers trobaretz perdos / ab elhs, s'avetz fag malestan, / e renoviers sebelliran / per aver, tant son cobeitos*, which also contains a reference to the burial money, for which see vv. 25-28.
- 37 In the absence of a satisfactory alternative, I follow the conjectural reading *sospent* adopted by Jeanroy-Långfors 1921, while not being convinced of its correctness from the paleographical point of view. Petersen Dyggve 1938's glossary gives for *suspendre* the meaning "accorder remission", though I have found no attestation of this. It is much likelier that *sospent* should be interpreted not as a synonym of *asot*, but rather in the opposite sense of "excommunicate, condemn" already present in Latin (see Niermeyer s.v. *suspendere*).
- 40 For the northern form *no* = *ne le* see the examples cited in DEAF I 1, 67, 30ff.

Text

Luca Barbieri, 2016.

Mss.

(1): H 219b (*Moniez d'Arraz*); the attribution is found at the beginning of the French section of the manuscript (f. 217a: *Iste sunt canciones francigene et sunt .l. | Moniez d'Arraz*) and has been incorrectly applied to all the texts contained in that section, whereas it probably refers only to the first.

Versification and music

8abbaabab (MW 1303,3 = Frank 473); 5 *coblas unissonans* with one 4-line *envoi* (abab); rhyme a: -ent , rhyme b: -ir ; the same scheme is found in three later texts, two *jeux-partis* and a *chanson pieuse* , two of which are attributed to Adam de la Halle; many rich and some leonine rhymes; equivocal rhymes in vv. 5-36 (*defent*) and 7-39 (*parent*); paronymous and derivative rhymes in vv. 6, 30 and 35 (*tenir-sostenir-retenir*).

Previous editions

Camus 1891, 240; Bertoni 1917, 324; Jeanroy-Långfors 1921, 10; Petersen Dyggve 1938, 136.

Analysis of the manuscript tradition

Ms. H is the French section of the Provençal Estense ms. D , whose initial rubric indicates the date 1254. This date has been variously attributed to the ms. itself, to the first section alone, or to its model (Zinelli 2010 is the most recent scholar to incline to this hypothesis, listing and discussing the various positions on pp. 83-86; on pp. 88-89 he cautiously suggests a later date, at least for the French section, around the last quarter of the 13th c.). RS 640 is the eleventh text, coming shortly before two other texts in our corpus, the fifteenth *Ja de chanter en ma vie* (RS 1229), and the sixteenth *Un serventés, plait de deduit, de joie* (RS 1729). H's text is fairly correct and shows no obvious linguistic peculiarities, apart from a few northern or Picard graphies, especially in the spelling of *g* + vowel (v. 4 *Albigois* , v. 8 *gerpir* , v. 12 *longement* ; cf. Spetia 1997, p. 58), the retention of the tonic form with the graphy *boen* (vv. 16 and 31), and the early closure of *o* + nasal (*sunt* v. 7, *unt* v. 26). As Petersen Dyggve, at the rhyme in vv. 20 and 21 I have eliminated the final *z* which modifies the rhyme and is unnecessary from the morphological point of view. I have accepted Jeanroy's suggested emendations, following Petersen Dyggve, in order to correct the scansion in v. 28 (*en boivre et en maingier*) and to regularise v. 37, although the latter emendation is not entirely convincing.

Historical context and dating

The song's opening lines refer to a difficult moment for the French during the Albigensian Crusade, most probably Amaury de Montfort's defeats, particularly between 1219 and 1222 (Serper 1983, pp. 4-5; Cassagnol 2006, pp. 146-151). The reference in vv. 1-8 is general enough to fit the whole decade spanning the reconquest of Beaucaire in 1216 and Raimon VII's final successes in 1224; but if we take account of the fact that vv. 11-14 probably refer to the loss of Damietta on 8 September 1221, the date of the song's composition can be restricted to 1222-1224, most probably close to the surrender of Damietta (1222-1223). This is the view of Serper 1983, pp. 4-5 and Vatteroni 1999, pp. 60-62, inter alia. A later date cannot be ruled out, as for Thibaut de Champagne's song RS 273, and Guillaume le Clerc in his *Besant de Dieu* shows that the memory of the Egyptian victory still weighed heavily on people's minds in 1226-1227. But it seems difficult to go as far as 1226, the year in which Louis VIII takes the Cross and reinvigorates the anti-Albigensian campaign, and in any case it is impossible to go later than the treaties of Meaux-Paris in 1229 which sanction the major redrawing of the boundaries of the county of Toulouse. Clearly the attribution to Moniot d'Arras is to be rejected and the text should revert to anonymity.