



Parti de mal e a bien aturné

(RS 401)

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Anonymous

I

Parti de mal e a bien aturné
voil ma chançon a la gent fere oïr,
k'a sun besuing nus ad Deus apelé
4 si ne li deit nul prosdome faillir,
kar en la cruiz deignat pur nus murir.
Mult li doit bien estre gueredoné
kar par sa mort sumes tuz rachaté.

II

8 Cunte, ne duc, ne li roi coruné
ne se pöent de la mort destolir,
kar quant il unt grant tresor amassé
plus lur covient a grant dolur guerpir.
12 Mielz lur venist en bon jus departir,
kar quant il sunt en la terre buté
ne lur valt puis ne chastel ne cité.

III

Allas, chettif! Tant nus sumes pené
16 pur les deliz de nos cors acumplir,
ki mult sunt tost failli e trespasé
kar adés voi le plus joefne enviellir!
Pur ço fet bon paraïs deservir
20 kar la sunt tuit li gueredon dublé.
Mult en fet mal estre desherité!

IV

Mult ad le quoer de bien enluminé
ki la cruiz prent pur aler Deu servir,
24 k'al jugement ki tant iert reduté
- u Deus vendrat les bons des mals partir
dunt tut le mund <deit> trembler e fremir -
mult iert huni, kei serat rebuté
28 k<e>i ne verad Deu en sa maësté.

I

Having renounced evil and turned back to goodness, I wish to make the people hear my song, since God has called on us to assist Him and so no worthy man should fail him, for He deigned to die upon the Cross for our sake. We should be deeply grateful to Him because with His death he has redeemed us.

II

Neither counts nor dukes nor crowned kings can escape death, and the greater the treasure they have amassed, the greater will be their grief on leaving it. It would be better for them to divide it up by good agreement, since once they are thrown into the earth neither castle nor city will be of any help to them.

III

Alas, wretches that we are! We have taken so many pains to satisfy the pleasures of our bodies, so that many [of us] have prematurely faded and passed away, and I see the youngest continually growing older! For this reason it is good to gain paradise, for there all rewards are doubled. How terrible to lack an inheritance!

IV

The one who takes the cross to go and serve God has his heart full of light, for on the Day of Judgment, when God will come to part the good from the wicked - before which the whole world must quake and tremble - the reluctant will suffer the great dishonour of being refused the sight of God in His majesty.

V

Si m'aït Deus, trop avons demuré
d'aler a Deu pur sa terre seisir
dunt li Turc l'unt eisseillié e geté
³² pur noz pechiez ke trop devons haïr.
La doit chascun avoir tut sun desir,
kar ki pur Lui lerad sa richeté
pur voir avrad paraïs conquesté.

VI

³⁶ Mult iert celui en cest siecle honoré
ki Deus donrat ke il puisse revenir.
Ki bien avrad en sun païs amé
par tut l'en deit menbrer e souvenir.
⁴⁰ E Deus me doinst de la meillur joïr,
que jo la truisse en vie e en santé
quant Deus avrad sun affaire achevé!

VII

⁴⁴ «E» il otroit a sa merci venir
mes bons seignurs, que jo tant ai amé
k'a bien petit n'en oi Deu oblié!

V

God help me, we have delayed too long in going to
God to seize the land from which the Turks have
exiled and banished Him because of our sins, which
we should profoundly hate. On this each one of us
should concentrate his whole desire, since whoever
leaves his riches for His sake will certainly have
conquered paradise.

VI

A man to whom God grants that he may return will
be greatly honoured in this world. Whoever has
loved well in his country should preserve the
memory of it wherever he goes. And may God allow
me to enjoy the best lady, so that I might find her in
life and health, when God has completed his
business!

VII

And may He receive into His grace my good lords
whom I have loved so much that I was almost
forgetting God!

Notes

For a more detailed commentary see the forthcoming edition of Radaelli 2013 in *Cultura neolatina*.

Text

Anna Radaelli, 2014.

Mss.

(1). BL, Harley 1717, 251v (anonymous). The crusade song is transcribed on the hair side of the verso of parchment folio 251, whose recto has been left blank. It would appear to have belonged to an earlier loose unnumbered folio folded in half and re-used as a double protective cover, no longer attached but evidently coming from another codex where it had been attached and had served the same purpose. The handwriting appears to point to scribal habits of the late-twelfth-century documentary type; the same period seems to be indicated by the northern-French/Norman way of writing the neumatic musical notation.

Versification and music

10ababbaa (MW 852,2 = Frank 293); the model is the song *Quant fine Amours me proie que je chant* attributed to Gace Brulé (RS 306); 6 *coblas unissonans* with a 3-line *envoi* (baa); rima a e , rhyme b ir ; epic caesura v. 41; hiatus: vv. 1, 17, 41, 43, 44, 45; hiatus at the caesura v. 36; elision vv. 2, 18, 31, 36, 37, 41, 42; elision at the caesura v. 41; the musical notation is diastematic on a four-line stave in red.

Previous editions

De la Rue 1834, II 196-198, Michel 1836-1834, III 459, Leroux de Lincy 1841, 91-93, Du Méril 1843, 414, Crépet 1861, 38-40, Bédier 1909, 67, Schöber 1976, Guida 2001, 59.

Historical context and dating

The song's composition goes back to before the death of Henry II, in a fully Angevin context, in a rare moment of truce between the English and French kings and of peace in the domestic struggles between sons and father (January-November 1188). The third stanza seems to contain allusive notes to Henry the second's young sons. See vv. 15-17, where the mention of futile obsession with material pleasures and many premature deaths appear to evoke Henry's two elder sons, the Young King Henry and Count Geoffrey, who both died young and not in battle. In lines 18 and 21 there may be an allusion to the last remaining heir, namely John, "the youngest", who at that moment, 1188, is still without land and has the prospect of growing old without an inheritance.

The author is probably a *scriptor* of the Plantagenet royal Chancery.