

The uses of the Bible in crusader sources. Edited by Elizabeth Lapina and Nicholas Morton. (Commentaria, 7.) Pp. xvi + 497 incl. 8 black-and-white and colour figs and 1 table. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2017. €171. 978 90 04 28492 0; 1874 8236

JEH (70) 2019; doi:10.1017/S0022046918002336

That medieval writers who dealt with crusading, whether narrative chroniclers, poets, theologians or popes, had recourse to the Scriptures to understand and express the phenomenon of holy war, conquest and settlement ought not to come as a surprise. What is perhaps surprising is how little systematic attention has been paid to the ways in which writers drew on the Bible to reflect, develop and disseminate the nature of the Crusades as a contemporary phenomenon. This volume of essays offers what the introduction acknowledges to be a preliminary step in the direction of a thorough study. The nineteen essays collected here deal with a variety of types of source material, though the predominant focus is on narrative chronicle-writing: one, by Adam Bishop, surveys the laws of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, while Iris Shagrir investigates liturgical and corresponding visual sources, and Julian Yolles discusses poetry from the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The essays are grouped into five parts: ‘Exercise of Violence’, ‘Chronicles of the First Crusade’, ‘Papal Correspondence and Crusade Propaganda’, ‘James of Vitry’ and ‘The Crusading Movement and the Crusader States’. This division of material looks pragmatic rather than programmatic, though what at first sight looks like a random set of divisions begins to make sense as one works through the essays, and realises, for example, the centrality of James of Vitry and the context in which he was working to the wider questions posed by the book.

One of those questions, raised in the introduction, is what we should understand when we speak of ‘the Bible’ in the period covered by the book (largely between the eleventh and the late thirteenth century). As Thomas Lecaque remarks in his essay on the literary background of Raymond d’Aguilers, a highly influential eyewitness to the First Crusade, only ten complete Bibles are known from France in the period c.1050–1150. Even for trained exegetes and theologians, familiarity with the Scriptures in the form that we know the Bible was rare. Monastic writers were imbued with Scripture, but in a particular way; as Kristin Skottki expresses it in her essay on St Bernard’s deployment of biblical prophecy, Bernard spoke and thought ‘biblical’ as though it were a language like French or German. Several of the contributors note that Benedictine monks knew the Psalms from daily liturgical observance, and Carol Sweetenham finds that almost a third of all biblical references in Robert the Monk’s *Historia Hierosolymitana* were to this book. Many contributors remark that biblical references in the sources that they examine are more likely to have come from the writer’s familiarity with the sounds of the liturgy than with looking up biblical passages. This is an important consideration because it raises questions of intentionality. As T. J. H. McCarthy shows in writing about Frutolf of Michelsberg and his Continuator, chronicles with multiple authors can reflect different types of intention. More than one essay in the volume ponders the distinction between the conscious and reflective choice of a scriptural verse by a writer and the use of a biblical phrase that comes from what Luigi Russo calls the ‘deep culture’ of the Bible. An example provided by Russo – but which might be amplified by many others in this volume – makes the point well: in the *Anonymi Gesta Francorum* hungry crusaders

are described as rubbing prickly plants between their hands to render them more edible, in what Russo shows is an echo of Luke vi.1, where Jesus and his disciples pick ears of corn and rub them between their hands before eating them. Here the borderline between quotation and allusion, between meaningful intention and immersion, is difficult to define.

Although the volume is not organised diachronically, intentionality becomes more evident as we progress chronologically. The critical period appears to have been that between Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem in 1187 and the 1220s: the period during which a group of Paris-trained exegetes and theologians, of whom James of Vitry is the most prominent example, brought their intellectual training to bear on the justification and rationale of crusading. The essays by Lydia Walker, Jessalyn Bird and Jan Vandeburie show how thorough and how systematic the study of biblical prophecy became in the hands of preacher-chroniclers like James and his contemporary Oliver of Paderborn, and how vital their project was seen to be in enabling the West to understand and put into context the disaster of 1187 – and, of course, in instructing Christian society how to respond to it. Similarly, two essays dealing with papal letters, by Miriam Rita Tessera and Thomas Smith, show an increasing sophistication in curial composition in their use of Scripture; a sophistication that culminates in Smith's exacting analysis of the *arengae* of Gregory IX's crusade appeals. By the 1230s there can be little doubt of intentionality in this kind of source.

It is axiomatic among historians of the Crusades that the word 'crusade' can be dangerously misleading in trying to understand the mental world of people who thought, wrote about and participated in them, since it is largely post-medieval terminology. But one of the conclusions drawn by the essays in this book must be that similar patterns of interpretation, if not a consistency of approach, contributed to the emergence of a shared understanding of what the phenomenon was. To be sure, not all contemporaries read Scripture in the same way, and John Cotts's essay contrasting Ralph Niger and Peter of Blois is a valuable corrective to any possible view of such conformity. But some biblical episodes were particularly difficult to ignore for those interested in holy war, and it is not surprising to find the Maccabees figuring prominently in this collection. Even in the case of such an apparently simple fit with crusading, however, there were multiple possibilities in how biblical history might be read and applied. Torben Nielsen shows, in the only essay in the volume that deals with the Baltic Crusade, how by the early fourteenth century the chronicler of the Teutonic Order, Peter of Dusberg, was able to use the Maccabees as an exemplar of new kinds of warfare, by arguing that as many pagans were killed through the spiritual weapons of prayer and endurance wielded in imitation of Mattathias as through physical ones. Moreover, Julian Yolles's study of poetry by two abbots of the *Templum Domini* demonstrates that the Maccabees were also a critical mirror for the conduct of Christian society in the Kingdom of Jerusalem: specifically the need to defend the Church from simony.

This is a rich volume, and it has not been possible to give due acknowledgement to all the essays contained here. Nevertheless, both the editors and Brill should be congratulated on assembling a collection of consistently high scholarly quality that will form a benchmark for this kind of study in the future.

ROYAL HOLLOWAY,
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

ANDREW JOTISCHKY