

Warfare and the Miraculous in the Chronicles of the First Crusade.

Elizabeth Lapina.

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One of the first lectures I attended as an undergraduate (by I. S. Robinson) drew attention to a medieval text that ostensibly was concerned with the golden age of the Church's past but which was revealed to my peers and me to be a powerful polemic in the

author's contemporary participation in the Investiture Contest. This kind of revelatory, "oh, so that's what the text is about" moment is the real value of intellectual history. And Elizabeth Lapina's recent study is full of these revelations, which are all the more impressive for being insights into the much-studied sources for the First Crusade.

Whether undergraduates or more advanced researchers, all those studying the First Crusade will very much benefit from this book and I, for one, will read these sources with new eyes having benefited from Lapina's new perspectives. In order of importance, these discoveries are (1) that although the claim that saintly warriors assisted the crusaders at Antioch has antecedents, it would have been seen by contemporaries as a very radical one; (2) that the description of this miraculous intervention was made possible by the south Norman appropriation and development of the cult of a number of Byzantine saints; (3) that Guibert of Nogent had a sophisticated appreciation of the contradictions of the use of the Maccabean tradition; and (4) that the authors who based their work on the *Gesta Francorum* drew on an apostolic framework in their use of the cardinal points East and West.

While the title of the book is one that a publisher might have chosen in terms of its breadth and potential appeal, it does not really reflect the book's contents. Methodologically, there is particular value in the study of ideas of the chronicles of the First Crusade that came after the circulation of the *Gesta Francorum* in Europe. By examining the ways in which Guibert of Nogent or Robert the Monk altered their *fons formalis*, Lapina has an opening into the respective theology and worldview of these authors. So the book's concerns are much narrower than the title suggests: they are hardly at all with Raymond of Aguilers or Albert of Aachen.

Similarly, the miracles that gain particular attention here are mainly those derived from the *Gesta* tradition; this is not the book to choose for a comprehensive account of the miraculous in the chronicles of the First Crusade. I do think that the warrior in white who assists in the siege of Jerusalem and the other celestial figures participating in battle that Raymond of Aguilers described deserve some attention in a study with this focus. There are stronger connections, it seems to me, between Raymond's use of the miraculous and the *Gesta Francorum* than between the ancient and early medieval examples introduced to contextualize the account of saintly intervention in battle.

One challenge faced by all historians interested in the evolution of medieval thought is that of moving beyond speculation in regard to the transmission and evolution of ideas. So if, as Lapina claims, it is probable that Bernard of Clairvaux read Guibert's chronicle and this inspired Bernard's thinking on the relationship between contemporary and Old Testament warriors, then the question arises as to what evidence can be brought to bear on this question. Were any of Guibert's formulations echoed by Bernard? We live in an age when the digitization of a huge corpus of medieval and ancient texts allows those wanting to trace particular ideas to search quickly for borrowings by one author from another, and a smoking gun or two of this sort would have shifted the arguments in this book to a whole new level, from being very plausible to being near certainties.

Having raised these minor caveats in order to offer my penny's worth on how the new avenues opened by this book might be explored further, I do not want to detract from the conclusion that all in all this is a tremendously erudite survey of ancient and medieval texts, organized so as to put into context certain fascinating incidents and phrases of some of the chronicles of the First Crusade.

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