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Résumé – Cet article analyse la comparaison que fait Baudri de Bourgueil dans son *Historia Ierosolimitana* entre Joseph d'Arimathie et les premiers croisés. Il examine l'évolution de la figure de Joseph à partir de sa première apparition dans la Bible jusqu'à l'époque où Baudri établit sa comparaison. Il étudie ce que Joseph représente pour Baudri et permet de comprendre le sens du texte pour l'auteur et son auditoire, ainsi que de mieux évaluer ce que devient la vocation de la croisade.

Mots-clés – histoire, croisades, chronique, latin

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Abstract – This article examines the comparison, made by Baldric of Bourgueil in his *Historia Ierosolimitana*, of Joseph of Arimathea with the first crusaders. It examines the historical evolution of the figure of Joseph from his brief appearance in the Bible to the time Baldric made the comparison. It assesses what Joseph meant to Baldric, provides a route into understanding the meaning of the text for the author and his audience, and a better appreciation of what would become the crusade vocation.

Keywords – history, Crusades, chronicle, Latin

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA, CRUSADER? HERO? BENEFACTOR?

Around the year 1105 at the Abbey of Bourgueil in the Loire Valley the abbot, Baldric, began writing a history of the First Crusade[1]. Baldric had already written poems, saint's lives, descriptions of his travels and numerous letters in his literary career and, in the enthusiasm and euphoria that swept through France in response to the miraculous success of the expedition to Jerusalem, he decided to turn his hand to writing history[2]. In *Historia Ierosolimitana* Baldric celebrated the crusaders as heroes, remembered their piety and dedication, and pledged to write in such a style as to match the glorious deeds of the Jerusalemites[3]. He did this by enhancing what he saw as the simplistic narrative of his primary source document, the *Gesta Francorum*[4]. He added logical and believable amplifications and embellishments to the story and included classical features such as orations and sermons. Baldric stated his strong desire to provide a version of the history that is more worthy of the miraculous achievements of the crusaders, a version that would have a bigger

1 See Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. S. Biddlecombe, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2014. An earlier edition, comprisiing a compilation of the seven manuscripts available to its editors, can be found in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux*, 5 vols., Paris, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1844-1895, Baldric's *Historia* is in vol. 4, published in 1879.

2 Baldric's life and works are discussed in *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. Biddlecombe p. xi-xxiv; H. Pasquier, *Un poète latin du XII^e siècle: Baudri, abbé de Bourgueil, archevêque de Dol, 1046-1130*, Paris, Thorin, 1878; this volume was used as the source for biographical detail in P. Abrahams, *Les Œuvres poétiques de Baudri de Bourgueil (1046-1130)*, Paris, Champion, 1926; the most recent volumes of his poetry, Baudri de Bourgueil, *Poèmes*, I, ed. and trans. (into French) J.-Y. Tilliette, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1998, and Baudri de Bourgueil, *Poèmes: Carminas*, II, ed. and trans. (into French) J.-Y. Tilliette, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2002, expand on Pasquier.

3 See Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 3-4. The first translation into a modern language of the *Historia Ierosolimitana* (by S. Edgington and S. Biddlecombe) is currently being prepared and will be published by Boydell and Brewer.

4 See Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 2.

impact on his medieval audience, a textual community that was both lay and clerical. One indication of these enhancements is the inclusion of a high proportion of direct speech by his characters, especially when compared with other narratives of the First Crusade[5]. An example of a speechmaker utilized by Baldric is Bohemond of Taranto, who addresses 'his men', 'the people' or the other leaders of the expedition on several occasions, and expresses a broad strategic understanding of the purpose, both moral and military, of the First Crusade. Baldric used Bohemond, and other speakers and sermonizers, as his 'voice', a means of explaining what he believed were the crusader's motivations, and the meaning in theological or strategic terms of what they were doing[6]. The likelihood of these speeches being reproductions of actual spoken words is very low. In fact, the only speech that Baldric had to think about reproducing accurately was that made by Pope Urban at Clermont in 1095, and even here Baldric's version differs from the four other available versions[7]. The issue of accuracy aside, direct speech and sermons, especially by military and religious leaders, are features of both classical and biblical literature and Baldric's audience would have been familiar with these devices, which could bring a performative and inspirational element to what might otherwise be dry historical narrative[8].

It is a reference to Joseph of Arimathea in one of the speeches written down by Baldric that forms the starting point for this essay. The speech took the form of a sermon, as such it conveyed a religious message. A sermon is used to persuade people towards a particular action or way of behaving and a preacher, to be persuasive, would usually be

5 I have calculated that 27% of the text of *Historia* is formed of character utterances, most of which are directed at groups of people, this can be compared with just 18% in the *Gesta Francorum*, most of which is conversational.

6 The role of Bohemond in Baldric's narrative is examined in S. Biddlecombe, "Baldric of Bourgueil and the Flawed Hero", *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 35, 2012, p. 79-93.

7 The four other major versions of the speech are found in Robert the Monk, *Historia Iherosolimitana*, ed. D. Kempf and M. Bull, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2013; Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, Turnhout, Brepols, 1996; *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. and trans. R. Hill, London, Nelson, 1962, hereafter *GF*; Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana 1095-1127*, ed. H. S. Fink and trans. F. R. Ryan, New York, Norton, 1973.

8 A review of the development of "Sermon Studies" with particular reference to the Middle Ages can be found in C. Muessig, "Sermon, Preacher and Society in the Middle Ages", *Journal of Medieval History*, 28/1, 2002, p. 73-91.

someone with personal or institutional authority. Even though Baldric was creating a written text in the *Historia*, when his words were read to an audience, either in Latin or translated into vernacular, they would retake the form of a sermon and re-assume that compelling and religiously committed message for an audience[9]. As abbot, Baldric would be the key preacher within his institution and he would appreciate the value and impact of a sermon. Sermons help to define Christian faith and encourage pious practice, often using quotations from the Bible and other Christian authorities in doing so. This leads us to believe that when Baldric included a reference to Joseph of Arimathea in his text, it meant something significant and was not done lightly. What the figure of Joseph represented to both the author and his audience at the beginning of the twelfth century helps to define the Christian values and practice that Baldric believed his audience should follow. Although a brief mention, the reference to Joseph of Arimathea has meaning for his audience, both readers and listeners. It indicates and communicates ideas and values to a broad textual community, one that included the arms-bearing men and their *familia*, who Baldric identifies as the main participants in the First Crusade. Therefore, understanding what the character of Joseph of Arimathea meant to Baldric and his audience at the beginning of the twelfth century can help us to understand the social and cultural pressures on arms-bearers and provide indications of how support for the Holy Land would over time become both a religious aspiration and a chivalric duty for them.

In addition to Baldric's understanding of the sermon genre we must also appreciate the reverence of Baldric, and medieval authors in general, for older forms and texts, as shown by their extensive borrowings from ancient Roman and biblical sources, both in terms of style and content. The life of Christ and those of his apostles and family, for example, often form the model for writing the life of a medieval saint, with the subject experiencing the same doubts and temptations in youth that assailed biblical figures, and performing miracles that mimic those carried out by Jesus. Similarly, the lives of medieval kings and lords or the history of their deeds, often follow a biblical pattern, with comparisons to King David being common, although, in writing the deeds of secular men,

9 A useful discussion on the delivery of sermons can be found in G. Constable, "The Language of Preaching in the Twelfth Century", *Viator*, 25, 1994, p. 131-152.

the use of a Roman model, such as that provided by Suetonius in *De vita Caesarum*, is actually more prevalent[10]. Medieval historians writing about military campaigns often utilised biblical references to the Old Testament wars of the Maccabees and the Jewish kings, but could just as easily use Homerian imaginings of battle scenes, using the Latin rewritings of the Trojan epics, or the imagery of warfare developed by Roman authors such as Sallust or Lucan[11]. Even when the author was an eyewitness to aspects of the history he wrote, his description of the 'deeds' of the central figures of the narrative often replicated in style and action those of ancient forms as a means of matching the events of recent times to a familiar and credible model.

This use of biblical and classical models is another reason for the inclusion of orations and sermons and is a feature of numerous historical narratives written in the middle ages. As a logical progression from this reverence for biblical and classical forms of literature figures from that literature are used as a means by which modern men, in this case men at the beginning of the age of crusading, can understand the motives or behaviour of the actors within the historical narrative. Baldric of Bourgueil in the *Historia Ierosolimitana* used figures from an ancient or biblical past for this purpose as much, if not more than, any other First Crusade narrator. The list of classical figures directly named by Baldric includes; Achilles, Ajax and Ulysses – Greek heroes of the Trojan War; Cicero and Sallust – authors; and Vespasian and his son, Titus (Roman emperors famed for battling the Jewish Revolt of the first century AD, and especially Titus for his apposite recapture of Jerusalem and the subsequent destruction of Herod's Temple). Baldric also makes reference to biblical figures, some famous and some quite obscure, including; Abraham, Balaam (the soothsayer asked to curse the Israelites, who is then persuaded by God speaking through the mouth of his donkey to bless them instead – Numbers 22-24), Melchisedech (king of Salem and high priest of God – Genesis 14:18), Moses and

10 Works such as C. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1927, and R. W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1984, outline the influence of classical literature on medieval thinking and writing.

11 E. Lapina, "The Maccabees and the Battle of Antioch", *Dying for the Faith, Killing for the Faith*, ed. G. Signori, Leiden, Brill, 2012, p. 147-159, provides numerous examples of the use made of Maccabean models in writing about the First Crusade.

his brother Aaron, Jacob, Josiah, Saul, Solomon, David, Phineas (the grandson of Aaron and killer of a fornicating Israelite and his Midianite woman, an act that began a slaughter in which 24,000 sinful Israelites were also killed – Numbers 25:1-19), Herod, Pontius Pilate, Longinus (not strictly a biblical figure, although a 'soldier' appears in John 19:34 and pierces the side of the crucified Christ with his lance, the soldier is named as 'Longinus' in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus), John the Baptist, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Andrew, The Blessed Mary, and Joseph of Arimathea.

The problem we have as historians, and the problem this work attempts to address in relation to Joseph of Arimathea, is understanding what these figures stood for in the medieval mind. Studies in reception history have shown very clearly how perceptions of the qualities and failings of a character can change over time. Achilles, for example, is a figure used by Baldric to make both a literary and a geographical connection between the heroes of the siege of Troy and the crusader heroes of the siege of Nicaea[12]. We know from our reading of Homer's *Illiad* about the arrogance and bravery of this character. However, our understanding of what this character stands for has developed over time with each new edition, version or analysis of the story we have read or seen. The *Illiad* was not available to Baldric, the library at Bourgueil would have made him aware of the existence of Homer but not of his written words. Instead, Baldric would have known of Achilles through his reading of Latin works such as *De excidio Troiae historia* by Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis', *Ephemeridos belli Troiani*[13]. Understanding and appreciation of Homer in the original Greek would not re-enter literary circles in Western Europe until the fourteenth century, and Baldric, writing at the start of the twelfth century, would only have an understanding of Achilles derived from texts which present that character in a different way to the original Homeric texts. In the versions of the

12 Ralph of Caen makes use of Achilles, Ajax and Hector, for example, making his hero, Tancred, a greater hero than all three in his *Gesta Tancredi*, found in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux*, Paris, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1866, vol. 3, chapters 52 and 128.

13 See Dares Phrygius, *De excidio Troiae historia*, ed. F. Meister, Leipzig, Teubner, 1873, and more recently *Dares Phrygius' De Excidio Trojae Historia: Philological Commentary and Translation*, trans. J. Cornil, unpublished Thesis, University of Ghent, 2012, and *The Trojan war. The chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian*, trans. R. M. Frazer, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1966.

siege of Troy by Dares and Dictys, which were widely read in the middle ages, Achilles played a much less dominant role; he is significant, but he does not dominate the narrative as he does in the *Illiad*. Baldric says of these heroes that: "In this place [meaning the area around Nicaea, on the western coast of Turkey] Ulysses exercised his cunning; Ajax showed his courage; Achilles demonstrated his hardness[14]." In the histories of Troy available to Baldric, Ajax fights far more often, more bravely and has a better reputation than Achilles. Hence his name is linked more readily by Baldric with the martial quality of courage. The perception of the strengths and weaknesses of a historical, fictional or mythical character used as an example for others always evolve and depend on what people knew about that figure and how they knew it at a given time and place.

The same principle applies to the biblical figures Baldric uses as the means of making points about the purpose of the First Crusade, the character of the men who went on it and the motivations that led them to do so. In the immediate aftermath of Pope Urban's speech, Baldric provides the reader with an example of the unity of religious and secular leadership that would be required if the expedition the pope had just proposed was to succeed. He reports that as soon as Urban's speech ended Bishop Adhemar of Le Puy and Raymond of St Gilles, the count of Toulouse, came forward and agreed to take the cross. Baldric comments that: "The bishop and the count represent Moses and Aaron for us[15]." Those who knew the Book of Exodus would know that Aaron was the elder brother of Moses, the High Priest of the Israelites, and that he acted as a diplomat and spoke to the Pharaoh on behalf of his brother and the Israelites[16]. They would know that Moses grew up as an Egyptian prince, but turned into a prophet and the lawgiver of the Jews and, much more relevant to potential crusaders, became the leader of a great mass of people heading for a land that God had promised them. At this point in the Middle Ages the distinction between secular and clerical worlds was often blurred, but what was clearly important to Baldric was that they should be seen in this case to be working closely together for the common good of all Christian peoples. To make this

14 Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 25, trans. S. Edgington.
15 Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 11, trans. S. Edgington.
16 See Exodus 6:20; 7:1-20.

point more forcefully, Baldric provided his listeners and readers with a strong comparison between the leaders of the First Crusade and the leaders of the Old Testament Exodus, and a significant example of cooperation between secular and clerical figures[17].

This comparison between Adhemar and Raymond and Aaron and Moses is fairly obvious; however, to understand what Baldric might mean by his reference to Joseph of Arimathea and what that character represents to him and his audience, we have to begin by placing Joseph, or any other classical or biblical character, into their historical and textual context. In the *Historia*, Baldric mentions Joseph of Arimathea as a model for others in a rousing sermon by one of the *pontifices et sacerdotes* who were part of the crusader army outside the walls of Jerusalem in June or early July of 1099[18]. Although the name of the sermoniser is unknown, the speech is placed in the middle of Book 4, after the siege of Jerusalem has begun, but before the procession led by priests and bishops around the city walls that immediately preceded the attack on the city. It is in the form of a sermon and acts as a rhetorical bookend for Urban's speech at the start of Book 1. The content of the sermon 'proves' that the pope was right to call for the expedition and it reaffirms many of the messages found in the speech at Clermont. Baldric has the cleric declare:

> Rouse yourselves, members of Christ's family! Rouse yourselves, knights and foot-soldiers, and seize firmly that city, our common property! Give heed to Christ, who today is banished from that city and is crucified; and with Joseph [of Arimathea] take him down from the cross; and lay up in the sepulchre of your hearts an incomparable treasure, that desirable treasure; and forcefully take Christ away from these impious crucifiers[19].

The speech can be seen as an attempt to raise the morale of the lords, knights, and ordinary soldiers as might be done with a battle oration[20].

17 For Moses as an Egyptian prince, see Exodus 2:1-10 and for Aaron as a priest, see Exodus 28:1-4.

18 See Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 107.

19 Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 108, translation based on that made in J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, London, Continuum, 2009, p. 151.

20 See J. R. E. Bliese, "When Knightly Courage May Fail: Battle Orations in Medieval Europe", *The Historian*, 53, 1991, p. 489-504.

However, as it was a sermon, its main purpose was to provide religious guidance to the audience, be they crusaders outside the walls of Jerusalem or the textual community reading or hearing these words. As befits a sermon it relies heavily on the Gospels, specifically, in this extract, the descriptions of the Passion of Christ. The sermonizer draws direct comparisons between the suffering of Jerusalem under its Muslim rulers, who are characterised by Baldric as 'impious crucifiers', and the suffering of Christ on the cross. It places the crusaders, and one must assume Baldric's audience, in the role of Joseph of Arimathea and puts the crusaders alongside this biblical figure who took the body of Christ and buried it in what would become the Holy Sepulchre. It further states that the crusaders would receive *thesaurum incomparabilem* in return for their aid and creates parity between the body of Christ and the city of Jerusalem, establishing it as a physical relic that must return to the hands of pious Christians. It is a powerful message, outlining the duties of Christian arms-bearers and holding out the promise of salvatory rewards earned by those who emulate Joseph of Arimathea.

We can assume that this is not a verbatim report of an actual speech. It is possible that Baldric spoke to a returning crusader who told him of speeches and sermons made in the crusader camp at Jerusalem. The means of transmission of this particular sermon from the camp at Jerusalem to the green wax tablets upon which Baldric wrote, might include the author receiving an entirely accurate recollection of it from an eyewitness, or Baldric merely hearing that a preacher made the comparison between the crusaders and Joseph of Arimathea in a sermon. The most likely explanation, however, is that Baldric, having read in the *Gesta Francorum* that on the two days before the final assault on the city "*ordinauerunt episcopi et sacerdotes predicando et commonendo omnes*", decided to create his own sermon at this point in the narrative[21]. He probably based the words he wrote, not on those reported by an eyewitness, but on what he thought the preachers should have said. At the same time, he used this opportunity to match this speech with what he had earlier reported Urban as saying at Clermont, thereby providing an oratorical balance to his narrative. The historicity of the speech is not the important issue, what matters here is that Baldric chose to use Joseph of Arimathea as a figure who was comparable to those on the

21 *GF*, p. 90.

expedition. He outlined the actions of Joseph as equal to the miraculous achievements of the crusaders and the 'incomparable treasure' Joseph had received as his reward, as comparable to the treasure that came to all those who took the cross. Some crusade historians have remarked upon this reference to Joseph of Arimathea; notably, Jonathan Riley-Smith who pointed out that Baldric of Bourgueil, in his *Historia Ierosolimitana*, had compared the 'liberation' of Jerusalem' to Joseph of Arimathea taking Christ down from the cross[22]. However, when Riley-Smith and more recently Jay Rubenstein and Katherine Allen Smith say that the crusaders became or were "like Joseph of Arimathea" they do not explain what that would have meant to a French abbot writing in the first decade of the twelfth century[23].

The exact meaning is, of course, impossible to know, but as a cultural figure, as a biblical character, Joseph of Arimathea must have stood for something specific and significant. We can find access to what he might have meant to Baldric through an appreciation of how the character of Joseph and the qualities and strengths he represented had been transmitted to the time in which Baldric wrote. The reception history of Joseph of Arimathea has been examined in a recent study by William Lyons, part of the Biblical Refigurations series which focusses on the textual, cultural, and interpretative contexts of biblical characters[24]. This essay seeks to expand upon the work done there to understanding the afterlife of this fairly minor biblical character and what he may have meant to Baldric and to those most likely to be the audience for his history of the First Crusade.

The character of Joseph is introduced in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John[25]. In the story of Christ's Passion, he appears after the crucifixion, asks Pilate for the body of Christ and buries that body in a tomb. He is briefly mentioned in all four Gospels, carrying out this act and then he disappears from the gospel story. Baldric's description

22 See Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade*, p. 151.

23 See J. Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse*, New York, Basic Books, 2011, p. 285; K. Allen Smith, "Glossing the Holy War: Exegetical Constructions of the First Crusade, c. 1095-c. 1146", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 10, 2013, p. 13.

24 See W. J. Lyons, *Joseph of Arimathea: A Study in Reception History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.

25 See Matthew 27:57-60, Mark 15:42-46, Luke 23:50-54 and John 19:38-42.

of the actions of Joseph ("*uobis illum deponite*") shares similarities with the Gospel descriptions used in Mark (15:46, "*et deponens eum*") and Luke (23:53, "*et depositum*"). Baldric uses the Latin verb *deponere* ("to take down") as a means of describing the actions carried out by Joseph of Arimathea as do Mark and Luke. The descriptions of Joseph's actions in both John (19:38-39) and Matthew (27:57-60) make no use of *deponere*. Matthew refers instead to Pilate delivering the body (using a form of the verb *reddere*), while John talks of Joseph taking the body away (using the verb *tollere*). These different usages indicate that Baldric probably used the Gospels of Mark and Luke as his starting point for understanding Joseph, providing the initial shaping to his perception of the character and what he represented.

In the gospels of John and Matthew, Joseph is described as "*homo dives ab Arimathia nomine Ioseph qui et ipse discipulus erat Iesui*" (Matthew 27:57). In the gospels of Mark and Luke he is described as "*nobilis decurio qui et ipse erat expectans regnum Dei*" (Mark 15:43) and "*erat decurio vir bonus et iustus […] qui expectabat et ipse regnum Dei*" (Luke 23:50-51). These different descriptions of Joseph as *nobilis decurio* and *decurio vir* provide a starting point for understanding the character of Joseph as he would be perceived at the time that Baldric was writing. The description of Joseph as *homo dives* (a rich man) in John and Matthew suggests a man of wealth but gives no indication of his role or how those riches were earned. The gospels of Mark and Luke provide a much more specific role and a title for Joseph, that of *decurio*. This title can be found elsewhere in the Vulgate, specifically in I Maccabees 3:55 as *decuriones*. Here it refers to the organisation of the Jewish *populi* under Judah Maccabeus. Judah organised the hierarchy of these people/army into captains commanding thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. The *decuriones* are captains over ten. There is some dispute as to whether this was a military or communal leadership role, but as Judah immediately involved his *populi* in the battle at Emmaus against the Seleucid army led by Gorgias (I Macc 4:1-14), the *decuriones*, as represented in this part of the Bible take on a military role in the Jewish forces. In the *Historia*, Baldric alludes directly to Maccabees only once, but elsewhere his narrative and language are very reminiscent of the story told in the Vulgate of the war waged by the Jews to restore Jewish worship in Jerusalem and specifically in the Temple, a befitting scriptural reference

in a First Crusade narrative[26]. Aside from this direct quotation, several examples of Baldric borrowing language and imagery from the story of the Maccabees can also be found in his *Historia*. These include, the order of Judah to *accingimini* 'gird yourselves' (Maccabees 1 3:58) which is repeated in Baldric's version of Urban's speech[27]; the numeric weakness of the nevertheless victorious Jewish army by comparison with that of the Gentiles (Maccabees 1 4:6) compares with the victory of an under-strength crusading army in its battle with Kerbogha[28]; the sounding of trumpets is found in battle scenes (Maccabees 1 4:13 and 3:54, *tuba cecinerunt*) and also those depicted by Baldric[29]; and, in the burning of the Seleucid camp and the smoke generated thereby (Maccabees 1 4:20) we find echoes in the language Baldric used for the retreat and rout of Kerbogha's army outside Antioch[30]. While the biggest theme of the First Crusade narrative, the restoration of Jerusalem to its rightful role, finds a direct parallel in the Maccabean revolt.

The origin of the role of *decurio* and its use in the Latin translations of the Bible is almost certainly the division of ranks within the Roman Army. The term is found throughout Roman literature, which is where Jerome, in creating the Vulgate that Baldric used, found the Latin word he needed to translate the original Greek word *βουλευτής.* An examination of what *decurio* describes in that literature may help us to understand how Joseph was preceived. Julius Caesar (d. 44BCE) in *De Bello Civili*, refers to *decurion* as 'young men of quality, with a great number of Roman knights[31]'. Varro (d. 27BCE), in his writings on terms used in the Latin language says that "*decuriae* refers to groups of ten and a squadron made up of three groups of ten and there were three decurion in each squadron[32]". Baldric in using the figure of Joseph the *decurio* might be drawing a comparison between the Old Testament Maccabees, the Roman military leaders known as *decurio*, and the arms-bearers of his own time.

26 See Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 27.
27 Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 9.
28 Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 79-83.
29 Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 91.
30 The importance of the Maccabees as a reference point for historians of the crusades is discussed in Lapina, "The Maccabees and the Battle of Antioch" and in N. Morton, "The Defence of the Holy Land and the Memory of the Maccabees", *Journal of Medieval History*, 36/3, 2010, p. 275-293.
31 Caesar, *De Bello Civili*, 1:23.
32 Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 5:9.

Much closer in time to the creation of Jerome's Vulgate Bible and his translation of the Greek word *βουλευτής* into the Latin *decurio* are the writings of Vegetius (d. *c.*390CE), who referred to *decurio* in purely military terms, claiming that a *decurion* led a troop of 32 cavalrymen and stating that:

> The *Decurion* is to be preferred to the command of a troop for his activity and address in mounting his horse completely armed; for his skill in riding and in the use of the lance and bow; for his attention in forming his men to all the evolutions of the cavaIry; and for his care in obliging them to keep their cuirasses, lances and helmets always bright and in good order [...]. In short, it is the duty of the *Decurion* to be attentive to whatever concerns the health or discipline of the men or horses in his troop[33].

The familiarity of medieval European arms-bearers with the writings of Vegetius is well-documented and the image of the well-equipped leader of a small group of cavalrymen skilled in the use of lance and bow, bears strong comparison with those of powerful medieval knights portrayed in stories such as the *Song of Roland* and on artefacts such as the Bayeux Tapestry[34]. By this understanding Joseph of Arimathea as *decurio* is the military leader of a small group of mounted arms-bearers. This allowed Baldric to create a direct parallel with the types of men who would have been part of the first expedition and those arms-bearers who may have formed a significant part of the audience for the *Historia*. Approximately one hundred years after Baldric had finished the *Historia*, the imaginative works of Robert de Boron, created a chivalric and legendary Joseph of Arimathea, placing him in the *chanson* tradition of France. Joseph is portrayed by Robert de Boron as a soldier in the service of Pontius Pilate, whose familiarity with the Roman governor enables him to claim the body of Christ in defiance of the Jews and to hold the holy grail that caught the blood of Christ[35]. Other romance stories make Joseph the progenitor of knights such as Galahad and the bringer of the child Jesus to England. This chivalric and romantic version

33 Vegetius, *De Re Militari*, 2:14.

34 See C. T. Allmand, *The De Re Militari of Vegetius: the reception, transmission and legacy of a Roman text in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

35 The edition of this text is Robert de Boron, *Joseph d'Arimathie*, ed. R. O'Gorman, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1995; the translation is found in Robert de Boron, *Merlin and the Grail*, trans. N. Bryant, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2001, p. 15-44.

of Joseph of Arimathea found in Robert de Boron's poem probably has its origins in this military interpretation of Joseph's status as a *decurio*.

However, Roman authors also used the word *decurio* to describe the senators of municipal towns, making reference thereby to an administrative and political role. Indeed, that is the sense in which Cicero (d. 43BCE) used the word, referring to a *decurion* as a colonial senator of a municipality or colony, specifically *Capuae decuriones*[36] and *Larini censorias corrupisse decuriones universi iudicaverunt*[37]. It may be that these overlapping usages suggest there was not a strict delineation between military and non-military roles for regional officers such as these in the Roman empire and that the title of *decurio* could encompass both. In the Roman world at the time of Christ, *decurio* would have been a role either in the lower echelons of the army or the colonial administration, because in the literature the title seems to encompass both military and administrative duties. These meanings suggest that Joseph of Arimathea could be seen as an administrator, a member of the Jewish council perhaps, who also had some of the characteristics of a military leader. Once again this understanding of Joseph allows Baldric to create a direct parallel with the arms-bearers of his own time. They too were men who would have provided administration in the form of local justice and tax collection, in addition to military leadership, either in support of their overlord or in their own right. The Roman literature referred to earlier would have been received by both Jerome translating the Vulgate in the fourth century and by medieval readers, such as Baldric, trying to understand what the Bible meant in the twelfth century. For Jerome, *decurio* provided a useful word to describe Joseph's status as a member of the Sanhedrin. Whether Joseph existed and whether this is an accurate word to describe his role is irrelevant here, because it is the perception that is transmitted through the literature that can help us to understand what he means in the context of a history of the First Crusade. Baldric's reading of Roman literature would have given him a broad understanding of what Mark and Luke meant by their description of Joseph of Arimathea as *decurio vir bonus et iustus*. This understanding of Joseph's status, and the military and political duties that were the duties of a man of that status and the Latin word which

36 M. Tullius Cicero, *For Sestius*, ed. Clark, 1909, 4:10.
37 M. Tullius Cicero, *For Aulus Cluentius* ed. Clark, 1908, 14:41.

best described it, was also informed by these texts and continued to inform those who read the Bible in the Middle Ages. Therefore, when Baldric refers to Joseph of Arimathea in the sermon, the meaning of that character to his audience had already been shaped by what they had read and what they had heard, potentially creating a communal understanding shared by author and audience of what Joseph's role was, what it meant in practical terms and how it could be applied to people in Baldric's own time.

Much closer to that time are the writings of Isidore of Seville (d. 636CE), who, in the *Originum sive etymologiarum libri*, describes *decurio* specifically in political terms as an office holder having charge of civic duties and carrying those duties out[38]. Isidore probably based this definition on a reading of Book 10 of the Justinian Code or *Corpus Juris Civilis*, which describes the *decurion* as the leader of a Roman municipality[39]. The Code further explains that in return for carrying out these civic duties they received some of the privileges that were normally reserved for the nobility, including the right to pass on the title to their sons. This implies that a *decurion* held a position of some honour in Roman society and a comparison with the castellans, knights, and minor lords of the twelfth century can easily be derived from this description of a class of men, who although neither royal nor benefitting from inherited lands, had noble privileges and ruled land on behalf of a higher lord. These middling medieval men would probably be complimented by the title of *decurio* and would feel that any comparison between themselves, and either the municipal leaders of Ancient Rome or Joseph of Arimathea would be one in which they could take honour and pride.

Aside from the description of Joseph as *decurio* in Mark and Luke and *homo dives* in Matthew and John, the character of Joseph of Arimathea as revealed in the gospels found in the Vulgate appears only briefly. Despite this St. Augustine, in his commentary *The Harmony of the Gospels*[40], built upon what the gospels said about Joseph, expanding

38 See *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. S. A. Barney, W. J. Lewis and J. A. Beach, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, book IX.iv.23-24, p. 204.

39 See S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law*, XV, Cincinnati, Central Trust Co., 1932, book 10, title 31, accessed at Grenoble II University Roman Law Library website.

40 See St. Augustine, "The Harmony of the Gospels", *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene* Fathers, ed. P. Schaff, New York, Christian Literature Company, Series 1, vol. 6, 1887, book 3, chs. 22 and 23.

what was 'known' about him through assumption and logical conclusion based on the truth they believed they found there. Augustine called Joseph 'an honourable councillor', calling this a 'dignified position', one which enabled him to approach Pilate to beg for the body of Christ 'on familiar terms'. Augustine goes on to praise Joseph's boldness and courage in going to Pilate, contrasting this with the fear displayed by Christ's other disciples who failed to perform this last service for Christ.

St John Chrysostom in his exegesis on the gospel of St Matthew also developed the character of Joseph, writing:

> Joseph went to Pilate, and asked for the body'. This was Joseph, who had been concealing his discipleship of late; now, however, he had become very bold after the death of Christ. For neither was he an obscure person, nor of the unnoticed; but one of the council, and highly distinguished; from which circumstance especially one may see his courage. For he exposed himself to death, taking upon him enmity from all, by his affection to Jesus, both having dared to beg the body, and not having desisted until he obtained it. But not by taking it only, nor by burying it in a costly manner, but also by laying it in his own new tomb, he showed his love and his courage[41].

None of the additional description of Joseph supplied by either St Augustine or St John Chrysostom, who was probably writing in either Antioch or Constantinople in the late fourth-century, is 'wrong', nor is it imagined; in fact, all of it can be deduced or concluded from the words found in the gospels. The characterization of Joseph as bold and courageous is based on an assumption that he was risking his life by asking for the body, especially so for a 'distinguished' person who was 'one of the council'. These are logical assumptions made by St John Chrysostom, based on what Mark and Luke wrote, assuming that *nobilis decurio* meant that Joseph was a member of the 'council' which had judged Christ and ordered his death. St Augustine did not go quite so far as this. Instead, he wrote that Joseph's 'dignified position' enabled him to approach Pilate on 'familiar terms'. Still, based on the assumption of council membership, when Joseph asked for the body, both of these church fathers considered it a very bold thing to do. It was characterised as an act of defiance of his fellow councillors, and hence Joseph can

41 St. John Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Gospel of St Matthew", *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene* Fathers, ed. P. Schaff, New York, Christian Literature Company, Series 1, vol. 10, 1887, Matthew 27: 58.

easily be described as having courage and daring, qualities that were admired by authors writing the deeds of medieval men and, we can fairly assume, by the audiences for whom they were written. There is no direct evidence for Joseph's courage or defiance in the Gospels, and neither John Chrysostom nor Augustine added any further narrative to the life of Joseph of Arimathea in their biblical exegesis. Instead of adding to the narrative, their exegesis amplified and to some extent re-drew Joseph's character, in works that would have a very significant influence on how he was perceived at the start of the twelfth century.

Evidence for the responses of medieval scholars to the Scriptures, and their interpretation and understanding of particular passages, can be found by examining the tradition of glossed bibles. These very popular books provided a kind of 'textbook' to the Bible for medieval readers and survive in thousands of extant medieval manuscripts dating from the sixth to the twelfth centuries[42]. Many of these marginal commentaries draw upon the works of the Church Fathers, which we have already examined, but others provide unique insights into medieval responses to the character and actions of biblical figures such as Joseph of Arimathea. One example is the *Catena Aurea* compiled by Thomas Aquinas in the mid-thirteenth century. This glossed bible draws on Bede, Augustine, Chrysostom and others, to discuss Joseph's wealth, position and rank as *decurio*, his boldness in asking for the body of Christ, the bravery of his defiance of the Jews and the merit he earned from the good works he performed for Christ. One other churchman included in the commentary on the sections of the gospel in which Joseph appears, was Theophylactus, the Greek Archbishop of Ohrid, who wrote his commentary on the gospels around 1100. In his commentary on Mark 15:42-47, and writing at virtually the same time as Baldric, he mirrors the *Historia* in calling on his readers to 'imitate Joseph' by taking the body of Christ. Similarly, in his commentary on John 19:38-42, Theophylactus urges his readers to 'be therefore a Joseph, and cover Christ's nakedness'. Although he was writing in Greek on the Western border of what we now call Macedonia, he shares the notion

42 A good summary of recent scholarship on biblical glosses can be found in L. Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria. The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2009, and D. A. Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2012.

of his readers imitating Joseph, or becoming like him, with Baldric of Bourgueil. The possibility of a direct literary connection between Baldric and Theophylactus is very low (although Bohemond of Taranto took the city of Ohrid during his campaign of 1083-1085 which may have established a link); however, their common approach to the character of Joseph of Arimathea as a role model for Christians is striking.

The format of these glosses is to place the biblical verse in the centre of the page, with the commentaries written in the space around it, and some glosses make mention of additions that had been made to the story of Joseph of Arimathea. His story was developed in another very popular work in Western Europe during the Middle Ages, the Gospel of Nicodemus (hereafter *GN*[43]). This work, originally written in Greek probably in the early Fourth-Century, has been described as a daring narrative which revised the four Gospels and embellished the story of Christ's Passion with imaginative detail[44]. It was translated into Latin as early as the Fifth-Century and, although it was eventually dismissed as a historical record by Reformation scholars, during the Middle Ages it was a very influential text. It survives in over four hundred manuscripts in Latin and was translated into just about every European and Middle Eastern vernacular language in many other books[45]. Unlike the four canonical Gospels, that of Nicodemus was not thought by those who used it in religious discourse to be divinely inspired, but, as Izydorczyk points out, comments by medieval copyists and commentators show that they thought it was a trustworthy and valuable witness to a number of events that were not fully recorded in those gospels[46]. An indication of the value placed upon of the *GN* is its inclusion in manuscripts alongside the canonical texts, not necessarily as a 'fifth gospel' but probably as a 'supplement', providing more details of what happened during and after Christ's Passion[47]. It has reached the modern age in many different forms and with numerous names, usually known in Latin as *Evangelium Nicodemi* and it was divided into two main sections in the

43 See *The Gospel of Nicodemus: Gesta Salvatoris*, ed. H. C. Kim, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973.
44 See *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts in Western Europe*, ed. Z. Izydorczyk, Tempe, AZ., Arizona State University, 1997, p. 1.
45 See *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus*, ed. Z. Izydorczyk, p. 18.
46 See *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus*, ed. Z. Izydorczyk, p. 12.
47 *Ibid.*

Nineteenth-Century; the *Gesta Pilati* and *Descensus Christi ad inferos*[48]. Joseph appears in the *GN* as an office holder, a just and good man, who disagreed with the condemnation of Christ by the Sanhedrin and who cares for Christ's body after the crucifixion. The narrative then goes far beyond what can be found in the 'canonical' gospels. It relates that Joseph was arrested by the Jews and imprisoned for his actions, but is miraculously rescued from peril by the risen Christ himself. The medieval popularity of the *GN*, as well as the lively and ever-evolving nature of the text, is reflected in the fact that Gregory of Tours in his sixth-century *Ten Books of History* repeats and embellishes the story of Joseph's arrest and miraculous escape. Gregory wrote (Book 1:21) that:

> Joseph, who had embalmed Christ's body with spices and hidden it in his own tomb, was arrested and shut in a prison cell. He was guarded by the high priests themselves, for, as is related in the account sent by Pilate to Emperor Tiberius, the hatred which they bore him was fiercer than that which they felt for our Lord himself. Christ was guarded by soldiers, but Joseph was watched over by the high priests. Our Lord rose again, and when He could not be found in the tomb, the guards were terrified by the vision of the angel. During the night the walls of the cell where Joseph was incarcerated were raised up in the air and he was freed from imprisonment, for an angel came to release him. Then the walls were put back in their proper place[49].

The embellishment added to the 'escape' of Joseph, i.e. the walls being raised so that he can walk free, may have been invented by Gregory himself, or may come from one of the numerous versions of the dynamic and evolving *GN* text. These narratives of imprisonment and miraculous escape add a lot to the character of Joseph of Arimathea and take the reader well beyond his brief gospel role as a rich *decurio* of uncertain religious conviction. Here Joseph is almost set on a par with Christ; his escape happens in the same time frame as the resurrection, and as Gregory states, Joseph is hated by the priests even more than Christ, perhaps because he is one of their own who has turned away from them. In the *GN*, and repeated by Gregory of Tours, can be read

48 See *Evangelia apocrypha*, ed. Constantinus de Tischendorf, Leipzig, Mendelssohn, 1876.

49 All citations of the *Libri Historiarum* deem refer to *Gregorii Episcopi Touronensis: Libri Historiarum X*, ed. B. Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, 1:1, 1885, repr. Hanover, Hahn, 1951; the translation is drawn from Gregory of Tour, *The History of the Franks*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974, p. 82.

examples of Joseph's suffering and bravery, and a confirmation that he was a supporter of Christ, that he defied the high priests who intended to punish him for that defiance. Some versions of the *GN* include a detailed description of how Joseph was to be killed, and his body left unburied, to be devoured by the birds, in direct defiance of Jewish law.

Gregory describes Joseph as *benefactorem Dei*, meaning he who confers a favour upon God, which is an honourable person to be. In return for that favour and dedication, God sent Joseph help, in the form of an angel, to miraculously release him from prison. To Gregory and Baldric 'God's benefactors' would be those men of wealth and power who gave money, land and gifts to a religious institution and who received in return the prayers of its monks and priests and, potentially, a place of rest in old age within the community and burial within its grounds. This culture of benefaction is described by Peter the Venerable, writing in 1127, who wrote that the gifts of the faithful allowed them to share in the spiritual merit earned by the prayers, fasts and good works of monks[50]. Just as the monks would pray for those who gave a gift to the monastic institution, so God would provide help to those, such as Joseph, who had done a favour for him. Professor Marcus Bull has pointed out that the giving of benefactions to the Church and crusading were "parallel pursuits, tending to the same aim of salvation [...] the two activities were intimately, even organically, linked[51]." The description offered by Gregory of Tours of Joseph as 'God's Benefactor' and the use of him as an example of right behaviour by Baldric would, therefore, have resonated very strongly with an early C12th medieval audience reading or hearing a history of the First Crusade.

By the time Baldric came to write his *Historia*, the character of Joseph of Arimathea had been shaped and re-shaped by nearly a thousand years of texts. The meaning of the words used to describe him in the Bible would have created a perception of Joseph as a wealthy man looking for salvation, a man who helped release the body of Christ from torments and placed his assets in the service of God. The exegesis of the Church Fathers drew logical conclusions from the words of the Bible to arrive at a

50 See Peter the Venerable, *The Letters*, ed. G. Constable, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1967, 2 vols., No. 28, 84.

51 M. G. Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: the Limousin and Gascony, c. 970-c. 1130*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 178.

Joseph who was a member of the Sanhedrin council and therefore added characteristics such as boldness and courage to the man who gave aid to Christ. The meaning of the words used to describe Joseph in the Bible, such as *decurio*, would have been understood by Baldric through his reading of the Old Testament, the letters of Cicero and the histories written by Julius Caesar, Sallust, and Lucan, as well as the definitions found in Vegetius and Isidore of Seville. These readings would have led Baldric to understand the description of Joseph in the Vulgate as a *decurio* as a role that was partly military, partly administrative, one comparable to those of the castellans and minor lords in the region around the Loire valley where Baldric lived. This understanding of what Joseph did and what he was, is further enhanced by documents such as glossed bibles and the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, as well as the writings of men such as Gregory of Tours. Baldric reminds his audience of the rewards that are promised to those who are benefactors of God, whether those benefactions are those provided by Joseph, a new tomb and the gentle service of burial or those provided by the participants in the First Crusade. The understanding of what Joseph was would also be influenced by the unknown and unrecorded sermons, stories and conversations that Baldric had heard throughout his adult life. These may have encompassed the courage and boldness of Joseph described by John Chrysostom and Augustine. They may have shaped the idea that Joseph of Arimathea was rich and powerful and that he wanted to put his resources in the service of Christ. They may have focused on the deeds of Joseph as the man who ended the indignity of the crucifixion, who bravely sought possession of the body of Christ from Pontius Pilate, so that it could be correctly buried, and who acted as a benefactor, treating the body of Christ with care and kindness. In the most simple and obvious way, Joseph of Arimathea's actions described in the Bible, gave the crusaders a goal to aim for. By putting the body of Christ in what then became the Holy Sepulchre, the figure of Joseph provided for the sermonizer outside Jerusalem and for those hearing the sermon through the medium of the *Historia*, a physical focus for the First Crusade, a place that above all other places in the Holy Land needed to be in Christian possession, the Holy Sepulchre itself.

At the start of the twelfth century, Joseph of Arimathea was perceived to be a rich man, a Jewish leader, perhaps with military and administrative

duties, who had secretly supported Christ. By ending the indignity of the crucifixion, providing clean linen in which to wrap the body and donating a new tomb as a resting place for that body he had declared his faith, risked his life and provided a service or benefaction to God. Like medieval benefactors, he had valuable resources and influence that he chose to use for the benefit of Christ and, in return, according to the *GN*, he was rewarded for those gifts by being saved from incarceration and death by an angel of God. If the audience for the *Historia* could make the aspirational comparison between Joseph as a bold and influential man, and themselves as men with lands, wealth, and military power, then the urgings of the pope to put these resources at the service of the church, becomes more pervasive and powerful. The sermon reported by Baldric near the end of the *Historia* resonates even more strongly with the message given by Urban at the beginning of the text. His version of Urban's sermon at Clermont argued forcefully that arms-bearers had been following the wrong path by fighting each other and his sermonizer outside the walls of Jerusalem argues that those who took the cross had, like Joseph of Arimathea, put their assets in the service of Jesus Christ and made a gift of their service to God, who rewarded them by granting salvation in return. Just as Joseph took the sacred body down from the cross, a holy body that was tortured, abused, and abandoned, suffering just as Jerusalem had suffered, so the crusaders should take control of the sacred city and end its enslavement. The body of Christ and the city of Christ become one in the sermon Baldric records and the benefactors of God, like Joseph of Arimathea, will earn through their gift to God the protection of God on earth and eternal rewards in heaven. By taking back and protecting the Holy Sepulchre that Joseph of Arimathea had established, the crusaders are emulating this biblical figure in all the ways that a thousand years of European literature had shown them. It was entirely appropriate, therefore, for Crusaders to be shown by Baldric following the example set by Joseph of Arimathea.

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